

The National Association for Mental Health

39 QUEEN ANNE STREET, LONDON, W.1.

June, 1962

General Secretary's Letter

Dear Members,

To very many of you, Lady Norman is synonymous with the N.A.M.H. It will therefore come as a shock to know that at the next A.G.M. she will not be standing as Vice-Chairman of the Association and Chairman of the Executive Committee. We have known for some time that Lady Norman felt she had carried these responsibilities for long enough; in fact, since the Association was formed. Now we are glad to know that Lady Adrian has agreed to stand in her place. This is not the moment to make any estimate of what Lady Norman has done for the Association. She has seen it grow and watched over its policy and its staff. But more than this, she has been its ambassadress at home and abroad. Her interest and her devotion have been paramount in the emergence of public enlightenment about mental health problems.

Lady Norman will not withdraw her interest when she ceases to be Chairman of the Executive. She retains the Chairmanship of Duncroft and has agreed to be Chairman of Springhead Park School. But for the Association an important chapter has closed.

Donation from Mrs. Rees-Thomas

The journal this month contains an article about the Cambridgeshire Mental Welfare Association and an announcement about Mrs. Rees-Thomas's gift of shares in the Cambridge Instrument Company. This unprecedented generosity, giving us the equivalent of £50,000, opens new vistas for our training work, and I want to say "thank you" again in this *Letter* on your behalf.

Hospital Plan

Since I last wrote, the *Hospital Plan* has continued to hold a large place in the national press. Our own Council has had a discussion about it, and was helped by reports from the Social Services Committee. As a result, a letter went to the Ministry of Health drawing attention to a number of points which aroused anxiety. The first is the guess that no more beds will be required for severe subnormality, and that, in the words of the Report:

"On the one hand it is necessary to take account of the waiting lists, and of the increased expectation of life of the subnormal and severely subnormal On the other hand the expansion of community services will avoid or postpone the need for hospital admission and will enable more patients to be discharged provisionally it has been assumed that eventually the factors mentioned above will more or less offset one another."

Given the acute distress caused by the present waiting lists for hospital beds for the severely subnormal, the Council feels doubtful that this guess

can be correct. Other points which have aroused anxiety are the lack of any mention of provision for psychotic children in the *Plan*, and the need for a more dynamic approach to the anxieties of mental nurses in the face of the Hospital Plan. We are still corresponding with the Ministry.

Voluntary Organisations and Health and Welfare Services

Meanwhile we still await an invitation to meet the Minister about the part the Association might play in helping the Ministry with its plans, but the Minister has issued a circular (Circular 762) about co-operation between voluntary organisations and local health and welfare services. This Circular says that there is a bigger rôle for voluntary workers to play in developing the health and welfare services, and lists the following as possible areas of work for volunteers:

"... on the local authority side over fifty items, divided between personal services to the individual at home, and community services outside the home. Among the personal services which can assist aged, handicapped, infirm or housebound people are cited: day and night sitting-in; hair washing, shaving, bathing, foot care; house decorating and repairs; reading, shopping, collecting prescriptions and pensions; and tape recordings. On the community side: workshop and job-finding schemes; lunch clubs and social and recreational clubs; and courses for the elderly ('making the most of retirement').

"A further fifty items relate to hospitals and are set out under such headings as personal care, patients' needs, and entertainment. Some of the services apply specifically to special units like mental and geriatric hospitals.

"Under personal care is included reception and escorting of hospital patients; and under patients' needs: the care of children whose mothers are attending hospital for treatment; visiting and befriending of lonely patients; writing letters, and interpreter services for foreign patients. Under entertainment come music, dramatics, youth organisation groups in long-term hospitals, and concerts, gramophone recitals and community singing in psychiatric units. For children's units, the suggestions include reading aloud and story telling. Under the heading of 'General Work for the Hospital' is mentioned reinforcement of the official nursing and other services, especially, for example, during epidemics or transport or industrial disasters."

Local Associations will wish to consider what they can do.

More recently still there have been published the mental health statistics of the Registrar-General's *Statistical Review for 1959*. There is a point here which should give us pause. The proportion of re-admissions to mental hospitals increased from 40 per cent in 1954 to 49 per cent in 1959. Does this mean that the guesses which have been made about the run-down of the mental hospitals may be open to question?

Importance of Training Staff

However this may be, the Council decided that, if local authorities sought the Association's advice about priorities for their health and welfare services, we should emphasise in every case the importance of training staff before putting up buildings. This we continue to do.

