



# From the editor (overseas) . . .

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Many advantages flow from foreign travel not the least of which is the opportunity of getting one's day to day work into a better perspective. To be able to compare the familiar with the unfamiliar sheds light on both, highlighting strengths as well as weaknesses.

I arrived in Taipei in the wake of a typhoon which caused serious loss of life and damage in the south of the island. Six days later even more damage was done in the capital whilst I was visiting social welfare programmes in Taichung. These, and other disasters, are coped with by a population imbued with a belief in the possibility of success. Having witnessed their phenomenal industrial and commercial success I was pleased to see the same restless energy applied to social problems. When people talked to me about eradicating poverty they were not merely mouthing slogans. Impressive figures were produced to support the philosophy behind the apparently effective social policies. My visits to institutions, community development projects, and many discussions with social workers, planners, doctors and government

officials, indicate a belief in the necessity of government commitment to social welfare as providing a springboard for social development. Taiwan is a long way from Richard Titmuss' vision of a welfare society, but at least the government's policies are pointing in the right direction. The hardfaced men in Canberra would learn much by coming to this small island half the size of Tasmania but with a population of 16 million.

Child and family welfare are given priority by the Department of Social Affairs in the Ministry of the Interior. In Taiwan Province and Taipei City there are 51 public and private orphanages caring for more than 6,000 orphans and handicapped children. Two of the largest are HUA HSING caring for 564 children and young people aged 6-18 and the Taipei Child Welfare Centre operated by the Free China Relief Association caring for 240 children. Both owe their origins to Madame Chiang Kai-shek who has a strong involvement in the child welfare field. Each facility operates a variety of child care programmes and the Taipei Centre offers professional social services to its host community as well as implementing a community development programme.

As the concept of family planning has become more widely accepted and the national per capita income has increased significantly the number of children left by their parents is decreasing. The number of children from poor families is also declining because of the government subsidy to keep children in their own families. This has reduced the number of children below the age of six taken care of by orphanages.

There are many differences from the child welfare one knows in Australia, but there are also similarities — like the difficulty of attracting enough child care staff and the slow progress in the professionalism of child care.

I leave Taiwan with two vivid memories — one of the serenity and loving care of the staff of the CHENG HSIN Rehabilitation Centre which cares for 400 physically handicapped children; the other, of the noisy welcome I received from the kindergarten children at the NANPING Community Development Project in TAICHUNG before they danced and sang for me.

**Cliff Picton**