

Audio-Visual Aids to Teaching

Videotape Reviews

Tread Softly (UK, 1985, 51 mins)

ESCATA, the enterprising and innovative organisation which specialises in training material for health and social services professionals, does not claim mainly to produce educational films but rather, what it terms 'video assisted workshops'. This is an important distinction and should be borne in mind when viewing the 'Tread Softly' video which looks at the transition from large psychiatric hospitals to local community services and is intended for practitioners, planners, managers and members from both voluntary and statutory mental health services.

With some of their more recent productions ESCATA has put together powerful visual material, grabbing our emotions as well as our intellect, and we recognise its value at first viewing. You might be disappointed if you looked at 'Tread Softly' without realising that the 51 minutes of video form only a fragment of the one day workshop proposed in the accompanying notes.

As with all ESCATA workshop tapes, users are warned against showing the video out of context; in this course it is a particularly timely warning. The set of slides transferred to video, which show something of the horrors of the New York experience at a similar transition stage from large institution to 'community' provision, and the sometimes moving interviews with Eric Johnson and Joan Milburn, who are in English psychiatric patient hospitals, do not immediately have an obvious connection. Without the notes, some viewers would be at a loss to know what to do with the segments.

This is no shortcoming of the material and it is what the producers intend. The *Trainer's Notes*, integral to the process, are quite precise about how it should be used. They provide suggestions for the timing of different elements of the training, instructions about when the video sections should be used, plans for how the workshop accommodation and equipment might be utilised and detailed schemes for developing the discussion and activities of the participants. Trainers, who like to have a very clear pattern of how their day is to proceed, will welcome the carefully planned notes, which probably give just a manageable amount of help to many people: the written information runs to 18 pages. For those who prefer a less structured training situation where the group leader responds more pragmatically to the needs and interests of the trainees, the notes may tend to be overprescriptive. Although it is made clear that we are being given 'suggestions', the notes have a ring of authority and some users would find indications of a more open-ended style of teaching a useful addition.

ESCATA is an important pioneering organisation in developing training materials. 'Tread Softly' is good but not, in my opinion, one of their best productions. Used with

imagination, however, and careful preparation, it could be a useful tool for all of us concerned with training the key personnel who will make the move from large institutions to community as painless and effective as possible.

Production: East Sussex Consultancy & Training Agency. *Distribution:* ESCATA, 6 Pavilion Parade, Brighton BN2 1RA. Available for sale on all formats.

ELIZABETH GARRETT
*Director, Mental Health
Film Council*

Mental Health Act 1983 (UK, 1983, 28 mins)

Few people will have read the Mental Health Act 1983 from cover to cover and so the makers of this programme are to be congratulated on producing a timely, well-produced visual synopsis. The programme comes with an excellent transcript and contents but, in fact, the programme stands alone and can be watched without reference to these. It is divided into four parts; firstly the philosophy and background, the civil committals, criminal committals, and the final part covers the Mental Health Act Commission and rights for detained patients.

The programme was made entirely in a studio, which makes for rather dull viewing, though uses the well-tryed technique of two presenters, which helps to keep interest and pace. It includes interviews with some notable experts and it is interesting to hear their views; it also makes good use of graphics.

The programme is of value to anybody who has to work with the Mental Health Act 1983, so that would include social workers and psychiatrists, for example. I think it is too specialised for undergraduates. In summary, a professional and well-made programme of interest to anybody working with the Mental Health Act 1983. However, I did find it rather relentless and heavy-going to watch.

Production: East Sussex Social Services. *Distribution:* ESCATA (address as above). Available for sale on all formats.

ANDREW MACAULAY
St George's Hospital, London

Psychiatric Formulation and Mental State (UK, 1982, 12 mins)

When viewing the videotape, the first question one has to ask is why it should be video rather than written or audio material. In this particular instance, that question is difficult to answer. The tape simply shows two psychiatrists reading a prepared script either on camera or voice-over to the legends making up the two mnemonics they propose. The result is a rather dull recitation of material which would not be likely to 'have them rolling in the aisles'.