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SOCIAL WELFARE CHILDRENS' HOMES

REPORT ON AN INQUIRY HELD ON JUNE 11 1978

AUCKLAND COMMITTEE ON RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

NGA TAMATOA

AROHAHUI INC.

INTRODUCTION

This report is based on tapes and notes made at an Inquiry into Social Welfare Homes held at the Trades Hall, Auckland, June 11th 1978. It is not a verbatim transcript at all points, but editing has been kept to a minimum,

The Inquiry was organised by Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination (ACORD), Nga Tamatoa, and Arohanui Inc. Panel members were:

John Hippolite

Rebecca Evans

Donna Awatere

Poe Tuiasau

The Inquiry was called because of the refusal by the Social Welfare Department to investigate public allegations of cruel and inhuman treatment towards children entrusted to its care in Social Welfare Homes. Members of the Public were invited to make submissions to the panel. Submissions were made by six ex-staff members, seven concerned parents and grandparents, a couple living near a home, a Guidance Counsellor, an ex-member of the Department of Education Psychological Service, five young men who had been in Social Welfare Homes during the last eight years, two older men who had been in a home prior to 1970, and four women who had been in Social Welfare Homes during the period from 1960 to the present day.

Notes on the preliminary report from the panel are appended to this report.

On behalf of the organisers, Dr Oliver Sutherland of ACORD welcomed those attending, introduced the members of the panel, and went on to say:

Over the past few months a number of serious allegations have been made to us about conditions at the Owairaka Boys Home. We took them up with the Minister of Welfare, and asked for an inquiry. This got newspaper coverage, and more people contacted us - ex-staff who confirmed the stories, parents and inmates. Other homes were also mentioned in the complaints.

In mid-April we put the accumulated evidence to Mr Walker, and again asked for a public inquiry. Still there was no reply whatsoever from the Minister, despite the details we sent; but he did say publicly that there would be no inquiry.

Later he announced the formation of "visiting committees", and it is no coincidence that he timed it for yesterday, just before our inquiry: he linked it himself with his statement that there would be no need for a public inquiry.

We don't accept this. We want the people who have come to us to be able to meet and talk to one another, and we want it to be public so that others can join in.

We have a rough but flexible agenda - boys' homes in the morning, girls' homes and receiving homes in the afternoon. Lunch is provided. The panel will put the questions, and there won't be questions from the floor unless the people testifying say they are willing. They can also say when they make comments they don't want recorded, especially by the Press. A number of press people are here, and we're pleased about that, because we want the public to know the facts which Mr Walker wants to hide.

We are running this inquiry in our own way. Bert Walker's had his chance, and we're not copying the sort of inquiry he might have had.

MRS IRENE KERR

I want to talk about my son, Craig John Fisher, who was made a State Ward at the age of 10, because he wouldn't go to school. From the day he started at the age he hated it. So I had problems, and then this created emotional problems, and I couldn't handle it. So he was made a State Ward at the age of 10. Prior to that he had 3 months in a Psychiatric Ward, at Auckland Hospital, Ward 12, where he had a lot of drugs pumped into him, so he became very lethargic and fat and didn't do anything. When we went to court and he was made a State Ward, he was sent to Owairaka prior to going to court, and he was held there for about a week prior to court case, where he was locked in solitary confinement.

Then, after he was made a State Ward, he was then again sent back to Owairaka where he had a period of 5 weeks altogether. Of those 5 weeks, apart from about the rest was spent in solitary confinement (*the Secure Unit*). He had to sit in a cell along with another boy of about 17, and eat his meals beside the toilet. Then out for P.T. training, and because Craig was so fat and lethargic due to this drug he couldn't do push-ups: so the P.T. instructor decided he'd help him along. He took his sandshoe and really belted my son's buttocks, till you couldn't get a pin between the massive pulp bruising. After this they must've got the wind up, so they took Craig up to the top block: and of course, naturally, he ran away and came home. When he showed me, when I saw his buttocks, I got straight on the phone to Owairaka and phoned the Principal. He was very apologetic, and said that it shouldn't have happened, and would I bring him back and he would look into it. So I took Craig back but nothing was done about it.

He was again put in a Secure Unit. Then he had a series of boils. So whilst taking a shower he asked one of the attendants, could he have something for his back. And this male attendant, who was in his 50s, tried to commit an indecent act on my son, which my son told me about. I went to the Principal and reported it, and he sat there and laughed at me and said,

"Now Mrs Kerr, who do you expect us to believe, your son or this man that's been in here for so many years and we've never had a report of anything like this before?"

Then, because he wasn't wearing undies, he had this terrific chafing right between his groin and right down the legs so he couldn't walk properly for about 2 weeks. He complained about it and was told that the doctor had looked at him and decided he didn't warrant any medication or anything like that.

I had been to visit Craig on several occasions, and one day when I went to visit him it was a stinking hot summers day (this was when he was up at the top block for 2 days) so I said

"Come on, let's go and walk outside".

So we were just walking in the grounds, when the next minute out comes this Mr [redacted] grabs me and Craig as if we were a pack of criminals, and rushes us inside. I ran and threw a wobbly and said I didn't see why we should be shut up inside on such a beautiful day.

When Craig was in the Secure Unit (I suffer with claustrophobia) there was only one window open in that place, and no doors. And the doors are locked; when you visit your son the doors are locked, and you're shut in there, and I couldn't breathe. So I pressed the bell and said, "Could I have a window open" - and the windows were so high so that you couldn't get out of them if you wanted to anyway - no, they wouldn't open them. So in the end I had a real performance and said I wouldn't leave till the Principal came down: and the Principal came down. And then of course they stopped me from visiting Craig, because they said that I was a manipulator and I caused a lot of trouble.

I've just had so many hassles with the Social Welfare. He was taken from Owairaka to Holdsworth in Wanganui, and he was there for about a year, and he seemed to be doing quite well, so they let him come home for school holidays: and then when they ran him back to my custody he was fine for a couple of months, and then time to go back to school, and it started all over again. He was expelled from school because the Headmaster said

"Well you have the choice boy, you either stay here and do as you're told, or you're out, you're expelled".

