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LADS' HOSTELS  
COMMITTEE,  
JOHANNESBURG, S.A.



REPORT

ON THE WORK OF THE  
LADS' HOSTELS COMMITTEE  
IN RECLAIMING  
JUVENILE DELINQUENTS



NINETEEN THIRTY—THIRTY ONE

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*“Young Offenders are Made and not Born.”*—Sir George Newman, to the Shaftesbury Society.

**W**HILE the disputants may argue as to the relative percentages of heredity and environment when connected with crime, our experience over the past twenty years goes to show that eighty per cent. of the lads committed to the Johannesburg Hostels have, after a few years' training under decent homely conditions, become useful, self-respecting men.

This Committee has not had time to investigate thoroughly the causation of crime amongst juveniles, but it is safe to say that wretched homes resulting from drink, immorality and unemployment account for the major portion of the delinquency among children.

As practical men and women, therefore, the Committee's efforts are directed to imbuing the boys with a strong sense of cleanliness, self discipline and industry.

In this way only will the wrongs committed by the parents be rectified and an insurance provided that the same wrongs will not be perpetrated by Hostel boys against the succeeding generation.

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Experience under practical conditions has taught us that this is not too much to expect, and there are many happy homes where the fathers are not ashamed to own the Hostel Principal and Matron as their foster parents.

*A Juvenile Court Magistrate makes the following remarks:—*

For Juvenile Delinquents the only legal punishments are :—

1. Fine with alternative imprisonment.
2. Imprisonment in ordinary gaols.

Imprisonment can be suspended, but in the majority of cases the fine cannot be paid and only the gaol remains—and if the conditions of suspension are not carried out there is still nothing for it but gaol.

3. A whipping. This is only available for boys under 16 years and many of them are not physically fit. Anyway, it does not suit in serious cases, and especially where the juvenile's environment is bad.

4. Reformatory. The minimum sentence is two years. This sentence cannot be suspended in the Transvaal.

If the public are satisfied with Reformatories as places for boys who cannot



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be dealt with suitably by the first three punishments, then there is nothing more to be said.

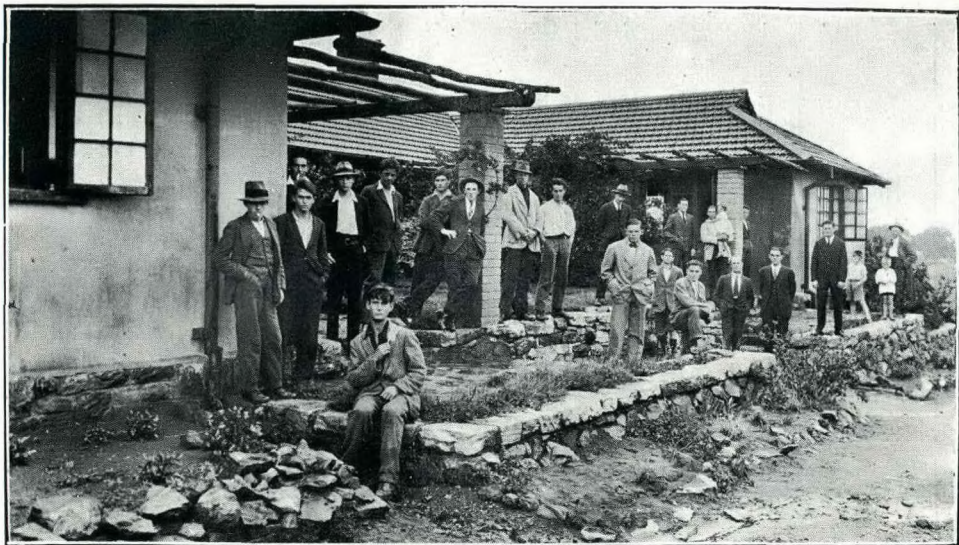
Experience, however, goes to show that there is some *via media* wanted between fines, caning, suspended or postponed sentences and Reformatories, and this is

5. Detention in a Hostel certified under the Prisons Act. This can be imposed in any case, whereas Reformatory sentence can never be imposed where the accused is entitled to a fine.

