



write on

NOTE TO READERS: Phoenix Rising assumes any correspondence sent to us may be reprinted in our letters section unless otherwise specified. Please tell us if you would like your name withheld if your letter is printed. Letters without names and addresses will not be accepted.



In your April issue, Dr. J.J. Jeffries writes of patients "who have been helped by ECT" or "who have benefited" from it, implying that the question concerning ECT is whether patients do or don't benefit from it with respect to their illness.

ECT is a symptomatic treatment. Anyone who is emotionally ill benefits from it briefly, just as anyone who is constipated benefits from a laxative. As one patient put it, "It made me feel real good for a few days." Sometimes people stay well after ECT, but this depends on other factors in the situation, not the treatment itself.

The question concerning ECT is something else entirely: Should doctors be allowed to obtain consent to it without divulging that it will cause a great deal of permanent memory loss?

*Marilyn Rice,
Truth In Psychiatry,
Arlington, Virginia.*



I have been keeping up with all the problems that have been happening in mental health in Alberta — the cutbacks of professional help; psychiatric nurses; programmes; psychiatrists resigning, etc. The Alberta Hospital is falling apart at the seams — the institution needs repairs and is overcrowded and has a lack of services.

Why has not the Government made some improvements at the institution before now? This would have made services better for staff and patients.

Why does it take a tragedy before help comes to the people of these mental hospitals?

It makes me so angry to see the lack of communication between the Govern-

ment and the people who are concerned about the problems in the mental health clinics, who are asking for help from the Government and are not getting response.

As I myself grew up in an institution (for 15 years) for the mentally retarded, I have seen and experienced first hand, living in the institution, the lack of services and the repairs which needed to happen at the institution. I know a lot of work has been done since that time to improve living conditions at Michener Centre.

Why could not the Government have made living conditions at the Alberta Hospital Ponoka better at that time?

And why has not the Government been aware of this before now? The Government officials should spend a month living in a mental hospital as a patient and get first hand an insight of institutional living; the lack of services that are not being provided; and the over-crowded conditions.

It is the people in these mental hospitals who are suffering through not getting proper care, as well as the staff. I have been through this at Michener Centre and I know the situation. I care about people in mental hospitals as well as in the community who are suffering from mental illness, just as I care for those who are mentally retarded.

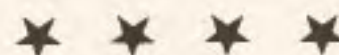
I wonder how many people in the Government ever had a loved one confined to a mental hospital, or a relative or friend? Maybe some one who is sitting in the Government could end up in a mental hospital. What would their reaction be then to poor living conditions and lack of treatment?

Unless the Government is willing to go right into mental health institutions and see the unfair conditions, they will not really understand the problems that exist in the mental health field.

As a concerned citizen, I hope the Government can learn from me what living in an institution does to people; this is why I am bringing forth my views in this whole matter of mental health problems; their solutions and getting the Government working with the professionals and public in mental health and the Alberta Hospital Ponoka living conditions. They need

upgrading — not downgrading! Just like a car that needs a tune-up, so does mental health. Not winding down.

*Doreen Befus
Red Deer, Alberta*



I was talking to Don Weitz of recent and he suggested that I inform you of some of the information I have gathered which may be of use to your magazine.

I was doing some research into the field of government spending into psychiatric services and comparing it with how much they spend on Community Mental Health Programmes and I came up with the following:

From the 1980-81 Public Accounts under the Ministry of Health it is recorded that the Ministry of Health spent \$243,583,300 into psychiatric services. A breakdown of where this money was spent in psychiatric services is listed as well. I have sent you a photocopy of the pages referred to in the Public Accounts, which can be obtained from the government book store.

From the Reference list of Health Science Research in Canada for 1981-82 which lists the grants and awards given in Canada, Ontario grants given for the purposes of some psychiatric research or treatment was picked out from the book. (The book is obtainable from the Ontario Ministry of Health Library on Overlea Blvd.). About \$419,032.00 was given out for some sort of psychiatric research or treatment in Ontario for this time period.

From the Hospital Statistics in Ontario for 1979-80 I found of interest a breakdown of Psychiatric Hospital costs. A grand total of \$166,044,521 was spent in Ont. Psychiatric Hospitals for this time period.

Now on the other side the Ontario Health Ministry spent \$8,132,032.97 (approx.) into the Adult Community Mental Health Programmes for 1979-80. A list of these Mental Health Programmes can be obtained from the bookstore or the Ministry of Health. A lot of these programmes that were granted money under this section are