

INSANE HOSPITAL CONDITIONS ASSAILED.

To the Editor:

Something is radically wrong at the Mount Pleasant State hospital. A few days ago I was attending a conference at Iowa Wesleyan college and a number of us decided to visit the state hospital. In the group beside myself was Dr. Kirby Page, well known author of LaHabra, Cal., and Dr. Carroll Hildebrand, professor of philosophy at DePaw university.

It seems that about 25 Mennonite conscientious objectors and their wives have replaced many of the former workers in this institution. These Mennonite young people are clean, fine looking, outstanding Americans. We talked with 10 of them and obtained the following information.

TRIAL AND ERROR.

1. When they began work some months ago they were merely handed the keys to various wards and told to go to work. No instructions of any kind was given them. When we asked how they knew what to do they said they didn't know what to do but had to use the trial and error method. They said there was not one single psychiatrist in connection with the whole institution.

2. The doctors do some strange things. One of the patients asked one of the doctors each day if she could go home. He always answered "Of course, you can go home." One morning she seized him by the sleeve and shook his arm and reminded him of his promise which was never fulfilled. He ordered her locked up in solitary confinement for a number of days. It seems that these doctors have had a few courses in abnormal psychology but not other special training for their task.

LOW PAY

3. We were also told that the regular help at the institution was paid such low wages that a very undesirable and incompetent group of people was doing the work.

4. Men and women among their help lived together in one big room without any attempt at segregation and frequently held drunken revels that lasted far into the night. 5. One of the Mennonite helpers said that he removed one of the help only recently who was so drunk that he had passed out completely.

VISITORS ASTOUNDED.

6. Every one of the distinguished visitors who was with me was astounded at the conditions which existed at this beautiful institution. The buildings are adequate and the grounds are beautiful but the sixteen hundred people should have different care than they are getting.

Psychologists tell us that about 20 to 25 percent of all people who go insane have a good chance at complete recovery if they have expert care. This would mean that from three to four hundred people at Mount Pleasant might hope for great improvement

and even complete recovery under right conditions. This would be a great saving to the state financially as well as a boon to humanity.

TIME TO INVESTIGATE.

Cheap and incompetent help are a most wasteful extravagance on the part of our great state. It seems to some of us that the time has come for the board of control to investigate conditions in all of its institutions.

I had hoped to avoid writing this letter but, my conscience would not let me rest until it was done. --L.L.Dunnington, D.D., minister, First Methodist church, Iowa City, Ia.