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# LADS' HOSTELS

AT

NORWOOD *and* COTTESLOE  
JOHANNESBURG  
SOUTH AFRICA



## REPORT

BY

Dr. L. van SCHALKWYK,  
*Organising Inspector of Education, Union of South Africa*

1932

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# INSPECTION REPORT

ON

## LADS' HOSTELS

at Norwood and Cottesloe

BY

Dr. L. van SCHALKWYK,

*Organising Inspector of Union Education.*

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### HISTORICAL.

1. The Lads' Hostel movement began its existence in Johannesburg in 1905, and is the development of an effort to organise social evening clubs for working lads of European extraction. The Witwatersrand Lads' Club developed from very lowly beginnings, having started in a store-room, which was rented at £8 per month. In 1910, the club was converted into a residential home, at Melville, with an enrolment of six lads, varying in ages from 14 to 20 years, to provide for lads who had no home or whose home was very undesirable. The ever-increasing need for more accommodation led to the establishment in July, 1917, of the Cottesloe Hostel as a permanent residence. Soon afterwards a second Hostel, for juveniles, was commenced at the Ferreira Mine, which, in 1919, was transferred to Norwood.

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2. The Hostels at Norwood (for juveniles) and at Cottesloe (for juvenile-adults) are certified under the Prisons and Reformatories Act (No. 46 of 1920) and subsidised by the Prisons Department. They are managed by a General Committee, with a sub-committee for each Hostel. The Committee have autonomous powers, and, although the Hostels are conducted under the aegis of the Prisons Department, they are privately administered institutions, free from external control. Out of a total expenditure of £4,150 (for the

year ending June, 1931) the contribution of the Prisons Department for maintenance grants was £2,568, *i.e.*, 62 per cent. It is not unreasonable that the authority which provides such substantial financial assistance should be permitted to exercise some measure of control by inspection. Inspections, I believe, have not been carried out in the past, although some control has been exercised over the accounts of the institutions when making maintenance grants. I should add, however, judging from the welcome which was extended to the inspecting officer on the present occasion, that the managing Committee would welcome and appreciate inspection visits from departmental officers. The function of inspections, moreover, is not solely control and criticism; inspections have also definitely positive advantages, such as advice and assistance to achieve the educational object, encouragement of the efforts of the staff, and, generally, constructive criticism which can be of practical use.

3. There are, to my knowledge, only four hostels for Europeans of the type under discussion here in the Union. In addition to the hostels at Norwood and Cottesloe, there are the G.D.A. Hostel for Girls at Cottesloe, and the Lads' Hostel at Pinetown, in Natal. The history of the Hostel system as a means of dealing with juvenile delinquency, both in South Africa and elsewhere, has provided indisputable proof that this is the method *par excellence* for dealing in a satisfactory way with the problem of youthful offenders. It is therefore not a little surprising that the practice has not been more extensively applied in South Africa. The Cape Peninsula has not a single institution of the kind for Europeans (there is one for non-Europeans), and the three which cater for the Rand are, on the evidence of those who come into direct contact with juvenile delinquency, inadequate to meet the needs of this centre. I am informed that the present Hostels on the Rand could be filled three times over if accommodation were available.

4. I am strongly of opinion that the Hostel method of dealing with youthful offenders should be

more extensively applied in the Union; in fact, if adequate Hostel provision were available, it is possible that only one reformatory would be necessary to deal with those cases which, generally after trial in a Hostel, prove to be not amenable to Hostel methods and discipline. The number of the latter would probably be so small that a combined institution for juveniles and juvenile-adults, with separate divisions, would suffice. An extension of the Hostel system would not necessarily mean increased expenditure (on the contrary, it would conduce to economy) because I am presuming that Hostels, as at present, and, in fact, as required by law, would continue to be conducted by private organisations, which can generally command a certain measure of public financial support. Private bodies, moreover, can generally obtain the services of suitable staff under more favourable conditions than it is possible for the Government to do. The chief advantage of a private institution, from the educational point of view, is the facility with which it can generally recruit staff of the right type, and dispense with the services of a staff member who, after trial, has shown lack of adaptability for the work.

