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The challenge of community in a bureaucratic world:

'I refuse to be intimidated by reality any more'

WE DREAM OF DEVELOPING A GREAT SOCIETY of small communities, but the world in which we are trying to make our dreams come true is a world dominated by huge government and non-government bureaucracies.

✧ **THE REALITY OF BUREAUCRACY:**
*'The bureaucracy above you hampers
your every move'*

We are all compelled to work in a political milieu which is manipulated by massive corporations of enormous power that reward compliance, punish protest and open and close options for everything from jobs to grants, according to their own agendas, without any regard for love or justice.

So it's not very surprising that many of us who set out to strive for change end up in complete resignation.

Some become discouraged because the institution they work for has totally frustrated their efforts to bring about any change for the good of the community.

Others become discouraged because some institution

that they had nothing to do with, but which had everything to do with the community they were working with, totally frustrated their efforts to bring about any change that was deemed contrary to the agenda of the institution concerned.

Alan Twelvetrees probably speaks for a lot of us when he says:

[It's] an impossible job. The bureaucracy above you appears intent on hampering your every move. . . Many who have been working for a few years find they are exhausted on account of dealing with the same kind of problem again and again. You are continually trying to retrieve something from the mess created by the lack of human policies!¹

In a society in which our lives are dominated by so many institutions, there often seems to be no scope for dreaming about community and no hope of making our dreams about community come true.

✧ **THE IRONY OF BUREAUCRACY:**
*'Our institutions can deliver a service,
but not care'*

The irony is that many of the institutions which now inhibit much of our work for community are structures that were ostensibly created to enable us to do our work for community better.

One state government's green paper on a proposed piece of 'community welfare legislation' speaks specifically of developing 'mutual support and understanding, collective responsibility and interdependence, and

harmonious and cooperative participation'.²

Whether government or non-government bureaucracies, institutions were expected to provide a 'service to the community' that would otherwise 'not be forthcoming from the community'.

Many regarded institutions as the only way we could care for the community. 'Institutions were a way. . . to redeem an uncaring community.'³

Government and non-government bureaucracies were established with the expectation that these institutions would not only provide the services, but also provide the care that the community required. Gradually, people came to realise that there was no way that institutions could care for the community. 'Our institutions. . . can deliver a service, [but] cannot deliver care.'⁴

However, while a few came to realise that one could no more program an institution to care than one could program an institution to laugh or cry, many did not. Many still persisted in trying to program their institutions to care. And, being unable to care for us, they took care of us by taking control of our lives for us.

The intentions may have been good, but the unintended consequences have been regarded by many as quite evil. 'Evil' may be defined as 'the exercise of political power that imposes one's will upon others, by overt or covert coercion, without due regard for love or justice'.⁵

And there is little doubt in my mind that a lot of so-called 'community organisations', which impose the will of their respective bureaucracies upon us 'for our

good' without due regard for the deleterious effects they have on our lives, could be classified as 'evil'.

✧ THE TRAGEDY OF BUREAUCRACY:

'We are able to equate the institution with evil'

It was not very long ago that I was discussing this issue with a chap named Michael Kendrick, who has been at the centre of an international movement for the reform of welfare institutions for many years. 'In our generation,' comments Kendrick, 'we are able to equate the institution with some kind of evil.'⁶

'Now a few people may recall,' he recalls, 'that institutions were, in their day, a passionate, righteous cause.'⁷ 'We thought,' he recollects, 'that if we had these attractive programs, things were going to get better.'⁸

'The sadness is,' he says, 'that I made a promise, as did all of us, that this would be a better world with our new attractive services. People's lives were committed to these services and changed by them. But of course services are full of their own kinds of limitations. . . .' He pauses. 'So we broke our promises.'⁹

'What I have lived through,' he concludes, 'is the creation of a whole new generation of evils that were not even on the landscape a few decades ago!'¹⁰

'For instance,' he says in closing, 'services have become technologised and bureaucratised and agencies that start out good lose their way. People that go in hoping to serve other people find themselves serving the powers that be.'¹¹

Kendrick's judgment is categorical. His lament is long. His language is strong. But there are many of us

who would, no doubt, join Kendrick in singing the bureaucratic blues, because we share the sense of tragedy of which he speaks.