The Hostel can also be used as a place of remand for observation, so that the Court sentencing a juvenile can get expert opinion on the character of the juvenile before finally dealing with him.

As a substitute for punishment, Hostel treatment is excellent in the cases where a bad home or environment has contributed largely to the crime. This is the case in a large percentage of juvenile offences. It also avoids the prison taint. Further, if the juvenile proves unreceptive of Hostel treatment and requires more stringent control, he can be transferred to a Reformatory.

The juvenile gets in the Hostel a fair chance—if he will not take it, then the Reformatory may do him good.



COTTESLOE LADS AT HOME.

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The only way to a Reformatory should be *via* a Hostel.

Detention in these Hostels is a competent punishment, and they cater for such persons, but alas! the accommodation is far too limited.

But why should the public be asked to pay for all this?

They only pay a part, and for that get complete control of the Institution, with the consequent absence of Red Tape! In the place of Red Tape is sympathy and understanding.

### START OF THE HOSTEL MOVEMENT.

Nearly 25 years ago, in 1905, the Lads' Hostel movement began its existence in Johannesburg, and was the development of an effort to organise social evening clubs for working lads. The value of the club formed, known as the Witwatersrand Lads' Club, was soon realised by the large number of lads who attended and made it their abode during the evenings. Many times it was found that the club was a real home for some of the boys, as they had no home of their own to go to, or if there was a home, it was not of a desirable character; and it was on account of these many appealing and pathetic cases

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that the constitution of the club was altered to meet the newly discovered need, and an experiment was embarked upon for providing a residential home for such cases.

### THE FIRST HOSTEL.

In 1910 a small house was obtained in Melville, where six lads between the ages of 14 and 20 years were provided with a home and family life under the guardianship of Mr. H. E. Norman. Three of the first admissions had been newly released from gaol; one came from the newspaper sellers who lived in the native compound; one was an orphan hopelessly addicted to dagga smoking; and the other, who had spent six months in a Reformatory for selling liquor for the purpose of obtaining money for lodging. Within a short time the family had grown too big for the small cottage, and extra accommodation had to be obtained.

In July, 1917, the Cottesloe Hostel was opened, and contained 28 inmates. But this was not enough to meet the need, and in consequence of the increased recognition which this method of helping delinquent boys was receiving from Magistrates and the Prisons Department,





LADS' HOSTEL, NORWOOD.

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it was decided to start a Hostel for Juveniles, at the Ferreira Mine, which in 1919 was transferred to Norwood. It will be seen that despite many changes of abode the Hostel movement was kept going and public interest increased in it. Since then, through the efforts and interest of generous friends, the work has continued steadily to progress.

### PRIMARY OBJECT.

The primary object is to give a chance to the boy who has failed through lack of guidance and proper home control. With this as the primary idea a great deal of extension has taken place in consolidating the good work started by Mr. Norman and by keeping pace with modern methods of dealing with delinquent and friendless juveniles. The Lads' Hostels Committee control two Hostels, viz., Cottesloe and Norwood. The former has accommodation for 20 lads from 16 to 21 years of age, and the latter has accommodation for 24 boys from 10 to 16 years upon committal. Since 1910 approximately 1,200 boys between the ages of 10 and 21 years of age have been handled, of which the majority have been sent by the magistrate upon committal. Over 80 per cent. of these came from undesirable homes,

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and the Hostel records show that 80 per cent. of this total have so benefited by residence in the Hostels that they are to-day self-respecting members of the community, following useful occupations, and so prove that there has been a real response to decent and normal conditions ; whilst at the same time the taint of prison life has been avoided.

The Hostels are managed as like a home as possible ; every effort is made to give a lad the requisite training to enable him to become a respectable citizen.