So Craig said

"If the choice is mine, Sir, then I'd sooner leave".

So then again Child Welfare came in, and he was sent to Wesleydale.

How old was he then?

He was 10 years 1 month when he was at Owairaka for 5 weeks, then he went to Holdsworth, he was at Holdsworth for about 10 months, then he was sent home. Then he went to Mount Wellington Residential School, at home weekends, and things went quite well: then they decided he was better off coming home, so he was home for about a month - same problem going to a public school. So then they decided they would send him to Wesleydale. So he went to Wesleydale, where most of the time he didn't have any schooling. While he was in Owairaka - the reason he was put there was because he would not attend school - now for that five weeks, he never had one day's schooling!

When he went to Wesleydale, they had problems with the teacher so most of the time they spent out in the garden, doing the garden. I used to go and visit Craig, and he had this chafing again, through not wearing underpants, and sweating. Then one night I went to visit him at Wesleydale, only to find that he wasn't there. So I said to the Principal, "Where's Craig?"

"Oh Mrs Kerr," he said, "He's back at Owairaka".

Of course I said

"Why, has he been playing up?"

"Oh no," he said, "but he's just too old in the head for the boys here: so we've put him in Owairaka with boys of his own age and level".

So I went over to see him, but I wasn't allowed in that night, so I went back next day and I found him in solitary confinement again. So I asked the Principal why was Craig in solitary confinement. He said

"Well, that's my business, and he'll stay there until I choose to bring him out".

This went on and on and on. Then I phoned Mr Lange, and he rang Social Welfare because they found that Craig shouldn't have been there till he was the age of 14. I rang Mr Flint and said to him

"Do you realise that you're breaking the Law?"

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "My son was only 10 years of age at that time".

He said, "Oh Mrs Kerr, I didn't even know that your son was in Owairaka, can I do some phoning around and get back to you".

So he phoned me back and said that I could go and remove Craig and take him home.

When the O'Brien case came up, I knew what they were going through so I thought if there was any way I could help them I would. I couldn't get hold of them, so I rang the Star and spoke to the original reporter, and he told me to contact Dr Sutherland, who asked me if I was prepared to speak to an audience on Television and I said I'd be happy to do that. A Television reporter phoned me and asked if I'd mind if he checked with Social Welfare that what I'd told him was true. I said, "No, not at all", so he was to ring me back. When I heard no more, I investigated, and found out that Mr Flint had made up his mind to discredit me. He couldn't afford to have me in front of a Television audience, stating Craig's case. So he made a nauseating, defamatory comment about my son and I, to this reporter, who in turn told Dr Sutherland, who told me. I consulted my solicitor, and I had a signed statement, a retraction of what was said, from Mr Flint, through my solicitor, and a settlement out of court which I wasn't too happy about. I felt I didn't want the money, and I felt that Flint shouldn't be able to make a statement like he did about my son and me, when he had no grounds for it, it was completely untrue.

Social Welfare still come round to visit my son, and they told me it's down on record. These Social Welfare Officers can write anything they like on a file; it doesn't have to be fact, it's what they think themselves. Everyone in that Department can get to read it, so they can read into something what they feel - "Well, that could mean so and so and so and so..." So this is what they read into it, and this is supposed to be a confidential file. OK, it's a confidential file, but things are put on to that file which are not even true, and I feel that this is wrong. And of course the next Social

Welfare worker that comes along they've got this impression that she's so-and-so, and he's done so-and-so, they've read this into the file, so straight away, you're down. They've got me down as a manipulator, and they say that I'm a manipulator, and my son is a manipulator just like his mother. I feel that they shouldn't hold the positions that they do. Lies are told. Mr Walker just turns his ears off when it suits him.

I was just reading this (*the Departmental Regulations on Close Custody*) where it says Not more than one child or young person is to be confined in any one secure room at one time unless in circumstances of real necessity. Now Craig was in there with a 17 year old boy.

Truancy was the only problem with your son? Is that right?

Yes, he's never stolen or done anything like that. All it was was he didn't want to go to school.

Was a systematic programme ever attempted to get him to go to school?

No, not really. For a while Craig went to Nga Tapuwae College. It was the complete opposite to all the previous public schools he'd been to. I wasn't prepared to allow Craig to go there, it would just make it difficult for me. It was too extreme, he could do what he liked. Well, either he was going to go to school and stay at school, or he'd have to go to Hokio, where he'd be made to go to school. I just didn't want him going to that school. Well, Craig did go to Hokio, and he did extremely well. He's been exempted from school now, and is doing woodwork at home, and Welfare still come round and supervise him. But I'm very pleased, because of all the institutions, Hokio. Craig seemed to like it and get on well there: so I'm very lucky he went to Hokio where he did. If he'd stayed at Nga Tapuwae College, I think I would have had all sorts of problems with him.

Mrs Kerr, you state that Hokio might be a reasonable alternative to Owairaka - is that what you're saying?

Yes, definitely.

KEVIN O'BRIEN

Can you tell us a little bit about the history of how you got to be there and what what happened while you were at Owairaka?

We were up in Kerikeri in the Christmas holidays for our holiday, and me and my brother were walking down the main road. We looked a bit scruffy and we had this bottle of whisky in our pocket, so the cop, he picked us up and took us down to the Kerikeri cells and gave me a hiding, while he took my brother away to see my parents, and then we got taken to Whangarei cells for the night, and then next day we were shipped off to Owairaka.

Did your brother go to Owairaka as well?

Yeah.

Both?

Yeah.

And where did you go when you went to Owairaka?

To the Secure Unit. For 10 days, 8 on my own.

Can you tell us a bit about what it was like?

It was hell. You see it says on this Close Custody thing, we were supposed to have radios and films and stuff? We didn't get any of those. The only things we got was the

books and comics.

How many comics a day? Was it unlimited supply?

No. We used to have about 2 comic swaps and we were only allowed 3 comics at a time and we could read them in ten minutes. If you wanted a book, you had 1 book and no comics.

Did you get a complete change of clothing?

Just football shorts and a T-shirt.

Were you given underwear at all?

No.