5. The time would seem to have arrived to review the practice with regard to the disposal of youthful offenders. If any alterations in the present system are decided on, they should provide for a graded system of institutions, based on differing psychological needs requiring different methods of treatment, and providing for easy transition from one type of institution to another. In fact, there should be a hierarchy of institutions to meet the divergent mental needs of the delinquents who require to be dealt with. An essential link in the system would be an "Observation Centre," to which problem cases could be sent for preliminary specialist study and observation before their final disposal is decided on. The absence of an institution of this type I consider an unfortunate defect in the present system.

6. The reason why Hostel treatment should be preferred to specific institutional treatment such as

in a reformatory, for the majority of juvenile delinquents, lies in the nature of the cause of crime. Crime is often explained as the result of either environment or heredity. The real explanation is that it is the result of the interaction of both. An environment in which there are no persons with an hereditary make-up is an abstraction, whereas an individual with his hereditary abilities and disabilities divorced from an environment is unthinkable. Hereditary qualities, whether favourable or unfavourable, constitute a fact which we must accept, but the way and the extent in which these qualities manifest themselves are determined by the environment, and can be largely modified by that environment. In a vicious environment there is a tendency for the more undesirable hereditary qualities to be developed, and consequently to warp the mind, resulting in undesirable behaviour such as crime. Crime is therefore essentially a wrong mental attitude or make-up, which has to be corrected by those whose profession it is to deal with things mental, such as educators, psychologists and psychiatrists. It is not possible to deal effectively with a disorganised mind *en masse*, such as is attempted in large institutions. The treatment should be largely and essentially individual, and that is only possible in Homes or Hostels of limited size.

7. It was stated that 95 per cent. of the boys committed to the Hostels came from home surroundings which were definitely bad. The corrective for their behaviour should therefore be looked for in home surroundings which are favourable, and this the Hostel endeavours to supply, and as far as the two Hostels under discussion are concerned, I consider that the management have been largely successful in achieving this object. The success, no doubt, would have been more pronounced had it been possible to deal with the boys in still smaller units (by means of the cottage system, for example) than the present enrolment, which in the one case is 22, and in the other 24.

8. The Hostels, being mainly or exclusively supported by the Johannesburg public, admit Johan-

nesburg boys only, although there are a few from the rest of the Transvaal and one from the Cape. Norwood admits boys from 10 to 16 years; Cottesloe, 16 to 21 years. The average period of committal is for two years, and often boys are released before this period has expired to make vacancies for new cases. It is felt that a committal of two years is often not long enough to counteract and to correct disruptive influences extending possibly over many years. It is impossible to predict the exact period of training which will be necessary for each individual case, the individual needs showing wide divergence. To meet the situation, magistrates should either commit for a longer period, or for an indefinite period, provided it does not exceed the maximum allowed by law (5 years). The lad need not necessarily remain for the full period in either case, as the management have the right to license him at any time after detention for a specified minimum period. Committals to industrial schools, irrespective of the child's age, are automatically up to the 18th year, but the Board of Management may license, and with the consent of the Minister, discharge at any time. A more or less similar provision, *mutatis mutandis*, for reformatory and hostel inmates would make it possible to deal more effectively with the educational problem of their reformation.

9. Both the English Mental Deficiency Committee (1929) and the South African Inter-Departmental Committee on Mental Deficiency (1930) have pointed out that juvenile delinquents are recruited largely from that section of the juvenile population which is designated sub-normal. The old and erroneous idea was that delinquents generally came from the mentally defective class. By sub-normal is meant a type of mind whose intelligence is less than 80 per cent. of what one might call normal intelligence (I.Q. 80). The group sub-normal falls between the normal and the mentally defective, and its range of Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) is approximately from 80-65. Very careful investigation in South Africa has shown that a sub-normal youth (*i.e.*, I.Q. less than 80) cannot possibly achieve the objective of the