On 7th May came the Debate in the House of Commons about the establishment of the Social Workers' Training Council, something which you will know the Association has wanted to see established ever since it was recommended in the *Younghusband Report*, now two years old. Despite protests the Bill is going to the House of Lords without any financial provision for central grants for training. The following letter was sent to Kenneth Robinson in a last-minute attempt to get some financial provision into the Bill when it went before the Commons.

"... You are very well aware that, since we first saw the draft of this Bill, the Association has been distressed that no central grant aid to assist the trainings envisaged by the Bill is proposed. We still feel that to discriminate thus against the social workers who are to be trained under the provisions of the Bill is grossly unfair and prejudicial to the whole future of the training, not to mention the development of the *Mental Health Act*. This is the more disturbing when central grants are available for Almoners, Psychiatric Social Workers, Child Care Workers, and Health Visitors, and we find it quite impossible to understand why the present Bill should discriminate in the financial arrangements for these particular trainees. We still feel that grant aid should be available to the National Council, that it should be available to the Courses, and that it should be available to senior workers given leave of absence from their posts. Failing this, however, we would like you to know that you have our entire support in moving the Clause to which I have referred. It seems to us a poor second best, but if it is the best we can get we would urge you to press strongly for some pooling arrangement in respect of expenditure on social work training."

The attempt failed, the Minister maintaining that grants for *Younghusband* courses should be a part of ordinary further education grants.

Debate on Working of Mental Health Act

You may like to know that on 4th July Lord Feversham will be instituting a Debate in the House of Lords on the working of the *Mental Health Act*. If any of you would like to send points for his speech we shall be glad to consider them.

On 7th April we were glad to welcome at 39, Queen Anne Street, in the name of the British Committee for the Scientific Study of Mental Deficiency, six of the American experts in mental deficiency called together by the President to make recommendations to him. Dr. Clark and Dr. Shapiro were hosts on this occasion, when some 30 guests were present. Later three members of the group, including President Kennedy's sister, Mrs. Shriver, met the tutor of the students on the Association's Sheffield Diploma Course.

On 13th and 14th April the 18th Child Guidance Inter-Clinic Conference was held, with a record attendance of 545 professional delegates from Child Guidance Clinics all over the country. The principal speakers were Dr. Kenneth Soddy, Miss Anna Freud, and Dr. John Apley—the first time a paediatrician has addressed this Conference. There were exhibits of architectural drawings by a number of Clinics up and down the country, and some of these we hope to incorporate in some permanent record. The *Child Guidance Directory* was re-issued for the occasion, containing for the first time a list of Clinics in Scotland and a list of the School Psychological Services in England and Wales.

Just after Easter, a short residential course for supervisors of Training Centres was held at the High Leigh Conference Centre at Hoddesdon, and the usual residential one-week course for staffs in both junior and adult centres is announced for the end of July.

Problems of E.S.N. School Leavers

From 28th to 30th September, at Worcester College, Oxford, there is to be a residential week-end Conference to discuss the problems and needs of E.S.N. School Leavers. Speakers will include Mr. Lumsden from the Ministry of Education, and Dr. P. A. Bennett, one of the principal Medical Officers of the Middlesex County Council, will be in the Chair. Two courses for General Practitioners are on the programme; one was held from 18th to 20th May, and a second one in London takes place from 16th to 18th November. Applications are invited.

The Local Associations had a Conference of their own in the South of England on 2nd June, when Mrs. Hacker was in the Chair and the speakers included Mr. Edward Blisshen and Dr. Pamela Mason. This Conference was open to interested members of voluntary organisations as well as to our own Local Association members. The Conference considered the theme: "Where do we break through?" This was an attempt to help Local Associations to consider action for prevention—one of the most difficult aspects of our work. This and the legislative changes which I have mentioned make important material for local activity.

Visits to N.A.M.H. Homes and Schools

Some Local Associations looking for activities in the summer months might care to consider a visit to one of our homes or schools. Details would be readily supplied and the staff would be encouraged by your interest. It is the busy period for the holiday homes in Bognor and Rhyl. *Parnham*, in the heart of Dorset, is beautiful at this time of year, and so is *Swalcliffe Park*, in the heart of the Cotswolds.

This month I think we can say at last that we have found a home for the third school-leaver hostel which we are to open at Bromley for boys leaving schools for the maladjusted. In our search we have looked at over 100 houses and have met with planning difficulties in at least three possible sites. We know the national difficulty from our own experience, and staffing is always a problem. The hostels are looking for staff. Can anyone help us?

This month Mr. Flanders, tutor to the Birmingham course for workers in the senior Training Centres, has accepted an appointment with the National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children to take charge of their Slough project. We wish the Society and Mr. Flanders all success with this new venture and welcome the link with the Society which this appointment represents.

Yours sincerely,

