

## Mr. Bradley Remembers

Sir,

In the October Journal Mr. T. R. Carnegie contributed a very interesting article on *A New Look at Borstal Training*. I am tempted by your general invitation to submit a point of view. I do this with all the diffidence proper to a "has-been" but with a very lively recollection of and a sincere respect for Mr. Carnegie himself and with a lasting and still nostalgic interest in the progress of the Borstal System. I should add, of course, that what I say here is my own personal view not necessarily held by any of my old colleagues in the Service.

Mr. Carnegie's outline of an institution operating a "specific policy of social rehabilitation including diagnostic treatment and discharge evaluation" has behind it the advantage of much research and clinical experiment not available to those of us who were battling with borstal problems twenty, thirty or more years ago. Borstal policy must march with modern thought and techniques, not fearing experiment, adopting what is wise and practicable, eschewing what is doctrinaire,

hypertheoretical or "patent," otherwise it will lose its vitality. But it must be remembered that borstal policy has always been governed, or perhaps the better word is "shackled" by circumstances largely outside the control of the powers that be. I mean of course such factors as excessive numbers, buildings used of necessity but often far from suitable, limited funds and many others, all of them acting as a brake on the efforts of that dedicated body of men and women whom I hold in such respect, the borstal staffs.

Borstal training in the early days, says Mr. Carnegie, was very paternalistic and emotionally loaded. All the clients were 'boys' irrespective of age or maturity. What's in a name? Probably, in its psychological implications, quite a lot. But I remember our puzzled discussions to find a better alternative; 'Lads?' Too emotionally paternalistic! 'Inmates?' Officially ordained but institutionally impersonal. 'Men?' *Pace* Inmate French, 16 3/12, 4ft.3ins. tall (or short), and a perpetual childish thorn in our too, too adult flesh! One of my housemasters with my

full concurrence, called his house "men," but it did not stick, even among the 'boys' themselves. So, *faute-de-mieux*, 'boys' they remained. But Mr. Carnegie's implication that they were treated as boys is wide of the mark. Portland in the twenties and Gringley Camp in the floods of the late forties—these were no day nurseries. And anyway, we did replace shorts by trousers!

I have always thought that there is much in Mr. Carnegie's suggestion that there should be what might be termed local borstals—Manchester boys, for instance being posted to a near Manchester borstal, and so on. In this way there would be "a greater degree of acceptance and integration between the locality and the institution." Distance from his home area is in many cases a drawback to a boy, precluding as it does the preservation of family contacts and failing to awaken in the various local communities a sense of responsibility for the rehabilitation of *their* boys. The idea of local borstals, however, overrides the principle of classification, for unless there were two or three such institutions around each big urban area, an obvious impracticability, there would be much undesirable mixing in the one borsal of the sheep with the goats, a consummation which the present system does a good deal to avoid. In any case it is well known that the Department has too often had but little choice in the siting or estab-

lishing of the borstals, being obliged to take what was going and to make the best of it. Moreover, security for the less reliable inmates has always been an incapable necessity, and the creation of secure establishments is a long and expensive job. Thus, governed largely (as I said earlier) by practical considerations, the current system of allocation has been developed, but not without a good deal of careful thought, and I find it difficult to accept Mr. Carnegie's asseveration that it has been "a policy of the oubliettes." The individual having been sent to borstal, he can be forgotten—"something will be done to him by someone." This is indeed a severe condemnation, unjustified by much conscientious and often successful training over the years.

In his "New Look" Mr. Carnegie suggests that every agency which might contribute to more efficient and progressive training should be incorporated in the curriculum. He mentions as instances E.S.N. schools and Mental Health Day Clinics, he also refers to Case Work and Group Counselling (the capitals are his). Clearly he is right in pressing that nothing which will help the reformation of our misguided clientele should be left untried, provided that the risk is avoided of turning a boy into a "case," shuttlecocked from one agency to another. For when all is said and done the truth remains that adolescents are incorrigible

"follow-my-leaders," and it is incontestible that many a boy's awakening has been due not to the system, not to scientific instruments of training (though their important contribution must never be minimised) but to the fact that he grew to trust and to respect this or that member of the staff and to determine not to let him down. I find myself thinking of a borstal matron who by her simple, motherly care saved one boy particularly and to my knowledge many others from a wasted life of crime: of a civilian blacksmith instructor who would have won no laurels for literary or psychological know-how, but who refashioned many a potential tearaway on the anvil of his experience and knowledge of the ways of men: of an elderly prison officer who finished his service as a Principal Officer in borstal who alone could pacify young Mulligan when in one of his tempestuous moods. The list is endless. And I suspect that Mr. Carnegie himself has his honoured place in it, and that there are 'boys,' now men, going straight just because they found in him not only the trained approach but, fulfilling it, the personal leadership and care for them which they so desperately needed at a critical time in their development.

I hope that what I have said may not be taken in any sense as to decry the contribution to

training due to the advance of social science, nor that I have fallen into the trap of the 'also-ran' by a blind belief in the practices of the past. It is very encouraging to read that "some staff have been given an initial social work training," and it is only too true that in the past the "creative talent of the staff" has not been invoked to its fullest extent. But improved self-knowledge derived from self-examination through group counselling and other instruments will not alone turn the scale. It must be accompanied by the recognition of this fact of personal attachment which, being outward-looking and not introspective, springing from the affections rather than from the intellect, in many cases may prove to be the stronger and more lasting influence on a 'boy's' development. Let it be said, moreover, that this personal attachment makes greater demands on the staff than the intelligent application of the techniques of scientific training. For respect and devotion by a younger person for an older person is a sound trust not lightly to be discharged. "For some reason or other, God knows why, this youngster looks up to me and I can't let him down." And in the process of not letting him down lies the measure of our dedication to our work.

R. L. BRADLEY

The Journal is very pleased to have this letter from Mr. R. L. Bradley, C.B.E., former Commissioner and Director of Borstal Administration.