✧ FROM PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES TO
CONCENTRATION CAMPS:

'We were prisoners with no rights and no dignity'

My wife Ange and I have got to know a lot of vulnerable groups of people in our neighbourhood. Among the most vulnerable we know are people who are mentally and emotionally disturbed. These people struggle to maintain their sanity in the midst of maddening circumstances.

No matter how many times they try to put the pieces of their shattered experiences back together again, they seem to do so without the prospect of much success. So, in spite of everything they try to do to the contrary, they are compelled to live with an inescapable sense of total and utter failure. Fortunately, there are many individuals in the community who care for our tormented friends and who provide crucial services which help them survive at critical times in their lives. But unfortunately, many of the institutions in the locality which are supposed to care for them often dehumanise them through the kind of help that they provide.

I have noticed that my friends are very quickly categorised. Their identities are readily reduced to labels. And they take on the roles of 'schizophrenics' that they have been given as models for themselves.

I have also noticed that my friends are very quickly

stigmatised. Psychiatrically disabled people are considered quite contemptible in a capitalist society. Because they are 'handicapped', they are of 'no use' as producers and, because they are 'pensioners', they are of 'no value' as consumers. So in a society that measures worth in terms of production and consumption, they are often treated as totally worthless.

Many of my friends have been segregated — put into hospitals, prisons and hostels. In these institutions, separate from the rest of the community, their lives have generally been regimented, medicated and regulated in a manner that would not be tolerated in the rest of the community. But it would seem that these 'abnormal' people do not have the same rights as 'normal' people have to fight for their rights. Any complaints can be easily attributed to 'paranoia' and any protests can be readily treated as 'psychosis'.

The government and non-government bureaucracies, which relate in such a dehumanising manner towards some of the most vulnerable human beings in our community, might be deemed 'a necessary evil'. But just how intolerable such a so-called 'necessary evil' can become is indicated by the testimony of Trish Vanderwal and is demonstrated in the case of Ward 10B and Chelmsford Private Hospital.

Trish Vanderwal tells us:

We lived in fear. We cringed. We cowered. We were prisoners with no rights and no dignity. We were the despised and rejected, subject to beatings and bullying.

Were we POWs in some horrific concentration camp during the war? No. We were mental health patients

in psychiatric hospitals where the caring component had been eroded away, leaving the way clear for abuse and neglect. I witnessed terrible things in hospital. Due to the nature of our illness, our credibility was low. Staff always managed to write up their notes so that bruises and injuries were accounted for.

Some patients were refused visitors until their bruises were no longer obvious, though who would have believed a mental health patient anyway? Intimidation became the norm. If a patient became too assertive, they would be deemed 'psychotic' and hustled off to a single room, injected with heavy tranquillisers and locked in. Under the 'bully gang', we all kept silent to survive.¹²

Ward 10B is the psychiatric ward of the Townsville General Hospital. It was the subject of a recent Royal Commission of Inquiry which amounted to a five-hundred page indictment of 'bureaucratic indifference' in the face of 'grossly negligent', 'unethical' and 'unsafe' treatment.

According to Commissioner Bill Carter QC, during a period of thirteen years from 1975 to 1988, hundreds of patients, including three of my friends, were arbitrarily restrained, inappropriately medicated and physically assaulted, resulting in what were described euphemistically as 'numerous suspicious patient deaths'.¹³

On 20 December 1990, Matron Julie Smith reported that at Chelmsford Private Hospital, regard for the rights of patients was 'a sick joke'. Patients were, she said, not consulted at all about their treatment. If they challenged the kind of treatment they got, she said they were dealt with by being given an overdose of drugs that put them into 'deep sleep' and 'kept them quiet'.

