

that methadone blocks 'heroin hunger'. The maintenance regimen has produced a polarization of positive and negative professional attitudes. The conference reported in this volume records a considerable body of evidence in favour of methadone maintenance, although the editor correctly frowns upon 'homogenous and simplistic answers' to the problem of narcotic addiction.

A definitive statement about methadone maintenance is given by Dr. V. P. Dole. Others describe methadone programmes set up in New Orleans, St. Louis, Minneapolis, and elsewhere. Dr. W. R. Martin of Lexington, Kentucky, however, has the last word when he states that there remains an unmet need for rigorous evaluation of methadone maintenance.

This book will be of interest to all professional workers who are involved in the rehabilitation of narcotic addicts.

A. B. SCLARE

DIMINISHED PEOPLE. PROBLEMS AND CARE OF THE MENTALLY RETARDED Edited by Norman R. Bernstein. (Pp. 340; £6.50.) Little, Brown: Boston, Mass. Churchill: London. 1971.

This book by 15 authors distinguished in the field of mental deficiency is very different from most books written in the past about mental defectives. It is not concerned with describing rare syndromes and statistics, but instead presents a sensitive humane description of the plight of the defective, who carries his own stigma and the effects of stigma contamination.

The book is divided into two main parts. Part I is concerned with social issues. It describes the gaps in the educational system and the cultural influences on education; the importance of work for the retarded, and the fixed expectations and often low aspirations and assumptions that we have for them; the variety of feelings that parents have, resulting in a variety of parental strategies towards the several agencies concerned with the child's care; the legal position of the defective and the need to clarify this; and the role of specialists in this 'Cinderella' of psychiatry.

Part II is concerned with clinical issues, and again the positive attributes of the retarded are stressed. The chapter on personality development includes genetic and dynamic formulations, and attempts to follow ego development from childhood through latency and adolescence to old age, with the dice too often loaded against the retarded. There is a valuable practical guide in the psychiatric assessment of defective, brain-damaged, and psychotic children, calling for a team approach, and much helpful information is given regarding verbal and non-

verbal psychotherapy with these children, as well as interesting and thorough case histories, and a review of the literature.

A realistic appraisal and critique of behaviour-shaping by operant conditioning follows, and there is a general survey of useful drugs, as well as pertinent questions about the relative value of drugs for retardates. The bibliography throughout is invaluable to workers in this field.

The concluding chapter talks of the parents and the 'chasm of nonassistance' they so often encounter. But optimism is shown in the value for parents of group discussions with 'concerned leaders', both as a therapeutic tool and to activate and support parents in achieving the goal of near-normal conditions for their children. Remembering that 'any child is capable of better performance' and that the retarded child has a 'profile of abilities' guards us against a too narrow approach and attitude.

This very good book leaves the reader with a feeling of hope as well as humility.

HETI DAVIES

NOTICES

EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR STEREOTACTIC AND FUNCTIONAL NEUROSURGERY First meeting, 18, 19 September 1972, Edinburgh. Main topics: stereotactic surgery on pituitary, including hypothalamus; surgery of pain, including spinal stereotactic procedures; treatment of epilepsy; complications of special interest following stereotactic procedures; movement disorders. Details from Dr. E. R. Hitchcock, Local Secretary, Department of Surgical Neurology, Royal Infirmary, Lauriston Place, Edinburgh 3, Scotland, U.K.

MICROSURGERY: NEUROSURGERY AND RELATED OTOLARYNGOLOGICAL TOPICS, SURGERY OF PERIPHERAL NERVES AND VESSELS Symposium, Vienna, 15-21 October 1972. Details from Secretariat, Symposium for Microsurgery, c/o Vienna Academy of Medicine, Alserstrasse 4, A-1090 Vienna, Austria.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NEUROLOGICAL SURGERY Annual Meeting, 4-7 September 1972, Oxford. The Sixteenth Annual Award of the Academy will be presented for the best presentation by a doctor training in neurological surgery on original clinical or laboratory research pertaining to the nervous system. The Academy offers travel expenses to the meeting, and an honorarium to the successful candidate. Details from Dr. Byron C. Pevehouse, Secretary-Treasurer, 2001 Union Street, San Francisco, California 94123, U.S.A.