

Letters to the Editor

Patient help

Well, your magazine is coming down to earth with a more personal approach, so that looks promising.

With regard to potential suicide cases and the mentally sick, the whole tragedy of it all is that, paradoxically speaking, the mental health authorities seem to be responsible for as much mind sickness etc. as outside sources. The trouble is, a patient is either sent to a mental hospital or department to overcome his bereavement etc., and either comes directly or indirectly under the auspices of people whose knowledge of psychiatry is outdated and confined to punishment, or someone who does possess the hypnotic gift of *making an impression*.

In the latter case the patient does eventually get better, but as soon as the link with that particular psychiatric worker is broken he is back where he was when he first started the treatment!—in fact with a double dose of frustration! *This is the tragedy of it all ! ! !* Whereas if he were to join some local organisation he would have the opportunity of seeing the same people every week, *well, at least once a month!*

This is not only my own personal view but it has also been stated quite openly on a public platform in London by a private psychologist who runs a 6-weeks' course, but who *does not* throw people back on their own resources at the end of the treatment (otherwise it would be wasted) but after paying an annual subscription they can join their social club and see *the same people*, including himself if the patient has found him the most helpful! So strongly do I feel about this that I feel it is far better for a patient to join the Watch Tower or Communist Party, because in that way it would not be a **WASTED INTEREST!**

The patients are free to join other organisations after being discharged from hospital or Health Department but it means that they have to *force themselves* to get *disinterested* in the psychiatric staff before settling down, or even beginning to get interested in people in the outside world. Money cannot solve these problems, and, of course, £100 spent on the best hotels and night clubs might only result in leaving the patient lost *without any feeling of security* and "that sense of belonging".

Undoubtedly, the task of a psychiatric

worker (or human official) is more problematical than that of a Probation Officer, because the transformation case of today might well be the disastrous failure of tomorrow when the patient once again encounters the outside world, devoid of the *psychiatric guardianship of security!*

As the frustrated misfit with creative instincts and potentialities is too often more maladjusted than the delinquent with destructive tendencies, it is frustrating for conscientious mental health workers who are not only expected to help the patient, but also to "serve (two) masters" as a rule, and it is then that one realises that psychiatry is the dual personality of the 20th century! So human—and yet it is the official side that dominates in the end. The red-tape factor probably accounts for the shortage of mental health workers.

45 Clyde Road,
Brighton.

A. Thorne

No uniform

It is interesting to see that in some wards of Littlemore Hospital, in order to promote good relations between patients and staff, some nurses are now wearing plain clothes. Your readers might be interested to learn that from 1929, when the late Dr. Elizabeth Casson started her Nursing Homes, the nursing staff have not worn uniform for the same reason, and that the plan is successful and now past the experimental stage.

G. de M. Rudolf (Dr.)

Mount Pleasant Nursing Home,
Clevedon, Somerset.

Causes for depression

I wonder whether at any of the meetings and conferences of the N.A.M.H. the question has been considered of the chief causes for the volume of depression there seems to be? This results in a good many of the beds in mental hospitals being occupied by patients suffering chiefly from depression.

I know it is a difficult question, and maybe it is one that members of the B.M.A. and other relevant societies feel they can't tackle. For instance, at my present address, where adequate material essentials are provided and there is kindness and well-meaning organisation—which is successful regarding material comforts—the psychological side seems