

Dear Friends:

Some of you have already received materials telling about our work and inviting your participation in a program of betterment in public institutions. But, whether you have had previous information or not, I feel certain that you will find the following record of experience and activity of real interest.

3 Years of Church Experience....

It's been three years now since the first Civilian Public Service men were assigned to work in mental hospitals and in training schools for mental deficient. In these three years the number has grown until now there are over 2000 men and over 100 women doing this special service under the Mennonite, Brethren, Friends (Quaker), Methodist, Evangelical and Reformed, Catholic, Baptist, and Christian (Disciples) Churches. The individuals have been about equally divided between rural and urban backgrounds. They have been mostly of high school or college age with many ministers and educators, doctors and engineers, farmers, artists, and business men included.

Experiences have been interesting and shocking, challenging, frustrating and demanding. We seem to have come to a new world--a world where people, sick people, 25 to 40% curable people and the rest for the most part able to adjust to institutions and get a great deal of joy out of life, were consigned to custodial care. Many weren't getting even custodial care. Rarely one of the 60 institutions would have a modern and up-to-date treatment program. But many patients weren't getting even custodial care and were being treated worse than a good farmer would care for his livestock. A few have been starved or have eaten like pigs. Frequently food is consistently inadequate. Some have suffered physical abuse. Some have gone naked for months --winter and summer-- or have been subjected to freezing temperatures with little apparel. Most patients receive only emergency medical attention and some receive none at all. Nurses have been scarce and attendants for the most part are untrained; they have many wrong ideas and attitudes. Patients have suffered needlessly. This, some have said, is the help- less patient's contribution to the war effort.

But we who have looked behind the scenes know that IT IS NOT A PROBLEM OF THE WAR PERIOD ALONE. Here's why we can say that--and here's what we're doing about it:

I. There has never been a regular periodical for attendants in mental hospitals or training schools. There has never been a textbook written for attendants--and never before this year has there been a handbook for attendants. Yet attendants, more than any others, live with the patients and determine their chances for recovery.

a. CPS men, working on their off hours, after from 8 to 12 hours of regular duties, have originated and written materials for 15 monthly issues of The Attendant, an 8-page magazine published by MHP (The Mental Hygiene Program of CPS). This month this magazine had 748 subscribers for 1672 copies; 2668 copies were being furnished free to CPS men serving in 60 institutions. It is sent to 717 separate private and public institutions--county, state and veteran's--hospitals and training schools. Total distribution on date of publishing was 5663 copies. Many orders for back issues are being filled.

b. CPS men have written an orientation and reference Handbook for Psychiatric Aides and it is being used in training courses and for distribution to both nurses and attendants. CPS men have prepared copy for

a Handbook of Restraint (the first attempt ever made to give attendants generally help on their most difficult problem--that of handling without unnecessary force or violence to personality the occasionally difficult patient.

c. Other handbooks and a textbook are being prepared.

II. Hundreds of institutions have operated since their origin with a skeleton staff. Hundreds of institutions have never been equipped to deal with mental illness in the modern, curative ways--many have been so over-crowded that individual attention is impossible; many have never had the most essential of therapies--occupational therapy departments, with trained and sympathetic supervisors or attendants. Funds have never been made available to give the proper equipment and personnel to a high percentage of public institutions. Thus, many superintendents have been helpless to raise standards.

a. MHP has started a manpower survey; it has polled its membership to learn of those interested in continuing in post-war.

b. The experience has brought enlightenment and challenge to the many Churches of the nation and these are rallying to permanent post-war activities in state institutions or in colleges. Friends, Brethren and Mennonites are planning permanent work-camps or service projects in the field and they are discussing opening their own psychiatric wards for mental patients. The E.&R. Church is placing mental institution service on its list of life work projects for Christian Service.

c. MHP has conducted a voluntary off-hour project of surveying the needs of institutions it serves; is collecting materials from 48 states with the intention of publishing a general summary of conditions soon.

III. The public has never had a clear picture of mental illness and the up-to-date and productive methods of curing a high percentage of cases. There has never been a nation-wide education program sufficient to cause the average citizen to awaken to the extravagance and the brutality of under-equipped, out-dated institutions--and hundreds are so classed.

a. MHP is preparing a series of public education pamphlets.

b. MHP is encouraging writing, speaking and publishing in the field of mental health and in care of the mentally ill.

c. MHP is planning a nation-wide educational program that will bring the problem clearly and forcibly before the attention of a waiting and anxious citizenry.

IV. There has never been a complete and up-to-date compilation of laws relating to mental health and to public institutions, and no model law, dealing with care and treatment, commitment and release, rights and restrictions of the mentally ill.

a. MHP, through volunteer, off-hour work of men and women in camps or in institutional work, has undertaken the briefing of all the laws of the nation dealing with mental illness or mental deficiency. These will be supplied to the U.S. Public Health Service and to all interested workers in the field.

b. MHP is working on a model mental hygiene law for reference by all states in making their code adequate and uniform.

In all these projects MHP has had the encouragement and support of leading authorities.

We hope that you, too, will share the satisfaction that comes from serving those who are helpless and deprived.

Sincerely yours,

Hal