According to Dr Sydney Smith, this hospital treated the patients in such 'an extraordinarily careless and callous manner' that, as a result, twenty-six people were killed and twenty-two others killed themselves. 'It was like a concentration camp.'¹⁴

✱ **THE APPARENT INVULNERABILITY OF INSTITUTIONS:**

'The psychic power emanated by organisations overpowers people'

While I do not believe all institutions are evil, I believe that there is a tendency for all institutions, even those intended for good, to become evil. There are a number of factors which seem to contribute to this almost invariable tendency for institutions, especially those intended for good, to become evil:

□ **First, the spirit of an institution disempowers**

Charles Elliott cites the significance of the 'spirit' of an institution in determining its dominant and dominating character in the community.

Elliott says the 'spirit' of an institution is the 'psychic power emanated by organisations' which, more often than not is 'bent on overpowering others'.¹⁵ He says that an institution 'can hardly help being repressive. . . for that is its essence'.¹⁶ According to Elliott, the 'spirit' of an institution invariably tends to overpower people rather than empower people. I would argue in that sense that even a 'good' institution can be 'evil'.

In our work with our vulnerable friends in the

community, many times we have had cause to consult with the government and non-government bureaucracies which control important aspects of their lives. I can remember only a couple of instances when those bureaucracies did not seek somehow to try to extend the control they had over our friends and over our involvement with them as well.

In our consultation with these bureaucracies, we would usually start out exploring the possibility of cooperation with regard to a particular person and end up trying to stop them from coopting us, along with the person concerned, into some program or other they were going to organise.

In my experience, institutions almost invariably act as if they have a divine right to rule the community. It is expected that, in most encounters, the community will give way and allow the institutions to take over. It's overpowering, rather than empowering, but that's the 'spirit' in which most consultations take place.

□ **Second, the structure of an institution disempowers**

Robert Chambers cites the significance of the 'structure' of an institution in determining its dominant and dominating character in the community.

Chambers says that most bureaucracies 'have a centre-periphery orientation'¹⁷: 'Their structure [is] often authoritarian, hierarchical and punitive. From the centre come the commands. From the periphery comes a flow of information which placates. Senior officers do not learn from their subordinates and subordinates do not learn

from their clients. [People] are cajoled and given orders. Promotion comes through compliance; deviant initiatives are rewarded by punishment. Appearances of achievement are applauded. Real problems of implementation are repressed.¹⁸

According to Chambers, the 'structure' of an institution invariably tends to warp perceptions, corrupt processes, manipulate programs and exploit people. I could argue in that sense that no matter how 'good' the aims of the institution may be, the means that the institution employs may be 'evil'.

I can remember talking to some representatives of a welfare organisation in our area about a series of activities we had planned with some of the people in the community they were involved with. I did so, not only to inform them, but also to invite them to participate if they so desired. They suggested that the activities we had planned should be done under their auspices. After all, they said, their structure was the appropriate structure through which to do what we wanted to do.

When we rejected the suggestion that our activities should be done under their auspices, they got most upset. Then, when we had the temerity to suggest that their structure may have been appropriate for service delivery, but was not appropriate to enable people to develop a sense of responsibility for themselves, they became almost apoplectic with rage at our impudence. They threatened to do their best to discredit us. And they did.

In my experience, institutions almost invariably act as if they are the centre of the universe and anyone not involved with them is rather peripheral to their world.

They act as if the only way anyone could be involved meaningfully in the community is through the agency of 'their structure'.

They can only relate to people in terms of their organisations. They can only react to people in terms of their regulations. Should anyone have the tenacity to resist the imposition of such warped perceptions and corrupted processes, which inevitably manipulate people and exploit people, the institutions quickly move to censure their opponents and impose sanctions against them in order to protect the place of their 'structure' in the community.

□ *Third, the tradition of the institution disempowers*

George Foster cites the significance of the 'tradition' of an institution as a major factor in determining its dominant and dominating character in the community.