primary school, that is, pass Std. VI. An analysis of the mental ages and I.Q.'s of the inmates of the Norwood Hostel shows that 57 per cent. are sub-normal, amongst whom are two with I.Q.'s of 63 and 65 who are probably mentally defective. This means that there will be some difficulty in placing 57 per cent. of the inmates in suitable types of employment, which will facilitate their social adjustment. They cannot become skilled craftsmen under apprenticeship conditions, because they are incapable of passing Std. VI, the minimum requirements for apprenticeship. They must therefore be placed in semi- or unskilled occupations for which this educational requirement is not necessary.

10. I should like to emphasise the necessity of keeping a systematic record of each inmate's physical, mental and moral development. Delinquency, as has been pointed out, is associated with some form of mental disorganisation, which often may not be unconnected with physical conditions. Intensive individual study of each inmate is therefore necessary, and the results of study and observation should be recorded. The practice of keeping a record has this further advantage that it stimulates and encourages the staff members to take an intensive interest in the individual inmates. The record should comprise facts concerning:

- (a) the physical condition and development;
- (b) progress in school or occupations;
- (c) psychological qualities (psychogram);
- (d) development of social and moral qualities.

The object that should be aimed at is to approach the study and treatment of crime in a more systematic, that is, in a more scientific, manner. This presupposes a personnel which is capable of appreciating and applying the scientific method. Two of the universities are at present offering courses in social work, and in the course of time it should be possible to recruit the type of staff whose training will have enabled them to approach the work with greater understanding and assurance.

11. Having pointed out the desirability of a scientific approach to the problem of delinquency, I must refer to other qualities which a scientific training cannot provide, but which are equally essential in dealing with the problem under discussion. I refer to a sympathetic attitude towards youth and its foibles, an understanding mind which can attune itself to the mind of the educand and so make the process of education possible. The delinquent has to be educated to a new attitude of mind, and education is the process of the interaction of mind upon mind, of the educator on the educand. This interplay of mind upon mind is rendered difficult where the educator lacks sympathy and adaptability. Great care should therefore be exercised in the choice of staff, and where it transpires later that a particular appointment has not been a happy one, the Managing Committee should be in a position to terminate it. In this respect private institutions are generally more fortunately situated than Government authorities.

12. The method of training which is followed by the Hostels is generally on correct lines. Where a lad is in a position to benefit from further school attendance, he is required to do so; although Dr. Fick points out that there are several cases where lads have ability to progress further at school, but are not given an opportunity of doing so. In the case of juveniles it would probably be advisable to enable those who are capable of doing so of completing their Std. VI with a view to admission to apprenticeship. There is not the same necessity in the case of juvenile-adults, who would generally be too old for apprenticeship.

13. Lads for whom employment can be found, are allowed to enter occupations. This is very sound policy. There is probably no better means of encouraging and establishing suitable social readjustments than to get a lad properly placed in work which appeals to him and which will absorb his interest and energies. Naturally, all boys cannot be permitted to take up work. A certain measure of character stabilisation is necessary before this can be done, but on the



whole it should not be necessary to wait until the lad has shown complete moral recovery. Preoccupation in congenial work will in itself be a strong incentive and factor towards moral rehabilitation.

14. In the absence of suitable work, it might be found advisable to allow ex-VI lads to take up vocational training at the Witwatersrand Technical College. At present there are only two Cottesloe boys attending the Trades School. This number might with advantage be increased.

15. A certain number of boys who neither attend school nor do outside work remain at the Hostels, where they are kept busy with various forms of employment in and outside the Hostels. Amongst these boys there are remand cases (six at Cottesloe) who, from the nature of their detention, cannot very well be permitted to go out. I am not very happy in my mind about these boys who remain at the Hostels. I am told that there is ample work for them to do, but is it work which to the boys appears worth while and which, therefore, can exercise an educative influence? If there is an absence of objective in the work, one can take it for granted that it will not absorb the interests and energies of the lads in such a way as to exercise the necessary educative influence. It is difficult to see what more suitable measures can be recommended, because it is obviously impracticable to suggest the establishment of an expensive workshop. I wish to emphasise, however, that pre-occupation in activities which are considered worth while is a potent factor in restoring and preserving mental harmony, and the method of "occupational therapy" is being more generally adopted in cases where discrepancies in mental organisation have to be dealt with.

