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SR

April 12, 1945

Pete Goertzen
C.P.S. Unit #127
Utah Training School
American Fork, Utah

Dear Pete:

I was certainly very happy to hear from you again, particularly were we happy to notice that you are on your toes concerning the problem that you wrote about in your recent letter. The matter of adequate feeding at your unit has been quite a concern to me personally as well as to you men. However, up to this time it has been somewhat difficult for me to see just what might be done to correct such matters as need attention without causing rather serious disruption with the school itself.

In your letter you refer to the request for information which comes from the Mental Hygiene Committee. You are entirely right when you say that we ought to know to whom we are sending information and to what purpose it will be used before we submit such confidential information to them. Again, I wish to compliment you for being on the alert and for making very keen observations for we need to be informed fully before we become involved in any matter which may have rather unpredictable consequences.

I talked to Robert Kreider this morning about the Mental Hygiene group and he points out that they have a fact finding committee whose purpose it is to get impersonal, confidential, and accurate information concerning all hospital units and institutions of that nature. That information apparently is to be used in a general way but should never involve any individual institution in a specific way. However, we are not entirely clear as to who is doing the investigating even within the Mental Hygiene group, so, we would again counsel to go a bit slowly in making a specific commitment. Certainly all the information that is submitted ought to be so submitted through the unit leader with full knowledge of the proceedings by Mr. Allen of the Training School. Perhaps the wisest thing would be for you men, through your leader, to discuss the whole matter with Mr. Allen of the Training School and get his reaction to the whole problem. First of all, I think it would be very wise to make a study and inform yourselves of the duties, activities, and purposes of the entire Mental Hygiene program and committees operating thereunder. It seems that that is basic to any dealing with the group. Kreider informs me that the purpose for which this committee operates are, of course, entirely legitimate but nevertheless he, too, feels that we have a right to know who is at the planning end of the committee's activities. So, again, we would urge that before any information be given to them that you acquaint yourself fully about their program and their aims.

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I also discussed this entire matter with Brother Oris Miller who also feels that you were on your toes and were very observant, and he particularly was happy that you presented this matter to us before taking any action on it. He also felt further that it would be well that Arlo Sonnenberg, your Unit Leader, be the one who discussed the matter with Mr. Allen in a way which would be entirely acceptable to the unit and to Mr. Allen himself. Whether or not information is given to those who ask for it I think should be determined by the reaction of Mr. Allen to it. We certainly are concerned about having conditions improved if they are not what they should be, particularly in a matter so important as nourishment of so many inmates who are not there of their own personal choice.

We would further like to request that you might send a copy of the letter which you received from the Mental Hygiene group asking for such information to Robert Kreider. He is concerned in checking further with that group to determine what methods and techniques they may seek to employ in obtaining improvement through the activities of that organization. We definitely are not interested in sponsoring and encouraging policies which may lead to another Cleveland incident. We are interested in good positive suggestions and laying concerns before people where they will do the most good but we do not feel that we ought to use methods and tactics which result in rather violent or undesirable consequences. We feel that we want to achieve the most possible good with a minimum of unwholesome after effects. After all, in the wake of even evil sometimes some good results, ^{but} for we certainly should not condone ~~such~~ ^{even} evil, to obtain a minimum amount of good; rather, we want to be consistent in using good methods for good results.

I think, Pete, that you will gather from this the concerns that we here have. I am sure that you share our concerns with us and again I would wish to compliment you for doing some real thinking in this matter. Will you discuss this further with Arlo and the rest of the men who may be interested in it and get their reactions. We will be happy to hear from you further at any time.

Very sincerely yours,

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Erwin C. Goering
Regional Director

ECG:bm

cc/ Arlo Sonnenberg, #127
David Suderman