Foster says: 'A bureaucracy of substantial size is simply another kind of social grouping with the same features [like traditions]. . . found in a tribe or a village.'¹⁹ He says: 'Bureaucrats, like all other human beings, jealously guard their traditional positions and perquisites, willingly surrendering vested interests only in exchange for something good or better.'²⁰ 'In bureaucracies,' he says, 'this leads to organisational inflexibility.'²¹

According to Foster, the 'tradition' of an institution invariably tends to render it inflexible and, I would argue that in that sense, no matter how 'good' the institution is, because it is inflexible it is inevitable that it will do 'evil'.

Recently, a friend of mine contacted a welfare organisation to discuss the problem of a person she was working with. She wanted to know some of the options she could explore in helping the person she was concerned with through a crisis. However, the social worker she consulted was committed to a tradition which refused to consider any other option in a case such as this apart from intervention. My friend was given no other option than to report the person to the police.

When my friend protested, saying that perhaps other options like counselling might be more appropriate, the case was literally taken out of her hands and the social worker reported the case to the police herself. In the process, my friend was dismissed, the person she was working with was distressed and the friendship that they had been developing, by working through the crisis together, was destroyed.

In my experience, institutions almost invariably act as if they have a monopoly on virtue and anyone involved with them would approve of their work. They act as if the only way that anyone could be involved meaningfully in the community is in the light of 'their traditions'. They cannot relate to people outside the purview of their experience. They can only treat people in view of their expertise.

The inflexibility of such a 'tradition' means the institution will inevitably hurt the people in the community it purports to help.

□ *Fourth*, the culture of an institution disempowers

Scott Peck cites the significance of the 'culture' of an institution in determining its dominant and dominating character in the community.

Peck says that bureaucracies 'tend to behave in the same way as. . . individuals, except at a level that is more. . . immature than one might expect'.²² One reason for this immaturity is what he refers to as 'the fragmentation of a conscience' in a group. 'Whenever the roles of individuals within a group become specialised it becomes. . . possible. . . for the individual to pass the moral buck to some other part of the group. In this way, not only does the individual forsake his conscience, but the conscience of the group becomes so fragmented [in a bureaucracy]. . . as to be nonexistent'.²³ According to Peck, the 'culture' of an institution invariably tends to render it non-reflective and, I would argue, because it is non-reflective, the institution will continue to do any 'evil' it does unchecked, regardless of how many 'good' people might be associated with the particular group.

A few months ago, a friend of mine wanted to confront a particular group, of which he was a part, about the whole way it was operating in the community. The group was meant to be providing support for disadvantaged people but, he said, the whole way it went about providing that help was so patronising that it only served to marginalise disadvantaged people more.

However, my friend found it difficult to find people in the group who cared to discuss the issue. It was not, he said, as if they were uncaring. They had great

concern for the part they played in the group. But they all believed that the part the whole group played in the community was not their concern. Everyone said it should be the concern of someone or other. But no-one, he said, would accept the responsibility of that concern themselves.

So the issue, about the whole way the group was operating in the community, was dismissed due to lack of interest. And the people in the group got back to business as usual. The group has continued to do its charitable service and, in so doing, has continued to do a terrible disservice, marginalising disadvantaged people, unchecked, till this very day.

In my experience, few people ever seriously reflect on the activities of the groups they are associated with. The institutions try to get their own way and the community tends to let them get away with it. That's just the way things are. It's the 'culture' which institutions tend to encourage and to which the community tends to acquiesce, even though it means institutions can continue to do the people in the community it purports to serve a terrible disservice.

A repressive spirit, augmented by an oppressive structure, aided by an implacable tradition and abetted by an apathetic culture are all major factors which combine to produce an invariable tendency for institutions, even those intended for 'good', to become 'evil'.