16. Whilst I am not able to write with enthusiasm concerning the way in which the lads are kept occupied with work, I am in a position to commend very highly the measures that are adopted to socialise the youths. The social contacts are numerous and well chosen, on the sports field, visits to and from

friends, Toc. H. and Oxford Group organisations, Hostel societies, etc. Responsibility and initiative are developed by the practice of self-government, which has been carried out with so much success in other countries. The cumulative effect of these socialising influences must of necessity contribute substantially to the formation of reliant and independent characters. The enlightened policy followed in this respect by the managing committee is in consonance with the best practices which obtain in other countries. I have seldom come across committees of institutions which keep in such close and continuous touch with their charges as the committee for these two hostels.

17. There is provision for transfer of a lad from Norwood to Cottesloe, and also for transfer to Houtpoort, and *vice versa*. The criterion which determines transfer from Norwood to Cottesloe is whether the presence of the lad in Norwood is going to be harmful to himself or the inmates. I am told that there is about one transfer a year, and I believe the Secretary does not much favour this type of transfer. Transfer, in my opinion, may become quite necessary, and when necessary, should be effected. At Norwood the boys are generally in puberty and early adolescence, whilst Cottesloe accommodates lads in their late adolescence. There are psychological differences between these two types, and when a lad, through age, at Norwood enters the period of late adolescence and through divergence of views, tastes and needs, becomes unadaptable at Norwood, he should be transferred. Transfer to a reformatory takes place when a lad with pronounced refractory conduct proves to be unamenable to the less rigid discipline and régime associated with Hostels.

The committee rightly attaches great importance to after-care. After-care is the only means by which we can be sure that the money spent on the training of the lads will give a sure return. The great defect in institutional administration is generally that the transition from the institution to the life of liberty outside is too precipitate. Regularised after-care

endeavours to make this transition smooth and easy. There must be a gradual apprenticeship to liberty, and the practice followed by the Hostels of allowing boys to take up work whilst living in the Hostels is intended to achieve this purpose. Unfortunately, the law does not assist after-care work as effectively as it might. Legally, the Committee can only exercise after-care for the unexpired period of the licence. If a lad remains for the full period of his sentence in the Hostel, he automatically becomes free and legal supervision is impossible. After-care, however, is done in an unofficial and unobtrusive way, with much success.

19. The results of the training appear to be highly satisfactory. From the statistics kept by the central office, it appears that 80 per cent. of the inmates later become definitely established in society.

20. The Hostels receive a grant of 3s. 4d. and 4s. per day, per inmate, for Cottesloe and Norwood respectively, from the Prisons Department. This is a flat rate that was agreed upon about two years ago, before which time the Department paid 50 per cent. of the authorised expenditure, with a maximum of 5s. per day per inmate. The annual per caput cost per inmate is:—

Cottesloe	...	...	...	...	£120	15	0
Norwood	...	...	...	...	£105	0	0

Excluding administrative expenses, it is:—

Cottesloe	...	...	...	...	£105	0	0
Norwood	...	...	...	...	£94	10	0

The annual per caput cost per pupil at Houtpoort Reformatory and at Industrial Schools is:—

Houtpoort:	£63 (approximately).
Industrial Schools:	£63.58 (1931-32).

It will be seen that the per caput cost at Hostels is considerably higher than at the Houtpoort Reformatory or at industrial schools. The Government contribution towards the Hostels was for the year ending June, 1931, at the rate of £59 per pupil per

annum, which is less than the per caput cost at Government institutions.