How about a teacher? Did you see a teacher? You were there 2 weeks. The regulation states that you must see a teacher if you're there for 3 days.

No, I never saw a teacher.

Also the regulations state as well that comics and other such material are to be reserved for leisure time, and you're not allowed to have them as you did as your main reading material.

They didn't have anything else. They just came in after we'd done our stuff for the morning, and gave them to us.

Tell us where you had your meals?

In our cells.

Was this by the open toilet?

Yes.

How long was the P.T. on for?

We had ½ hour session when we got up in the morning, before we had our shower. Then about 1 o'clock we had ½ hour session, and then before showers at night we had another ½ hour session.

Did you ever refuse to do P.T.?

No.

Did you get blistered feet?

Yeah, I did.

Why didn't you refuse to do P.T.?

I went to the doctor. I asked to see the doctor. He slit them, and he said

"That's all right you can go back and do it".

And they just said, you'll be doing P.T. tomorrow.

Can you remember the name of the doctor?

They never told us that.

Kevin, can you describe to us that Secure Unit?

The room itself? It's only a little thing from about there to there (about 6' x 10') and in it there's a bunk, made of cast iron or steel or something, and a couple of mattresses, and one of these old, like the police cell toilets, sort of tin, and they've just got a washbasin on top. And we used to have to get a rag and clean that out with the same rag as we cleaned the wash basin out, the toilet.

How often was that?

Every day. A piece of paper and the rag. We had to get the White Lily cleaner and clean the basin and the toilet. And these rags were re-cyclable, they were used every day,

they'd come back caked with White Lily.

Was there a window in this cell?

Oh yeah, there was a window. But you weren't allowed to look out of it, and it had sort of wire reinforcement in it so you couldn't see out of it anyway. It had a little thing to open it, and sort of wire netting over it so you couldn't get a hand through but you could get a bit of fresh air.

How many hours per day were you confined in there?

Well there was a whole hour altogether, P.T.

23 hours a day you were in there?

Yes.

What about your meals?

They brought them round to us.

What about the doors?

They were locked all the time, 23 hours.

It says something about leaving the doors open for us to go and sit outside and talk and all that. They never did that! The only way we could talk was by getting up on top of the bunk and looking out of the part of the window you can see out of, and talk by hand signals. We had our own little calls - I could get my brother to come up to his window. That was the first time me and my brother actually talked.

And there's another thing in these regulations about meals: it says where practicable it is expected that meals will be taken together in the common room and that staff will eat with their charges. Suitable conditions for eating are to be arranged e.g. special tables, etc.

Well we never got a table: and we were locked up while we were eating our meals, too. We couldn't have a little talk round the table as they reckon there. Nothing like it.

Those 23 hours you spent in your cells, could you give us a rough idea how that time was spent? Sleeping, reading and so on.

I could only sleep from when the lights went out, I can't sleep in the day at all. I didn't have a watch so you don't have much sense of time so we didn't really know. We'd wake at about half past six I think, it was dark, and then the lights went on.

Would you give us a break-down of your day?

When we woke up, we'd make our beds; shorts on, towel round shoulders, and you would stand in the doorway, and they'd come along and open the door. And everything would be done. Yes sir. No sir. Please sir. Then outside, towel on window, press-ups, shower, then back to the cell and have breakfast, that was about 8am. Then about half past 8, after we finished breakfast, they'd bring around the cleaning gear - dustpan and brush to sweep the floor with, a bit of newspaper, and White Lily on a rag. The rags were all dirty from the day before. About 9am, comic swaps; lunch, then 1.30 - 2pm P.T. wearing football shorts and a pair of sandshoes: no socks.

This was in the Secure Unit. Cell 7 is the punishment cell, but I was never in it. It was smaller and had a smaller window. I wasn't beaten, but I saw others beaten during P.T. One bloke was refusing to do P.T. because of the blisters on his feet. He was beaten up and put in Cell 7. When he came out he still showed signs of it.

I never talked to anybody else till I came out of secure. There was complete silence during P.T., you were only allowed to say things like Yes sir, thank you sir.

What did you sleep in?

The first few days I was told they were short of pyjamas, so I slept in my shorts. I got pyjamas on the fourth day. The shorts and T-shirts were worn for everything, and they stank. I had sheets and a blanket. We got a change of shorts and T-shirt once a week, but by then they stank.

What if it was cold outside for P.T.?

Too bad. We still just wore shorts and sandals.

What about visitors?

We saw our parents on Sunday afternoon in Secure, for 1 hour. This was the first time I was able to talk to my brother, though we'd been there for a week.

MR AND MRS O'BRIEN

Very dissatisfied. We had been overseas; resettled in New Zealand; family difficulties developed so we asked Social Welfare for help. Received no expert help at all, but the kids were made State Wards.

Up at Kerikeri, the kids were scruffy, and were picked up. They were taken to a cell, then to Whangarei, and then to Owairaka because they were State Wards. They were said to have been dead drunk, but they certainly weren't when we saw them shortly before. As usual, they were routinely put into solitary confinement at the pleasure of the institution.

In January we visited, though the times are pretty obstructive - 2-3pm during the week, 3-4pm in the weekends. It is a most unpleasant feeling to visit, especially the Secure Unit. You are escorted down through a series of locked doors. Both boys at that stage were disturbed in their minds when we saw them. Social Welfare in the city turned out not to know what was going on - a bureaucratic muck-up. There were problems over the holidays in the Social Welfare administration: but it shouldn't be run for administrative convenience.

We parents should demand the kids back because although they are said to be "in care", the word 'care' is not at all what is going on - it is abuse.

At Kerikeri, were you informed what was happening to the boys?

We were not contacted by the police up north till the boys got to Kaikohe. The only charge mentioned was that Kevin John was drunk.

Were you officially told about the transfer under the provisions of the Children and Young Persons Act?

No. They were not brought before any judicial body, it was an administrative decision.

Kevin John was not sent to Wesleydale where he was sent before. They went from Whangarei to Auckland strapped together with their hands behind their backs. The elder boy is disturbed, has been in Ward 12, and has tried suicide. He was very upset. No charge was laid till May. The elder boy ran away at the end of January, and has been missing ever since.

