

Waukesha, Wisconsin,
July 18, 1921.

Dr. Thomas W. Salmon, Medical Director,
National Committee for Mental Hygiene,
370 - 7th. Ave., New York City, N. Y.

Dear Doctor Salmon:

Allow me to thank you for your letter of July 14th. A word of appreciation from one who is competent to speak on the subject is especially welcome at this time.

At the risk of boring you I am going to give some inside facts about the charges that have been made and some phases of our policy in running the hospital. On May 14th. a man, named [REDACTED] from Fond du Lac, Wis., came to the hospital and without my knowledge worked among the patients in order to secure signers to affidavits charging mistreatment and neglect. He managed to secure two affidavits with eight signers. The affidavits charged that we were severe in discipline, illiberal with our passes, that we did not diagnose and treat cases correctly, etc., and one affidavit charged that a doctor had kicked a patient. You, of course, know that among patients such as we treat there are always bound to be a few who are discontented and who would sign most anything. I, however, am absolutely sure that without this outside interference no affidavits would ever have been made. The leader of this situation in the hospital was a psychopath named Moberg. He seemed to have been here for the purpose of agitating other patients, but even with him nothing would have been done without [REDACTED]. After [REDACTED] left several patients came to me and told me of the incident and said that it was their opinion that [REDACTED] motive was to pose as a friend of the soldiers in order to secure this vote for State Senator from the Fond du Lac District and I have been told by people, who claim to know, that the whole thing is a deep-laid scheme of a certain political faction of Wisconsin to rehabilitate themselves with the soldier vote. Whether or not there is any truth in this I do not know, but I do know that this faction, by its attitude during the war, lost the support of a number of patriotic people.

The Wisconsin News, a yellow newspaper said to be controlled by Hearst, and the organ of this faction in Wisconsin, has taken up the charges and has been running large head lines and printing false statements about the hospital. I am sending you a sample of the Wisconsin News Campaign. You will observe that they speak of the 'Flight of a Sick Vet' and if you read the article you will see that [REDACTED] is mentioned. The significant fact about this article is that although the patient went to Hartford, Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Journal and Wisconsin News received a telegram from Fond du Lac, the home of [REDACTED] telling them that this man had run away because of abuse. The News' reporter came here afterwards and in my presence Snyder told him about having been locked up in insane wards seven months during his army service, about having been treated in numerous hospitals and sanitariums since his discharge, in four of which he was locked in insane wards, and about having deserted from four different hospitals. He also told this reporter that he did not leave here because of abuse; that he

was treated kindly and well at Waukesha and liked it better than any hospital he had ever seen. You will observe the distortion that the News has made of this story. It is characteristic of everything they have printed and shows clearly that there must be some ulterior motive in what they are doing.

Now, about our severe discipline and illiberality of passes, I hesitate often to tell medical men about this because we have so often been told that we are too easy and our discipline is lax. This criticism has come from some of our personnel as well as from others, but criticism, tradition and the regulations have not deterred me from the policy decided upon in the beginning. This policy is based on the belief that every restriction placed on a nervous patient's liberty that does no good is positively harmful and that punishment of minor delinquencies is harmful not only to the individual but to the general well being of the patients in general because of the bad morale and the sullen discontent, which is liable to be caused by what might seem unnecessary severity. In the pursuit of this policy we have not lost sight of the fact that certain neurotics are benefited by severity, but it seems that any rational person would realize that without army authority, the attempt to put over army discipline and army methods in handling these cases would be absurd. We had a special condition to meet. It had to be met with special methods and those officers and others of the personnel who would not take our word for it and have attempted anything rough have been promptly snubbed by me. The only punishment we have ever meted out has been to deprive a patient of his clothing for a period of a week or ten days or to deprive him of passes for a similar period and this, if I remember correctly, has been done less than one-half dozen times. Our method is simply this. When a patient is continually delinquent, as many of them from the nature of their disorder are bound to be, either Dr. Heldt or I send for him and give him a kindly talk in which he is shown that his course is harmful to himself and distasteful to us because of the example it sets for other patients. This measure in nearly all cases succeeds and patients who have been unruly and abusive calm down and give no more trouble. We have had psychopaths sent us from elsewhere merely to get rid of them. A number of these, after a few weeks of our treatment, have calmed down and been perfectly orderly in every way, proving, I think, that our method must be the best for this special situation. The spirit of this hospital has always been high. Our patients as a rule swear by us and we have little disorder simply because we have treated them as human beings.

Afternoon and night passes are given to all patients and for therapeutic effect we give passes allowing patients to visit their homes. Our Medical Officers are interested in their work and at the present time four papers, dealing with the different features of it, are in the course of preparation. You probably know that some of our clinical histories comprise 20 typewritten pages. Our attending specialists see all doubtful cases and yet these affidavits charge that patients are not diagnosed properly.

About the patient who was alleged to have been kicked by Dr. [REDACTED] this incident happened in January. The patient attacked Dr. [REDACTED] but instead of punishing him by dismissal from the hospital, as we had a perfect right to do, we gave him one of our talks. He apologized and admitted that he had been in the wrong and we allowed him to stay. More than three months later [REDACTED] got him to sign the affidavit saying that he had been kicked and injured. Dr. [REDACTED] is, however, an untactful officer and in my opinion proper handling of this case would have avoided an attack by him. [REDACTED] still continues to be somewhat untactful. I have, therefore, asked the Bureau to separate him from this station and they will, no doubt, do so.

You probably remember Dr. [REDACTED]. He is one of our very best Psycho-Therapists and has always been well liked by the patients. [REDACTED] together with [REDACTED] has worked up considerable opposition to him and has, I believe, secured some affidavits about his cruelty to patients. Dr. [REDACTED] once prevented [REDACTED] from taking a couple of girls up to his room and from this a mountain has grown. I have to admit, however, that [REDACTED] is not like Heldt. While Heldt was away [REDACTED] acted as Clinical Director and it seems that his manner toward certain patients in the staff showed irritation and this helped the ball of opposition to him to grow.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the National Committee for the help they have at different times been to us and I am going to express the hope that you will aid us in any suggestions or advise concerning our work that in your opinion will give better results in the treatment of these men or would make an advance in Medical knowledge, concerning the special disorders we treat.

Very truly yours,

Lawrence Kolb,
Surgeon in Charge.