It is difficult to make a comparison in costs between the two types of institutions because there are so many factors which vitiate a true comparison. Government institutions, for example, do not pay for rent, light and water, and they deal with large numbers (at industrial schools the average enrolment is well over 200), which necessarily lower the unit cost. Hostels, on the other hand, do not have to bear the charge of teachers' and instructors' salaries, nor of expensive equipment and replacements. Hostels also have to meet charges in connection with trams, pocket money and tobacco, and they have not the advantage of Government contracts.

On the whole, the unit cost of the Hostels seems to be above the figure that one would have thought it possible to conduct institutions of this kind. There is, however, a Financial Committee which surveyed the whole position in 1931, but which found it impossible to make further economies, if the work was to be carried on efficiently and satisfactorily. Under the circumstances I should like to defer to the opinion of the Committee, whose membership included gentlemen very competent to deal with financial matters.

21. Boys who earn, are required to pay two-thirds of their earnings towards board and lodging, with a maximum of £6 p.m. This is a sound principle. The Committee provide tobacco (at Cottesloe) and 1s. per week as pocket money to boys who are out of work. Whenever possible, the Court makes an order against parents for support, but in many cases it is found that they are unable to pay anything. The total contributions from parents for the year ending June, 1931, was £217 19s. 4d.

22. The lads are fed on a carefully drawn-up diet-scale, which allows a calorific value of 3,645 at Cottesloe, and 2,920 at Norwood per pupil per day. The diet is well balanced, Cottesloe receiving a favourable discrimination in butter and meat, which is

perhaps not justified by the small difference in average age between the lads of the two Hostels.

23. Personal and institutional hygiene receives adequate and good attention. The domestic administration leaves little to be desired. The dormitories are plainly but usefully equipped, and are kept in good condition, and in the case of Cottesloe, in excellent condition. The discipline is good and the tone of the Hostels made a most favourable impression on me. The lads are generally healthy, well-behaved and happy.

24. The boys contribute towards the labour of keeping the hostels clean and tidy. They polish the dormitories and dining-room, and attend to the bath-rooms, lavatories and drains. In the dining-room the boys wait on one another in turns. I should like to emphasise that the Hostel authorities make a special point of teaching the lads that all honest work, no matter how menial, is dignified work. Many of the lads, owing to low school attainments and sub-normal intelligence, will be obliged ultimately to make a living in work of a non-skilled nature. Unless the unreasonable prejudice against menial work can be overcome, many of them will be greatly handicapped in their social rehabilitation.

25. Unobtrusive but effective dormitory supervision in hostels of this nature is very necessary. I have come across few institutions of this kind where some of the inmates do not endeavour to introduce homosexualistic practices. This evil is innate in some characters, being part of their biological constitution. The practice, however, can also be acquired; in fact, it is an evil which can be highly infectious. The cognate evil of masturbation need not unduly concern educators. Its evil effects are much less than was formerly imagined, and extreme liberal views hold that it is a physiological function which, if not practised to excess, is probably as harmless as the secretion of urine by the kidneys, or bile by the liver. Careful investigations by scientists have established that the majority of boys masturbate, and I know of

institutions where 100 per cent. of the boys have been addicted to the practice. I draw attention to the other, and less serious view of this practice, because I know many educators worry exceedingly because they know the practice to be present amongst the boys under their charge. Many, too, lose sympathy with the boys who are supposed to be given to a degrading practice. The educator who wishes to reduce this practice to a minimum amongst his boys, should concentrate on building up strength of will and character, and especially should seek means of work and sport which will absorb all the energies of the boys. Generally, the boy who has a healthy tired feeling at the end of the day will not have recourse to self-abuse.

26. My impression is that the hostels are well conducted, and that the Committee of Management have envisaged their objective clearly and correctly. The success with which they have conducted these Hostels should justify them in extending their activities to meet the greater needs of the Reef, which at present are only partly provided for. The State would no doubt find it to its advantage to provide the necessary financial assistance to make the greater scheme possible.

23rd June, 1932.

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