The effect on the family has been traumatic. It is shattering for your kids to do 'bad' things anyway. Then they are in what is like a prison, and the parents are treated like muck. Visits are made so difficult. Signs saying "No this" and "No that" are hanging everywhere. There is no privacy. Our elder boy is missing as a direct consequence of his treatment at Owairaka.

This underpants business isn't just because of summer - they don't get them in winter either. It's a sort of 'torture' to reduce the kids.

Bert Walker warned us not to stir things up. He said we were seeking "personal publicity": but it's not the sort of publicity you want, is it? That your kids are doing awful things. There has been a certain amount of harassment from police and neighbours. The pressures are there, and some threats have been made to us.

They are quick enough to stop the family benefit, but it takes months to start it again. The Departmental files are a tissue of lies and fabrication which parents don't

get to see or challenge. They are not caring for children, just using them. The officers of the Department should resign.

MRS RAKATAU

People have never known all this unless they have a child or have been in them selves. My son David was in Secure for about 2 months, February and March 1978, before going to Kohitere. He was aged 14. He came home at Christmas, went back, ran away, and was put in Secure for 8 weeks continuously.

As a parent I went to the home. Nobody else has ever been there. It is the coldest place I have ever been into, for a parent who is distressed because her son has done something wrong. You go and knock and give your name and wait. The Office calls down to Secure, to send somebody up to take you down; no smiles at all. Fair enough your son has done something wrong: but this sort of person is the wrong type to be staff of these places. You need people who are understanding towards the parents and the kids.

I am shown into a visiting room, and my son comes in barefooted in shorts and a singlet, and we sit down. You're not allowed to take fruit or sweets or food, only comics and readable things. It's like visiting a prison I should think, but you can take fruit there, can't you? We talk for an hour - he's a bit down.

I visited him every second day for two months. One day he was upset and crying. I'd never seen him cry before. I felt he'd been too long in Secure. He asked me to go about him going up into the home. He was only 14.

You are given a list of what to take etc. I used to take 4 comics at a time. After all, some of the others didn't get visitors, and they do circulate them. He was never seen by a welfare officer in those two months - I was the only visitor. He never saw a teacher: yet if a child misses school for 13 days, the parents can be taken to court and fined.

He was made a State Ward and sentenced to Owairaka. I asked when he was going to Kohitere; where he is now, and is very happy. While there he has made things - carving and learning to use their hands. He says it's more of a home there. They mix more, and are put under trust.

At Owairaka he was kicked by one of the staff - Masters do you call them? He was assaulted by a warder and hit by a housemaster. They were singing in the cells one day and they're not allowed to sing. He was not singing at the time he was accused of singing. He had a bruise on the temple. Once I asked him if a boy had been beaten up because I couldn't believe it, and he said

"Gosh Mum, it's true all right".

His clothing stank, though they had a shower morning and evening: so it wasn't his that stank, just the clothing they wore.

His brother wasn't allowed to visit him, though I took him and asked 3 times within the weekend he was home from boarding school. My daughter wasn't allowed to visit him either. Two of the masters commented things like

"You know, it's a wonder your son hasn't gone up the wall."

"Why?"

"He's been in there too long".

I rang Social Welfare and asked when he would go, and was told Kohitere was full.

The Minister went there and had a cup of tea and saw it was clean - but he never went near the children nor parents. My son is made a State Ward because they accuse me that I can't take care of him. But he's not being taken proper care of.

Was David in his cell all the time?

The doors are locked all the time. He was only out for P.T., and to see me. On one occasion he saw a film. I must tell you where he watched this film: in a narrow corridor - they sat on the floor!

Mrs O'Brien: Many of the staff swear at the boys all the time. The boys are punished for swearing; but it's not a good example.

MRS KATHLEEN ARMSTRONG

Two of my boys have been in Owairaka - this is going back 9 years now. One began at 9 years old. He climbed out of his bedroom window at 1 am to steal milk money. I was charged that he was not under proper control. I pleaded Not Guilty. When I put a child to bed at 10 pm and went to bed and to sleep myself, why should I expect he's getting up. How was I guilty? So there was an adjournment. There was a Police and Welfare investigation, because I was "irresponsible". They said I should plead guilty because it was "only a formality", to speed up the process. The Department of Social Welfare said they'd have to take my son away because his mother was irresponsible and refused to plead Guilty. The Detective told me to plead Guilty, so I did.

My son was in Owairaka for 2 days, and then he ran away home. I rang Welfare. They said to ring the police: but my son respected the police, because of how I've brought him up, so I was reluctant to bring them in, so I took him to Welfare, in town. After that, things snowballed. He ran away because of the treatment, and he was always put into Secure. For example, he developed blisters on his feet from doing P.T. in sandals and no socks; he refused to do P.T. and was beaten up.

Did he know the name of the officer who beat him up?

No.

Wouldn't you expect that in a Home acting in place of parents, you would be able to identify the staff by name?

Yes. I did ring Mr Ricketts, the Principal of Owairaka, and I spoke to him several times. When Philip came home with these blisters on his feet, and his wrist was quite sore, and I took him to our doctor. That was a result of him having been beaten in Owairaka. I took him to our doctor, and to the Auckland hospital, and they had it X-rayed, and it was bruised inside or something - there were no bones or anything broken: and Philip says he thinks he got it when he tried to defend himself and his arm was thrown against the concrete wall, down at Secure. He was 9 at that time.

Did you brief a solicitor at any of the court appearances?

No, because Welfare said it wasn't necessary, only a formality.

The boy is 18 now. Things went from bad to worse after that - car conversion. He went into Kohitere where he made good progress. He went from "D" to "A" group, or whatever it is in 9 months. That is how I know that he can and will co-operate under the right circumstances. Whenever he ran away from Owairaka, he came home.

He came home from Kohitere at 12, he was still a state ward. He didn't want to go to school. He left at 14 and is now a cabinet maker. He says that, although he is now stable, his earlier trouble all came out of the first few confrontations, when he got beaten for running away. Finally I insisted he not be sent back to Owairaka.

Did this running away and getting beaten happen more than once?

