

A2 326

File

Clerk Refer To.....
Clerk File..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Place on Agenda.....

3128 Wynwood Lane,
Los Angeles 23, Calif.,
March 11, 1958.

The Board of Supervisors,
City of Los Angeles.

Dear Sirs:

So the proposed county-wide mental health plan is being opposed by "patriotic" groups on the grounds that it is subversive!

I once knew a man who lived in mortal terror of psychiatrists. He was an alcoholic, a wife-beater, and, also a patriot. Since becoming acquainted with others of his ilk, I have become leery of them when they get excited on any issue, especially psychiatry. It's somewhat like being afraid of water, and only W. G. Fields made any sense -- or money-- out of that. How can a sane person fear a mental health program?

Those ~~paranoid~~ "patriotic" groups would do their country a service if they would put down their flags for a moment and calm down, take a quiet look at themselves, examine calmly the rash of newspapers ~~about~~ stories about mothers who beat their children to death, of young men so twisted in their minds that they kill for sex thrills, of lonely children fixing breakfasts for themselves or doing without breakfast, of mothers who take their lives because of post partum psychoses. They would do well, also, to investigate the tremendous cost of maintaining our mental hospitals and of providing care and treatment during the lifetime of people who could have been cured early in life by a sensible preventive program at a fraction of the cost.

People who fear a psychiatric program betray their own tragic and unhappy state. They are, in most instances, paranoid. They see conspiracy where none exists. Their ancestors were those who speared the first men who made fire out of flint. They find it absolutely necessary to their well-being to raise a considerable amount of hell in a respectable, patriotic manner, so I say, let's rent them a hall and buy them a printing press so that they can comfort each other in their own peculiar manner.

But let's get on with the job of taking care of the mental health of our people as well as we know how, especially these young people whose parents are divorced, or absent, or cruel and filled with resentments toward their own offspring.

In my own community I could name four children who have psychiatric problems which, unless treated, might result in tragedy later in life for themselves, their mates, and their children. The parents in two of these cases are not interested in what happens to their children, in the other two cases they wouldn't recognize a psycho if he came at them with a butcher knife. I know one twelve-year old girl who steals utterly useless things--a confirmed kleptomaniac. I would like to point out what causes this, but I don't want to be subversive. After all, I love my country, so the young girl can go to hell. And to hell, make no mistake, she will go.

not read

She is pretty, and doubtless she will marry and have children. Then she will remember all the screaming and beating which she received from her mother, all the imprecations that she was, "Bad, bad, just plain bad." She will take out her resentments on her children, and beat them, and beat them in an anger she does not understand. And one day we shall pick up one of these yellow newspapers which is always telling us about subversives and one-worlders and we shall read of this vicious young woman who beat her child to death.

The plain, unvarnished fact is that such mental aberrations can be detected early in life, and mental health can be restored to the child and a measure of tranquility to the home through the good offices of clergy, teachers, and psychiatrist working in cooperation. From a hard dollars-and-cents point of view, a preventive program is the best.

I must enforce my plea by a personal reference. Four and a half years ago my wife had a post partum psychosis. The birth of our third child had brought on a shock which caused her to go back to her childhood, a sort of retrogression to a dreadful and cruel existence in a broken home. She lived again the tortures of neglect and rejection and violence which had been her lot as a child. In this state she had to be watched, constantly to prevent her suicide, and once she almost succeeded.

The cost of nursing and psychiatric care was appalling, and finally, I was ready to throw in the sponge. Then I called the Red Feather agencies. For three weeks they provided someone to watch the children, at half cost, so that I could continue working. Then appointments were made at the L.A. Psychiatric clinic. For two years my wife went to the clinic, going through the agonizing sessions with fear, but with courage. She found herself. She found her love for her husband. She found, again, great joy in her children. A home which mental illness had almost destroyed was saved. Today we have four happy children and are awaiting our fifth.

We are grateful to God for His blessings, not the least of which is the generous time and skill of those dedicated, quiet Americans who are so busy helping others they find little time to make patriotic speeches and stampede officials.

I owe a great debt to this community. If I can repay a little of the debt now, count on me to support any sane move for human progress and for mental health.

Sincerely,

David W. Ewart

David W. Ewart

COPIES OF THE PROCEEDINGS
GOVERNMENT OF CALIFORNIA
MAY 13 10 00 AM '33
FILED