

BOOKS / BOEKE

Women Come of Age: Perspectives on the Lives of Older Women. Ed. by Miriam Bernard and Kathy Meade. Pp. xv + 230. R70. London: Edward Arnold. 1993. ISBN 0-340-55261-1.

A democratic charter for the elderly of South Africa could be formulated by the new South African authorities from recommendations put forward in this 1993 publication. The 1990-92 British Research project into discrimination and diminishing of elderly women produced the finding that germinated these recommendations, which are equally valid in South Africa.

Our medical school academies are particularly urged to read this book, especially pages 186 - 190, while they are radically revising undergraduate curriculae. It will also help them when they prepare continuing education programmes to reach practising health professionals, such as doctors, social workers and nurses.

The need for all medical facilities to give promotive and preventive health education and care to the elderly is strongly stressed. Under this heading, the rationing in the UK of joint replacement operations is criticised, as this prevents the restoration of mobility and independence to cer-

tain elderly. In South Africa, the majority of elderly do not know such procedures exist.

Other academics, professionals and community leaders should read this book, for they can do much to empower the elderly as well as improve their quality of life. Politicians, administrators of government departments at national, regional and local levels, welfare organisations and entrepreneurs could assist the elderly more appropriately in their daily living than just to cater for their health.

Commerce and industry should become involved. The pension and investment industry, trade unions and employers could provide women greater economic empowerment to prevent their vulnerability to poverty in later life. Engineering skills are needed to make it easy for the disabled to board public transport, including the ubiquitous combi taxis.

The elderly and all other concerned people should read this book. The chapter on intimacy and sexuality among older women is handled extremely well and with delicacy.

When the needs of older women are fully recognised, understood and met, then will 'women come of age'.

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