Oh yes, it wasn't just once that he complained about being beaten. Once when he came home there was a police car driving past our house and he took off over the back fence. Afterwards I said to him

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"What did you do that for?" and he said
 "I know if they come I'm going to get another hiding when I go back to Owairaka, don't want to go back there".

This wasn't just once?

I haven't got enough fingers to count how many times he ran away. In the end I in that he wasn't sent there any more because I knew he was just going to run away.

How was he punished - with straps or fists or what?

Fists mostly, that he talks about.

He never ran away from Kohitere, but then it's pretty isolated.

My other boy was sent to Owairaka for riding in a stolen car. 2 weeks ago, he away. He came home and spent two nights under the house. I found out, and fished h out. I asked someone I know who works at Owairaka what I should do, and he said to follow my conscience. So after what happened with Philip, I kept him at home till court appearance so he wouldn't be put back in Owairaka and maybe run away and thi time not come home.

His probation report was made on the basis of an old Social Welfare file - t show it to you. I struck it all out. Just so many lies. They can put anything they without us parents knowing: though we can read probation reports.

Was Philip ever seen by a teacher?

No, never. He was never seen by the Welfare Officer either, though he visited me.

REUBEN

I was in Owairaka 9 times, the first time when I was 9 - I'm 17 now. I ran away f home. I was put in solitary every time I went in. They took everything away, cloth and all. Then you have a shower and go to a cell. I was in solitary for a week bef I went to court, then in solitary for 3 weeks.

I saw boys hit on the behind with a cane during P.T. for not doing press-ups properly. When I was in the top block I saw a teacher. In Secure Block, the doors always locked. We ate our meals in the cells.

How much better was it up top?

You were able to talk, and there was room to play around. And you get unders.

Did that make a big difference in your life?

Not much.

Did you ever think you'd go round the bend?

I was just there then. I slept all the time in solitary. We didn't get comics. Some guys got extra P.T. as punishment. Some guys got whacked over the ears. Up to when I was in, when someone escaped we had to do P.T. all the time till the escape was caught.

Kevin John O'Brien: In Wesleydale, when someone ran away we had to stand in line c run till they were caught - a number of hours or even days.

(agreement from another boy)

CRUISE EPIHA

I went to Owairaka for the first time in March of this year (1978), on remand for sentence. I was put in Secure straight away for 3 days. When I went back after sentence I was put in secure again for 3 days. I got let off P.T. if I do it well. Fellas that mucked around kept on going in to Secure. The P.T. area was fairly small. We wore shorts and a T-shirt. I had to undress in front of 2 or 3 housemasters when I got there and change into them. I was too scared to say I didn't want to undress in front of them. You have to rub nit stuff into your head, then into the showers. It's Thankyou sir, all the time. You aren't spoken to much, only head nods, out of cell into shower, out of shower, into cell.

Could you explain the head nodding, because I've heard about that from others?

Oh, when you have a shower he comes in the door after you've finished your shower. He looks at you, then he nods his head. "Thankyou sir". Then you shake your towel out and you go like this (*pull waistband of shorts forward*) so he checks you; and you stand outside the door and he goes like that again (*nod*). You go "Thankyou sir" and you go back to your room and stand outside your door and he does that (*nod*) again and you go inside the door.

He tells you what to do by nodding his head, he doesn't talk to you?

He just nods his head.

I only knew one guy that was beaten. Oh, and another guy was jumped on and hit on his bed for noise, but he was lying on his bed reading a comic. One boy has fits when somebody upsets him.

Is he an epileptic?

I don't know. He's a State Ward.

Is this March this year?

Yes.

Did you notice anything about the colour of the staff, compared to your own?

About a quarter of the kids were their colour (*indicating white males*) mostly my colour. The staff were mostly their colour, though there were about 3 Maoris.

While I was there nobody got a hiding. Oh, one fellow did. When you come back from running away you get given a hiding, they say.

Going back to when you're going to court. If you're up in the Top Block on the day you go to court and you get a sentence to one of the other institutions: when you go back to Owairaka, do you go back to Secure, or to Up Top? Do you start all over again? Usually they put you in Secure, because they think you'll run away, because you're going to another institution.

CLIFF

I was in Secure at Owairaka for a week in March 1978; I'm 16. Then I went to court and then to Mount Eden for 2 weeks. You have more freedom in Mount Eden: visitors every day who can bring food and fruit and stuff; and you have 9 hours a day out of your cell.

The cell and the toilet is just like he (*Kevin John O'Brien*) said, and the cleaning cloths with White Lily and that. We ate our meals in the cells with the door locked all the time. We did sometimes have an hour out for 'recreation' - you can talk, play table tennis etc. Not regular, it just happens sometimes, about once a week. We just had the one lot of clothes, and pyjamas. There weren't any teachers.

We ate on our beds or on the floor. In Mount Eden we had a table in the cells for meals. I got blisters on my feet from doing P.T. in sandals without socks.

Was there a doctor?

Yes, you could see him. One fella had blisters but they still made him run around the same. They get given extra P.T. as punishment - one boy was given a week but he had asthma so he only did two days.

Did you ever see him get any medical attention?

He had check-ups.

Medication?

He had pills to take.

The ones who have run away come back to Secure, for up to 3 months.

Would the other boys take it out on them, because of the extra P.T.?

No, even if they weren't put in Secure, because the other boys would think they did right to run away. But extra P.T. is given to them as a punishment, like I said.

BILL HARTLEY

This is going back some time to 1964-65.

You get put in solitary at first. You have to undress in front of people when you get there. If you get smart you get longer - up to three months in solitary. There was potty in the cell. We had no comics, nothing to do but sleep and scratch the walls. We had our meals in the cells. Though this was back in 1964 when I was 13 - 14, I remember it clearly.

I was in the first time for absconding from my own home. The second time was for breaking and entering a shop. The third time was for assault, and I had 3 months in solitary. We got slapped round the ears. We had to do P.T. if somebody ran away. There was no smoking. We used to have to mow the lawns and football field, even if wasn't needed (*confirmed that still do*) I suppose they got "amusement" out of watching people pushing mowers around when the lawns don't need it. They supervise it.