The Principals and Matrons who are in charge act *in loco parentis*, and do all they can to foster a family spirit such as pertains in any normal, decent home. The boys attend the local schools and work in different trades alongside ordinary normal people, and it is seldom these privileges are abused. School and employers' reports are usually satisfactory, and the reputation of the lads on the sports field is excellent. Of course, there are failures and, unfortunately, these have, for the good of the others, to be passed on to the Reformatory or some other institution for correction. This is not to be surprised at, for to undo twelve or more years of bad environmental training is no easy



NORWOOD HOSTEL CRICKET XI.

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matter and cannot be accomplished in a short time. It is on this account we ask the Court for the boy to be sent for a lengthy period, varying from two to five years.

To teach them responsibility and self-reliance and to take a personal interest in their home, the boys have their own House Committee of Parliament which deals with the internal welfare of the Hostel; besides which there is a Literary and Debating Society, at which everyone must speak; and there are First-Aid, Physical Drill and Club Swinging Squads. That all these things are helpful and appreciated by the boys is proved by the keen and efficient manner in which they are carried out. Camping is also made a special feature, and it is here, one may say, that some of the happiest moments of Hostel life are spent. Cricket and football matches are also played, in season, against local teams.

The family spirit is further fostered in that as soon as a boy obtains employment two-thirds of his earnings are contributed to the Hostel for his maintenance, with a maximum of 30s. per week contributed to the Hostel Funds. Each boy is encouraged to save some of his pocket money

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so that when he leaves the Hostel he has something stored away for a "rainy day."

### RESPONSE.

And the response to this treatment? As stated before, 80 per cent. of those placed in our care become decent and self-respecting citizens. Some of the most unpromising material has under decent conditions and careful guidance responded in a surprising manner. The Committee is satisfied that there is a definite response to Hostel treatment, and statistics prove that the work is really worth while and of great assistance to the country as a whole in helping to do something for the young delinquent or lad who has never had a chance to make good.

### FINANCE.

The Prisons Department contributes to the maintenance of the committed inmates, and where the parents are in a position to pay they are compelled by the Courts to contribute whatever they can afford. Unfortunately, many are not in a position to pay anything, and the children of such are supported out of the voluntary contributions sent to the Committee by sympathetic friends.



RETURNING FROM CAMP.

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Approximately £1,000 per annum is required by way of contributions to enable the Committee to continue the work, the cessation of which would mean that some forty lads would have to be returned to the Prisons Department.

### PUBLICITY.

Visitors to either of the Hostels to see what work is being done are assured of a hearty welcome. "Seeing is believing," and the Committee believes that the delinquent boys of South Africa are better in Hostels than in Prisons. Every civilised country in the world is awaking to a similar point of view, and it is a matter for congratulation that the Witwatersrand was one of the first communities to establish Lads' Hostels.

Members of the Committee take an active part in the work of the Hostels by attending regularly to act as relief to the Principals when they take an evening off duty. Members are thus brought into personal touch with individual inmates, and this is productive of much good.

### HOW ASSISTANCE CAN BE GIVEN.

The need of expanding the Hostels movement is great. Again and again applications by the Courts to take in cases



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have to be refused on account of no accommodation being available. Another Hostel could be filled at once, but this is not possible owing to lack of funds to maintain same. Assistance is urgently needed in this direction. To those who cannot give financial assistance the call is ever present for "Service" in the way of visiting the Hostels and interesting themselves in the inmates or getting others outside to take an interest in the work by way of organising entertainments, etc., for the funds of the Committee. Will you assist us? If so, it will be found to be well worth while.



DONATION FORM.

To the LADS' HOSTELS COMMITTEE,  
134, Exploration Building, Johannesburg.

I enclose a cheque for £.....in support of the work of  
the Committee.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

*Cheques should be crossed and made payable to Secretary,  
Lads' Hostels Committee.*

NOTE.—Should any sympathiser with the object of the Committee desire to leave a legacy in aid of the work, it is suggested that the following form of bequest be inserted in their wills:—"I give and bequeath, free of legacy duty, the sum of £....., to be paid to the Secretary for the time being of the Lads' Hostels Committee, to be at the disposal of the Committee for the time being."

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