

Received in
SECRETARY'S OFFICE

121 River Street
Cochran, Pa. 16314
April 19, 1973

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DEPT. OF PUBLIC WELFARE

Ref. to _____

Mrs. Helen Wohlgemuth
Secretary
The Department of Public Welfare
Harrisburg, Pa. 17101

Dear Mrs. Wohlgemuth:

I would like to begin this letter by introducing myself. I'm a Thiel College student who has worked the past three summers (1970, 1971, 1972) at Polk State School and Hospital as a Child Care Aid Trainee. I consider myself one of the more liberal citizens of Pennsylvania.

Next I would like to give you a short history of what I have seen at Polk. My first day on the job was quite an experience. As a matter-of-fact, I had much the same reaction as I believe you have had. I wasn't able to eat for two weeks. Gradually I became accustomed to the slovenly conditions, but my family suffered. Periods of depression became my life style.

I begin to notice quite a few items which I'll list and which I think you should at least consider:

1.) Not only was the work degrading (Washing dirty diapers for adults is slightly different then washing the soiled diaper of a child.), but the people I worked with were miserable.

2.) The average Polk attendant must weigh about 180lbs., have at least 2 children to go home to take care of after keeping track of 50 or more patients all day, could , more than likely, be a divorcee, or may be older and physical incapable of handling her job.

3.) The younger girl is very capable, but spends the majority of her day sweeping, getting out laundry, serving meals, finding that she gets frowned upon if she does too much work.

4.) Work weeks are in seven and eight day shifts and by the fifth day not too many employees are capable of working with any type of child, let alone their fellow employees.

5.) The person who applies to Polk usually does so out of desperation.

6.) Not only is Polk's superintendent outdated but so are its workers and its buildings.

I, personally, don't know Dr. James McClelland. I'm only a nothing at Polk, but I would still like to congratulate you at this time when you're probably asking yourself "Did I do the right thing." There are protest, but consider by whom-- Polk

patients who don't even realize the conditions under which they live and Polk employees who are afraid of revision and of being discovered for what they are.

I only have one comment on the entire episode. Don't stop now. It'll take more than a single woman to bring the necessary reforms to Polk. I have mentioned only a few items. It takes more than just a days visit to discover the fault.

If you have any questions you wish to ask of just an interested citizen, I'll be glad to help.

Sincerely,

Ann Johnson

A former Meadowsides employee
and
concerned citizen,

Mrs. Ann Seeley Johnson