I saw a fella get beaten. One wasn't very good at press-ups and was whacked with a cane on the behind. He tried to do them but he couldn't and he got very distressed. I am sure my progression of crimes came from the way I was treated - at first I only ran away from home.

I remember the extractor fan going all the time - it was very noisy. I would try sleep, then kick on the door. I really turned against authority - assaulting cops and things like that.

Kohitere was a bit better.

BRUCE POLLARD

In 1977 June and July, I worked at Owairaka, employed as an Assistant Housemaster. I am not a member of ACORD or any political party. I am not interested in roasting anybody, and what I say will be the truth. In spite of the Minister of Welfare's statements about my previous assertions on TV, it was the truth. It would be simple for the Minister to have viewed a "daily diary" which is very carefully compiled and maintained in Secure at Owairaka, which has everything entered. Each staff member coming on duty signed the top of each page. This was a minute by minute record of the Secure Block. Everything and its times is recorded, and it gives a complete composite picture of regulation and routine of administration of the Secure Unit. That record would not agree with their public assertions.

I was there for 2 months only, and I was the 14th in 12 months in that job. Such a high turnover of staff indicates something is wrong. Owairaka is used mainly as a

Social Welfare holding pen. Lads do offend and get there. They don't always understand why and how they got there. Almost none of these children (as they are) have legal representation. This is appalling. Lawyers, parents, and the Social Welfare Department should answer for this.

Adjournments and remands frequently send kids to Owairaka. There they are immediately put into close custody. If you look at criminal statutes, there is provision against lawful or improper confinement, but it's not applied to young offenders. This is the fault of the judicial process, not the Owairaka authorities. It doesn't happen with the adult offender - he is bailed, or remanded to Mount Eden as legislated. Young offenders are immediately started on a term of imprisonment.

Why are the young imprisoned? Often pending conclusion of the judicial process. Often a probation report is called for. An adjournment means back to Owairaka: and these are cells, not "rooms", and this isn't "secure", but a prison. This may happen two or three times, back and forth for up to a month. Administrative convenience is being met by this improper confinement. The unknown "offender" is received, for a range of offences - he may have done something really bad; but he might just have run away from home. There are other categories such as 'not under proper control', or running away from foster homes. A lot of resentment of authority is built up. Owairaka is offered as a substitute for a bad family life, which may be leading him on a criminal path.

Why did you leave?

Disillusionment. Staff management and control is unenlightened. By no means all, but some staff will resort to violence and assault. It is not officially inspired or condoned.

Did you ever take it up with Ricketts?

I saw boys belted over the head or kicked in the backside, usually accompanied with humiliating speech, several times. There are weekly staff meetings in Secure, and I took it up. Mr Ricketts replied

"Mr Pollard, I will not have this at all. It is not part of our policy".
And he made it clear to staff.

Did they stop?

Not really. But I was no longer trusted by some members of the staff. I would be prepared to testify before a proper authority, that I saw some assaults.

Is it true that some of the boys at Owairaka are State Wards in transit?

Yes.

Is there a programme of training for initial contact staff?

The majority of staff are very decent people. The Armed Services train people to control others in a decent and disciplined manner.

Would a complaint from a parent be entered in the Secure Unit diary?

Yes. If it was laid in Secure.

Were Children and Young Persons visitors ever there while you were there?

There was no visiting committee while I was there. Parents didn't visit much either.

Were V.D. exams given?

Yes.

Could you describe the admission process?

The boys were given a shower; a prescriptive mixture to rub into the hair; and clothes.

Were there any fire drills while you were there?

No.

Did you see boys with blistered feet?

Yes.

Were the boys given underpants?

No. Not necessary in my opinion.

Did you see staff hitting children?

Yes, on odd occasions.

They were not allowed to look out of the window?

No.

They were not allowed to talk?

No.

They were having meals in their cells rather than the common room?

Yes, in the Secure Unit.

The cells were locked?

Yes, at all times except to issue and retrieve cleaning materials.

Did the boys spend 23 hours a day in their cells?

Yes.

What changes would you like to see, briefly?

What is needed is a better and larger facility, to distinguish remand cases from state wards in transit and so on. Trained staff are needed, working in more open facilities, where boys can be held in a humane manner while they are classified. In my opinion, the food and clothing is adequate.

IAN MITCHELL

In 1969, for a brief time I worked at Owairaka. I can confirm the gist of the previous statements, it sounds as though little has changed. For example, things like mowing the football field with a lawnmower, as a spirit-breaking procedure.

New arrivals were automatically put into Secure first, regardless of who they were or why they were there. They were watched by the staff so they had no privacy; and they were hit.

Were senior staff aware of this?

Probably.

It is difficult to attract competent and adequate staff. However, some are competent hitters, adept at avoiding witnesses. I was an assistant housemaster. There were the old Secure rooms then. One of my jobs was to take food to them to eat in their cells. There was no evidence of staff training at all, except in the cases of the Manager and the Matron, in fact there was virtual illiteracy. Many of the staff seemed drawn from the bottom of the heap. About 80% of the kids were Maori and Polynesian. The psychologist was recently arrived from the U.K., and made ethnocentric, monocultural judgments in his reports, such as mistaking whakama for sullenness. These reports of his sent children on to other establishments and institutions.

What efforts were made to recognise the cultures of the Maori and Polynesian kids?

It was absolute monoculturalism. The Matron was Maori, and positive. Otherwise, there was a lot of cultural arrogance, and no other cultural identification or positive practice. Maoris were put down and treated with contempt. There was no effort made to treat the children as human beings.

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What about staff qualifications?

No special ones were needed.

Was there any homosexuality?

Dunno. Not staff to kids anyway.

What do you see as an alternative?

A cluster of family homes with boys and girls, run by women and men, in the same complex.

The booklet "Juvenile Offenders" seems very bad to me. It's bad to use tests and scores as the basis for decisions as to a child's future.

DAVE GOODER

I am a secondary school guidance counsellor, and belong to the executive of our association, The New Zealand Counselling and Guidance Association. At the May Conference, we recognised Social Welfare homes as a problem. The Association is taking up two main issues with the Minister.

