

Received in
SECRETARY'S OFFICE

APR 28 1973

DEPT. OF PUBLIC WELFARE

300 Freeport Road
New Kensington, Pa.
April 19, 1973

Dear Mrs. Thodgemuth

My husband and I feel that we must write concerning the incredible news report of the dismissal of Dr. James McClelland, the superintendent of Polk School.

For 11 years we served as pastor and wife of a church in the community of Franklin, a few miles from Polk. During those years we had many and varied connections with the institution.

Our 2 sons worked there. Each worked several summers in the college student program. Many of the members of our church were employees of the school, some of them in supervisory positions. Everyone of these persons has spoken with the highest regard of Dr. McClelland, emphasizing always his adamant insistence that the patients be treated with the utmost concern and patience. He put up with no second-rate care for the patients there.

It was our privilege to visit often at the school, at times unannounced. Never was there an occasion when anyone needed to apologize for conditions.

Before we had this first hand contact with Polk, we found it difficult to advise parents to institutionalize a retarded child; however after seeing the happy atmosphere and concerned climate at this institution, we changed our minds, and many times used Polk as an example to parents trying to make a decision about a member of their family. We are not alone in this judgment for many visitors and parents have this same opinion. Dr. McClelland's leadership was in large measure responsible for this atmosphere.

Do you realize what damage is being done by these quick and irrational judgments? Not only are dedicated individuals being destroyed, but institutions are being blanketed with a reputation that is putting fear and guilt into the hearts of those who are unfortunate enough to have families there.

It is no doubt true that some improvements are necessary, but care should be taken to study through and be certain before accusations are made which will be more damaging than helpful.

We must speak what we know is true and stand up to be counted in defense of a man whom we know has stayed up all night with dying patients because he cares so much. We must try to do our part to see that fine parts of the system are not destroyed because "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing".

We trust you will give this matter further consideration.

Sincerely,

Luella Moffat

Luella Moffat (Mrs. Arthur T.)