✧ THE ACTUAL VULNERABILITY OF INSTITUTIONS:

'Every institution is dependent upon people for its power'

Because of the tendency for institutions to become the dominant and dominating realities in our lives, there is a tendency for us to believe that they are not only invariable, but also invulnerable.

Many of us tend to believe that the institutions in our communities represent 'relatively fixed quantum, discrete unit quantities of energy which may be undesirable, but are nevertheless independent and durable, if not totally indestructible, self-organising, self-regulating, self-reinforcing and self-propagating forces'.²⁴

Now if that were true, the institutions in our communities could only be controlled by either the voluntary restraint of the management of these institutions or by involuntary constraint of the management of these institutions imposed by other institutions.

Obviously, it is in the interest of the institutions in our communities to persuade us that they represent the powers that be. It is in their vested interest to convince us that the only power people can get to moderate the power of the institutions is by joining the management of one institution or another for, in so doing, people who may join one institution or another, even with a reformist agenda, will inevitably amplify the power of the institutions over the community.

But the institutions in our community are better understood as a 'relatively flexible gestalt', not a 'relatively fixed quantum' — 'a corporate pattern of

organisation', rather than 'a separate unit of energy'. Contrary to what many of us have been led to believe, institutions are actually quite 'vulnerable', not totally 'invulnerable' — because each and every institution is essentially dependent upon, rather than ultimately independent of, the people for its power.²⁵

As Gene Sharp explains, each and every institution in the community, without exception, depends on the support of the people for its power. The control that any institution exercises over a community depends on the degree to which the people accept its authority, assist with its activities, share their knowledge and skills and resources with its agencies and subordinate themselves to its sanctions.²⁶

If people obey the dictates of the institutions, either because of a sense of obligation, or an ongoing habit due to identification with the group, or fear of acting independently of the group, then institutions can exercise amazing control over communities.²⁷

But if people do not obey the dictates of institutions, then the institutions cannot exercise any control over the communities in which they are located.²⁸

Sharp says: 'Obedience, though usual, is not inevitable. It always varies in degree with the individual concerned and with the social and political situation. Obedience is never universally practiced by the whole population. Many people disobey. Some people do so frequently. Under some certain conditions, subjects may be willing to put up with disruption of their lives rather than continue to obey policies they can no longer tolerate.'²⁹ 'Changes which result in the withdrawal of

obedience can create extreme difficulties for the system.'³⁰

In stating his case, Sharp refers to the famous lectures of John Austin, in which he said: 'If the bulk of the community were fully determined to destroy it (i.e. the system) and to . . . endure the evils through which they must pass (to serve) their object, the might of the government itself. . . could scarcely suffice to preserve it or even retard its subversion.'³¹

Now, if that were true, the institutions could be controlled by the very people they try to control, including some of the most vulnerable groups of people in our community.

Obviously, it is not in the interest of the institutions to let people know about the power they have, not only to tame them, but also to transform them. Nevertheless the news is out, the rumours are circulating and ordinary men and women are here, there and everywhere, beginning to try to do something about subverting the institutions that hitherto have been the dominant and dominating realities in our lives.

□ Individuals are discovering that they have the power to contribute to the spirit of an institution

Charles Elliott, who stresses the significance of the spirit of an institution in determining its character, suggests that people have a crucial role to play in contributing to the spirit of an institution.

Elliott says the spirit or the psychic power of an institution is a product, not only of the institution, but

also of the individuals who comprise the institution. It is, he says, 'made up of individuals acting upon each other influencing and being influenced by the institution'.³²

Therefore, Elliott says, individuals can affect the consciousness of institutions through the choices they make. 'All individuals and [institutions] find themselves confronted with the process of discovering who they are as they exercise life choices. As they make choices, they both discover who they are and they demonstrate who they are.'³³

I can remember the day Kay Thompson came to work in the office of 'Help Incorporated', a welfare organisation I was working with at the time. Kay was a single individual, just one among many staff, but she affected the consciousness of the whole office, if not the whole organisation, by the way she chose to live her life at the office.