We are getting what we pay for - untrained staff. We need reasonable, trained child care. We can only expect reasonable residential child care with a proper standard of training. We need more than the 6 weeks course at Kohitere. We need salaries and training comparable to the training of teachers for a "normal" situation - we train teachers for up to 3 years to look after 30 children in a school, but we don't spend any time at all, training a residential child care worker to work with 30 disturbed, perhaps deviant, maybe normal children in residential care. None at all. And that has to be remedied if we are to make any inroads at all. The head of Kohitere, who has a staff of about 30, about 60 children in his care, and has this programme under his wing for training resident child care workers gets a salary equivalent to what a Head of say a Geography Department would get in the average secondary school in New Zealand.

Another bad feature is that on entry, even children who have been abandoned, or who are State Wards in transit go into solitary and have VD checks and all the same admission procedures as the remands and juvenile offenders do. Compared with what I observed in the UK, Owairaka is very bad.

REPORT OF FIRE ALARM

On April 17th 1978 at 3 am there was a fire alarm at Owairaka. 10 minutes later, no boys were assembled outside, and the Fire Chief found the boys in the Secure Unit still locked in their cells. Staff had had no instructions, either verbal or written, for dealing with fire drill or fire.

This account came from a staff member who would not appear or be identified, being afraid his job would be jeopardised.

TINA BARTLETT

I was in Bollard in 1974. You were stripped of your clothes and stripped of your privacy when you arrived. You are 'de-loused' - with nit goo and a dettol bath - I had to strip off in front of these ladies: then put in a cell. It was very small, with a bed, rubber mattress, and a toilet. You were given four squares of toilet paper for all day. We wore pyjamas all day, even for cleaning out our cells. They often didn't fit too well, which was very demoralising.

The VD check was very demoralising too. I had it twice: one on entry, and once again after running away.

How was the VD check given?

You were moved into another cell and told to take everything off except your top. Then you were put on a bed and into stirrups like when you have a baby. The old bag moves your legs around how she likes. She didn't say thankyou, she didn't say please: just Undress! Get up there. Spread your legs out. etc.

I was 15 then. All our meals were in the cells. Usually you go into the cells for just 1 day, or 3 days. In the cells there is no pudding like in the house, because we're "naughty girls". But I was in there for something I didn't do; my charges were later dropped. I was in the cells for a week, because we weren't supposed to talk, but we were communicating with each other through a vent - that vent also went into the main office! After a while the spots on the walls start coming at you: it was a rotten experience. The second day I was allowed to draw with chalk, but they didn't approve of my drawings, so the chalk was taken away. I asked for the book I had been reading (which was "The Drifters") but it wasn't a title that authority approved of. Nobody got given books or comics unless they asked for them.

At recreation time we were allowed into a courtyard about the size of the dining place upstairs, and what they called 'the art room', which was a sort of recreation room with draughts, tennis against the wall etc. There was no provision for intellectual games or stimulation. There were no hourly checks in our cells, just at breakfast, morning tea, lunchtime, afternoon tea and tea. You can only talk if you're out of Secure, downstairs. If you talk in the vents you get to stay longer. I was accused of theft from a supermarket where I was working. After 2 weeks in Bollard, I was told by a social worker that the charges had been dropped. But my parents were overseas at the time, and they began State Wardship proceedings without my knowing.

Up top you get a whole roll of toilet paper in the cells. Once I was seen by a teacher or welfare worker when I was in the cells. There was a window in the cell, but painted yellow so you couldn't see out. Lights came on at 7am. During the day you could see to read, but it wasn't a good light. You were out of your cell one hour in 24 to do P.E. Upstairs at the House it was much different, but for P.E. you got shorts and top but no shoes. We were trying to get warm - the staff had cardigans. P.E. was in a hall, not outdoors, but it was cold. In Secure, it's pyjamas all day, but up at the House you get clothes.

The whole experience was traumatic for me - it sticks in my mind. I was perpetually in punishment, for example for swearing. The worst part was being stripped of your privacy. I felt resentment, and increased hatred of authority. I tried to ask questions about the Law, but nobody would talk to me.

Were there any fire drills?

No; and there were too many locked doors for us to have got out.

To get to the art room etc. you had to be good.

The VD checks were not blood tests. After running away and day leave, they were always internals. The girls see them as punishment, and hate them. They were given 100% to every girl, whether sexually active or a virgin.

There are better ways to give internals. Auckland Hospital doesn't use stirrups. They might have had to use the straps because some of the girls are kicking and struggling.

As far as staff attitudes went, some were good, some bad. I felt they punished blacks more than pakehas. Actually only about a quarter of the girls were black, the rest

were pakehas. There was no violence, except on punishment.

Punishments were mostly things like not allowed pudding, not allowed seconds (and you wanted them), not allowed to watch TV, not allowed to associate with other girls.

We had to do the ironing and washing, though there was a staff person paid to do them. We had to do out the staff quarters, and wash out their toilets with a rag. The punishments didn't work, it just made us uncooperative.

Were you given psychological tests?

Yes, but I didn't answer seriously. The psychologist was a twit, and took my answers seriously!

N. (NAME WITHHELD AT HER REQUEST)

I was in Bollard when I was twelve, when I was made a State Ward, for running away from home. I was put in Secure. I never saw a teacher. I had comics and one paperback. We were given a little bit of toilet paper. They would let you out to the toilet if you asked, if you wouldn't use the bucket. When you're doing P.T., if one girl makes a mistake you all start over again.

I was there in 1974 and 1978. I was about 13, and I wouldn't take the VD test. I was put in Secure but I still wouldn't agree. In the end 3 or 4 staff came in and I was taken and strapped down for it. You wear pyjamas all the time in Secure. For P.E. you're given stupid little tops and rompers.

At Allendale I was a month in Secure for running away. You don't ask the questions. They ask the questions, you answer them. Up the top in summer it's shorts and T-shirts, in winter, stupid skirts. You can get a short cardigan. You get issued with clothes that don't fit. I was given a bra that didn't fit. You felt humiliated.

