

44

VISIT TO WESTERN STATE HOSPITAL, Staunton, Virginia  
March 7-9, 1943

I feel that my three day stay at Staunton has been very much worth while. Personally I feel that my coming was Providentially timed. The boys admit that they had become considerably discouraged the past few weeks. They felt that their lot must be worse than that of any other hospital unit. This I believe was due to numerous glowing reports from some of the boys in other units.

On Wednesday evening March 3rd the boys met as a group and aired their grievances. The following day (Thursday) Landis Martin approached Dr. J. S. DeJarnette with a number of suggestions. The doctor was much more susceptible than the boys had expected and asked Landis to present in writing what they wanted. This request resulted in the enclosed three page paper.

On Monday I had a pleasant forty minutes with Dr. DeJarnette. He spoke highly of the boys and expressed his entire satisfaction with their work. He said that they are excellent workers that not one of them is lazy--and that not a single one has used liquor since he is at Staunton. This fact seemed to impress him very much. In fact he wants me to tell the Mennonites that in his handling of over 6,000 alcoholic cases in Western State Hospital there has not been, as far as he knows, a single Mennonite. To him this is an outstanding record. The doctor assured me that the boys cooperate in every way and that their relations to the staff and to other employees is above board. He knows of no unfavorable reaction from anyone in the community.

Also on Monday I had a lengthy conference with Miss Troxall, the Supt. of nurses and work supervisor. She was very frank and open and I feel that this contact was very fruitful. Miss Troxall says that they did not know what was expected from the institution along several lines. She mentioned especially the various reports. To remedy this situation she has given Landis Martin full time to bring all reports up to date. He is free to use 2,3, or even 4 weeks to do this work. After all reports are up to date he will be given 2 days per week off for this task.

I discussed with her the report that the boys had presented to Dr. DeJarnette. I explained to her as best I could the relation of the M. C. C. to the hospital. I told her

that we are not trying to reform their institution and that wherein our boys get the same treatment in working hours, food, and living conditions as other employees we must be and are satisfied. I did, however, tell her that we are interested in the boy's welfare and that we want them to do good work. She agreed with me that they (boys) must be kept satisfied in order to give their best service. For that reason we discussed a number of the points in question.

On the question of keeping the bath rooms and hall clean in the new living quarters she agreed to have Martin do this work as long as he is working on his reports. After that she promised to give a boy one hour each morning to do this cleaning. This I assured her will be satisfactory.

On Monday evening I met with the group and discussed with them their problems. They seemed to think that Selective Service should do something about their situation. I tried to impress on them the part that if we want any help from Selective Service we must first have clean hands--that is line up as far as humanly possible on the things that are our responsibility. This brought out such as week-end leaves and living in town.

On Tuesday Col. McLean and Major Biers of Selective Service called at Staunton. They looked over the new living quarters and agreed to return later for a closer inspection of the institution. As soon as Selective Service gives their decision on the Sanitarium situation we will be able to go ahead on the housing situation as far as the married men are concerned. If they approve part of the unit being used in the Sanitarium we will be able to place the married men there as they have both living accommodations and are willing to employ the wives. If, however, they decide that the present set up of using our men at both places we will have to have our married men move in with the rest of the boys. They are informed on what is expected.

The other complaints or "concerns" of the boys we also considered. Miss Troxell assured me that if the institution could be given fifteen more men they could and would put them on a twelve hr. day with a day off each week.

As to the meals she said that the boys need a warm meal in the evening. This is being worked out now.

She assured me that they are as interested in sanitary conditions at the institution

as the boys are. The garbage wagon that has been sitting opposite the cedar press for twenty-five years is to be moved. The other matter of unsanitary handling of meat, etc. she said will be investigated. I might add that I visited both the kitchen and bakery and found them quite satisfactory.

Personally I feel that the situation at Staunton is beginning to work out satisfactorily. If our appeal for moderation in the matter of week end leaves and time spent away from the hospital is not heeded we may have to be more specific in defining our position in the matter.

Respectfully submitted,

J. N. Byler/w