Kay was competent in her job, but she was not preoccupied with her work at the expense of relationships. She made the department seem like an apartment, a place of hospitality, where people felt at home with one another, as well as with their work.

Kay was very caring towards everyone she encountered, from the executive director through to the casual assistant — and anyone who would happen to drop by for a visit. She was compassionate without being pretentious, lacing her kindness with lashes of laughter. She often wept with those that wept, but as often as not left them with a smile. She made life at the office fun for everyone.

I would dearly like to introduce Kay to anyone who has doubts about the power an individual has to contribute to the 'spirit' of community in an institution.

□ Individuals are discovering that they have the power to challenge the structure of an institution

Robert Chambers, who stresses the significance of the structure of an institution in determining its character, suggests that people have a crucial role to play in challenging the structure of an institution.

Chambers says the structure of an institution is 'neither universal nor inevitable'.³⁴ Certainly, it is easier to challenge 'small non-government agencies than to challenge large government organisations'. But, Chambers says, 'it comes back to personal choice. . . there is always something that can be done'.³⁵

'Some may feel there is nothing they can do. But in every country there are courageous people — political and religious leaders, academics, scientists, civil servants and others — who have stuck by their principles and whose lives are a strong example of what can be done.'³⁶

Chris Brown is a shining example to me of what can be done in circumstances in which most of us would have considered nothing could have been done at all. Chris does not come across as very heroic. He is a rather shy, self-effacing character. He's not what anyone would think of as an activist. In fact, in many ways he'd be what many of us would think of as a typical academic. But Chris actually has the quiet courage of a fifth column reformer.

Ever since I can remember, when he has not been working at the University of Queensland, Chris has devoted himself to the reform of 'Queensland Care', a large non-government organisation we have been associated with. For twelve years, Chris constantly raised the issue of quality care at the board on which he served.

But, as often as not, his comments were met with complete contempt. For twelve years, Chris withstood the withering gaze of the chairman, who would brook no dissent from any members of the board, as Chris stood time and time again to raise the issue of the need for a more open, more responsive and more compassionate approach to the people the organisation purported to serve through its various institutions.

But it was all to no avail. The organisation became, if anything, even more bureaucratic. And, in due course, the services of Chris Brown as a consultant were terminated. At that juncture, I think Chris was entitled to think he had done everything he could and that there was nothing more he could do.

But Chris told me he would not give up without giving it another go. He believed there was still something he could do — maybe not at the level of the direction of the institutions, but at the level of the delivery of the services. So Chris got involved in actually modelling the kind of quality care he had been advocating in one of the residential units associated with the organisation.

Much to my surprise, the board which had categorically rejected what he had said, enthusiastically embraced what he did and Chris was invited by the board to

translate his experiment into policy for the organisation. So Chris is in the process of setting up an alternative program within the organisation, which will establish the more open, more responsive and more compassionate structure which he envisaged.

Chris Brown gives me the courage to imagine that an individual has the power to challenge the status quo and advocate more of a community structure in an institution.

□ Individuals are discovering that they have the power to change the tradition of an institution

George Foster, who stresses the significance of the traditions of an institution in determining its character, suggests that people have a crucial role to play in changing the traditions of an institution.

Foster says: 'When a [group] is faced with a suggestion of change, there exists a balance of forces. On one side of the scales are those forces which are against change — conservatism and the like; and on the other side are the forces for change — dissatisfaction with existing conditions. . . and so on. Successful community development consists largely of choosing those projects where the balance is almost even and then trying to lighten the forces against change or to increase the factors making for change'.³⁷

Trevor Boucher is a man who has committed himself to changing a very large government organisation. From the time he became the Australian Tax Commissioner five or six years ago, he made it his mission to

turn the ethos of the tax office inside out and upside down.

He wanted to turn the tradition of service in the office inside out so it would develop a reputation for service outside the office and the general public would perceive the tax office as a helper rather than an exploiter. He also wanted to turn the tradition of collection from the little people rather than the big corporations upside down so that the ordinary taxpayer could begin to feel that they were being treated fairly by a tax office which was ensuring everybody paid their fair share.

