

Cleveland 5, Ohio
CPS Unit No. 69
February 22, 1946

Mr. Harmon Wilkinson
Mental Hygiene Program of Civilian Public Service
Box 7574
Zone 1
Philadelphia 4, Pennsylvania

Dear Sirs:

I am writing you this letter in response to your request of February 14th in which you ask about my experiences here in the mental hospital.

I have decided to discuss briefly my experiences under six headings, namely, Food, Bedding, Visitors Comments, Patients Statements, Recent Improvements, and Needed Improvements.

FOOD:

During the past fall months I have seen boiled cabbage fed to the patients three out of four consecutive meals. On these occasions the food consisted of a plate of boiled cabbage which was boiled in water till it was soft. It was served without any seasoning or flavor. The rest of the food was creamed potatoes, one and some times two slices of bread and a cup of watered coffee. No sugar, I understand, was being served to the patients of the Male Infirmary for over a year until a CPS man began working in the kitchen of the Infirmary. When he approached the store man about sugar he was told that there was no sugar for the Infirmary and so the CPS man took the matter to the supervisor and from that time on the Infirmary has been getting sugar. I understand that a number of the other wards only began receiving sugar very recently.

Our superintendent, Dr. Crawfis, asked one of our CPS men to go to the kitchen as a cook. His presence in the kitchen and his interest in giving the patients good food was too much for the dietician and within two weeks she left by request.

I am inclosing a 15 day menu prepared by one of the privileged worker patients of this institution who eats in the patient workers cafeteria. He feels that the quantity and quality of food served is not adequate.

BEDDING:

On January 20th I made a survey to determine the bedding needs for the Male Infirmary. Out of 340 beds there were 19 beds without any sheets. There were 279 short of having two sheets on each bed. Ninety-eight pillows had no pillow slips.

VISITORS COMMENTS:

One visitor said he had been coming to the Male Infirmary on visiting days for some 15 years. He said that he noticed the patients

were coming to the visiting room smiling and looked happy and better dressed and with less bruises since the CPS men came into the Infirmary. He said that he had been watching the faces of the various patients as they came into the visiting room. He said he was sure there was a change within the building for the better.

PATIENTS STATEMENTS:

One patient who recently came before staff and who was granted a trial visit told us of how state attendants would often take a door knob and put it in a sock as a weapon and would hit patients over the head and knock them out and then blame the swelling to the patients falling against a bench or something similar. He said the hospital was "Hell" before the CPS Unit came in. He said he was glad he was leaving the hospital before the CPS Unit was withdrawn. He said that he didn't want to be in the hospital when the C.O. boys left. He said this with so much emotion he had tears in his eyes.

Another man, who was a good worker patient in the Infirmary, and who apparently was put into the hospital by his own daughter because he was old and had some property was given the chance to become a privileged patient. He refused the chance to become a privileged patient because he said he wanted to stay at the Male Infirmary as long as the C.O. boys stayed there.

Other patients, when they are sent to the hospital ward for a few days beg the doctor to return them to the Male Infirmary as soon as possible. They are always tickled to get back.

When the CPS Unit came into the Male Infirmary it was common to see men put their hands over their heads as if they anticipated that the attendant would give them a blow over the head when ever an attendant came near. Since the CPS Unit is in the building the patients no longer fear the attendants. We make every effort to be a friend to the patients and to treat them as gentlemen. Cruel treatment of patients only aggravates the inferior feeling, which are already present in the patient and thus often delays the recovery of the patient.

We are constantly impressed with the response on the part of the patient to being treated as a human being. The patients are keenly aware when the attendant is working for their interests. Truly, love is a greater force than evil in handling mental patients.

A FEW NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS:

1. There should be a break down of class barriers between doctors and nurses on the one hand and the attendants on the other. A step toward breaking down this barrier would be for all hospital employees to eat in the same cafeteria rather than each having their own.

2. The attendants working in the back wards should be paid more than those working in the cleaner wards otherwise it is almost impossible to get good attendants to work and stay for any length of time in the back wards and as a result the job is usually poorly done. As it now stands all attendants of the same class receive the same pay regardless whether they work on clean or untidy wards.

3. The shower facilities are inadequate. It is not uncommon to have a ward of 140 patients and only one shower and one bath tub available by which patients may bathe on bath days.

4. The T.B. ward is in a very poor place. It is impossible for

the sun to shine in at any window at any time during the day. There are only north windows except those which are hid under a stone porch

5. The twelve hour day in the hospital should be cut down to an eight hour day as soon as possible. Twelve hours is just too long a day. Such long days and so little pay does not attract the best type of labor. The hospital has to depend on paroled prisoners, drunkards, and drifters to too great an extent, as a supply from which to draw their attendants. This is evidenced by a personnel turnover at this hospital of over 100% every ten months.

6. The buildings all have too many patients in them. More buildings should be erected soon.

A FEW RECENT IMPROVEMENTS:

Recently one of our C.P.S. men was placed in the patients kitchen by order of Dr. Crawfis, over the protests of the dietician. This man called Dr. Crawfis's attention to conditions in the kitchen which weren't what they should be. The result was that the dietician left.

There is a large paint crew repainting the interiors of a number of the buildings. In fact the Infirmary is being entirely repainted which is making it a much more pleasant place in which to live.

Dr. Crawfis is constantly seeking information from CPS men which will help him improve conditions within the hospital. I think he has considerable confidence in what CPS men tell him. He seems to be very much interested in the Mental Hygiene Program.

The recreational program for the patients has been greatly increased or enlarged since Dr. Crawfis came to this institution. I think this is a fine thing. I'd even like to see a large recreation hall built which could be used both by the patients and attendants. It should have a basket ball floor, ping pong tables, boeling alleys, etc. Such a recreation center is badly needed here for both patients and attendants.

I trust that this information may be of some value to you.

Sincerely yours, *Vernon S. Roake*

Vernon S. Roake
Supervisor of Male Infirmary
for past three months.