Boucher was faced with the seemingly impossible task of trying to turn around an office of over 18 000 employees, many of whom had worked in the department for twenty to thirty years with a long tradition of well established work practices in place.

But Boucher had a number of things going for him. The average employee of the office was, as a member of the public, committed to more client service and a more equitable system. Moreover, most of the staff were excited about the possibility of developing an image of themselves as respectable public servants who could own their work, rather than disreputable social pariahs who had to keep their work secret.

Boucher began by going to work on the counter in the Sydney tax office for two weeks. He wanted to interface with the public in order to understand the public perceptions of his office and his office's problems in serving the public. He then employed management consultants to enable people within his office to develop their consciousness of client service and resolve the

problems which they encountered in delivering it adequately across the counter.

Boucher then started to audit the top hundred companies in Australia. He demanded that they pay their fair share of tax. Some, like Ariadne, got a bill for \$150 million. And slowly the Australian public started to believe the tax office was becoming fair dinkum about an equitable system of tax for all.

The tax office developed the tax pack to enable ordinary people to do their own tax assessment for themselves. This was an expression of trust by the tax office in the ordinary taxpayer to do the right thing if they were given the information they required to fill out their own tax forms themselves.

The tax office has consequently started to develop a reputation for being more friendly. And the staff at the tax office are reportedly more ready to tell people at a party who they work for and more readily greeted with a smile rather than a scowl when they do so.

Trevor Boucher gives me a reason to believe an individual has the power to change the status quo and actualise more of a community tradition in an institution.

□ Individuals are discovering that they have the power to call the culture of an institution to account

Scott Peck, who stresses the significance of the culture of an institution in determining its character, suggests people have a crucial role in conscientising the culture in which the institution exists.

Peck says that institutions may well be evil in the sense that they 'exercise political power that is the imposition of one's will upon others; either overt or covert coercion. . .', but if an institution seeks to impose its will upon others and goes gunning for someone 'the triggers are pulled by individuals'.³⁸

Peck says that institutionalised evil can be effectively dealt with by individual goodness. He says: 'Orders are given, [taken] and executed by individuals. In the last analysis, every single act is ultimately the result of individual choice.'³⁹

Peck says: 'There are dozens of ways to deal with evil. . . All of them are facets of the truth that the only ultimate way to conquer evil is to let it be smothered within a willing, living human being. When it is absorbed there like. . . a spear into one's heart, it loses its power and goes no further.'⁴⁰

Barry Hart is a good example of someone who was determined to make sure that the evil he was subjected to would go no further, no matter how difficult it was for him as an individual to confront the institution that constituted his reign of terror. Barry was one of the psychiatric patients in the 'house of horrors' at Chelmsford Private Hospital.

Barry, like all the other patients at the hospital, suffered terribly at the hands of the staff. He realised, he says, 'that there was no way the staff would do in their mates', so he resolved to 'stand up to them' himself.

Barry didn't have a chance to do much while in hospital, but when he got out of the hospital he organ-

ised a campaign to rally the conscience of the community to confront not only the institution, but also the whole infrastructure which supported it.

To start with, Barry didn't have much success. It was all too easy for the staff to attribute criticism to the paranoia of a patient. But Barry felt the issue was too important for him to fail. So he carried on year after year, trying to convince the authorities the seriousness of the situation was more than a mere figment of his imagination.

In the end, Barry did succeed. Eventually, he was able to convince the authorities that his criticism was not based on fantasy, but fact — and it was the staff, not the patients, who were crazy. A Royal Commission last year finally vindicated Barry Hart and the patients' association and condemned Dr Harry Bailey and his staff associates.

Barry Hart gives us all an example of how an individual, even a pretty vulnerable one, can have the power to rally the conscience of a community so effectively as to call an institution, even an apparently invulnerable one, to account.