Do you think this was punishment or rehabilitation?

It didn't worry me. It's 3 meals a day and a roof over your head. You could take off if you wanted.

Was there any religious training or prayers?

I think somebody said grace once.

Was there anything Maori?

Well, there's cane work stuff - nothing culturally Maori.

You do learn domestic things there, like cleaning and ironing, but very little schooling.

HARRIET HUSSEY

18 years ago, I was in Allendale, for 3 years in and out of foster homes. Things have not changed. What they say is true. I spent most of my time in Secure, in solitary confinement. There was a bed and a pan and a non-opening window. You got out for a bath or shower. Meals were brought, and those were the only times you saw anybody. We had no comics. I was in for 2 months at a time. Every time I got a chance, I ran away. I was 12 the first time, and had had no sexual experience. I was given a VD check. I formed my first lesbian relationship at 12. Those who smoked got 2 smokes a day. We were issued with clothing every morning. We had a couple of hours of arts and crafts every morning in the art-recreation room. There was a lot of ganging up on each other. That's the only thing I regret or feel ashamed of, having had to gang up and beat shit

out of another woman. Flint used to come to dinner once a week. When we were inspe like that, at a meal, we had to be very good, or we'd get put in Solitary. We were threatened with Arohata. There was no school, no encouragement to be anything bet Things there did improve under Pat Hislop.

I began by being picked up for trespassing, and I wasn't a bad kid, and nor the ones I was in with. It taught me how to use the system, and how to fight back doesn't teach you respect for society, or for adults. You see how adults treat children. My mother was afraid to come to see me, and wasn't treated and respected an adult, and I saw that too. The Pakeha staff treated the Pakeha girls better. T Maori kids were seen as the bad ones, the bad influences.

(Woman from floor) I was 22 when I had my first internal VD test, and they : indescribable. No child should have to go through that.

JUDY CALLAGHER

As a person who has spent 7 years in different institutions, there is one institut in which I would like to see change. Through no fault of my own, I ended up in a Child Welfare Home. My parents were divorced when I was 8 years old, and my mothe remarried and I hated my stepfather. I kept running away because I wanted to find father. I just couldn't bear to stay at home any longer, and at the age of 14 I c to the notice of Child Welfare after stealing something that was valued over many thousands of pounds.

I was taken to a Welfare home, where I became very confused. The woman in c had about 6 or 8 children of all ages in her care, and one of them was a boy of ab 15 or 16 who after I had been there for about 3 days was transferred to Borstal. T woman kept on at me saying that it should have been me, I was worse than the boy. seemed to me she favoured the boy. So I ran away. I hated her and the Welfare and Police. After wandering around the streets, I came across a Police Station. I pic up some large stones, smashed the windows and took off.

Not long afterwards, I was picked up by the Police, and returned to the Home. On reaching the Home, I went through the front door, out the back and away again. was in this home for about 3 or 4 weeks before being transferred to the Girls Trai Centre.

Regarding today's position in Child Welfare Homes throughout New Zealand. An young child who comes to the notice of the Welfare or the Police and has to be tak away from the home scene should go to a camp similar to the Peter Snell Village wh this child, with others in similar circumstances, can receive guidance from profes ional people who are trained to help these children. I know that when a child com before the Welfare or Police notice, that this child is crying for help. There cou several camps throughout New Zealand set up for these children.

Some of the reasons for this are:

1. If a child was taken to one of these camps, his problems could be worked out with guidance from professional people.

2. If the child received the help he needed at this early age, maybe we could s him from spending time in Penal Institutions as he or she grew older.

3. You say, if we had camps like this, who will pay for the children in this car. At the moment, Government is paying for Welfare Homes throughout New Zealand. Why for Camps? By closing down these Welfare Homes, the money could go into the Camps. The child's parents also contribute by forfeiting the child's own Family Benefit w the child is away from home.

The camps could run on the basis of a large home with about 40 children, whe they could learn to live with one another and with respect. They must be run with understanding of the child, to give the child a chance in life that they wouldn't if they were home. When the time comes for the child to go home, say after a peri

of say 3 or 4 months, these children must be checked on to see how they are coping. This is what I would like to see done in trying to keep youngsters out of Penal Institutions in later life.

In my own case, I feel that if only the Social Welfare had listened to me, I would not have spent my years from 14 to 21 years old, in institutions. People of today must listen to the youngsters who are our future.

When was this happening?

From 1954.

COLIN JONES

I worked at Weymouth 1976-77, and have also had social work placement contact with Bollard and Allendale. I am basically for the institutions. I don't deny what has been said - for one thing I wasn't there - but they are personal views, as mine is.

Were the girls given VD checks?

They are not compulsory at Weymouth, but it's fair to say that some girls are coerced - for example in one specific case:

"We think you've got VD. You don't have to have a check, but we won't let you have home leave if you don't".

N.: You get put in Secure if you don't. Also, it's not the staff who force you, it's the Nurse.

What was your position at Weymouth?

I was an Assistant Housemaster.

How does an institution "suspect" a girl has VD?

I don't know.

Why can't the Principal control the Nurse?

The Nurse at Weymouth is a law unto herself.

Please comment on pyjamas?

At Weymouth, in Secure, it's a nightdress with underwear all day. I see no justification for it. It's meant to be a security measure, preventing escape. I haven't worked in Secure.

What is the attitude to new staff, who want to make changes?

It's fairly resistant, but some changes occur. I don't think Weymouth should ever have been built. I think too many girls are sent to homes. There is no real programme of rehabilitation.

What about staff training?

I had more than most. There is very little training on the job.

The girls in Secure had their meals in the cells. The Senior Housemaster decides the length of stay, but there are sort of "sentences" of different times in Secure. For hostel misdemeanours 3 days; absconding, 1 week; absconding a second time, 2 weeks. They are in their cells most of the day, one or two hours out. They have comics and books. A teacher goes down: there is a classroom there for some. Some children who are violent are seen individually. There is crochet, radios etc., but girls spend a lot of time doing nothing.

It should be more a system of cottage homes with "parents". Weymouth is 'the end of the line', they are not usually there for trivial reasons. I have seen girls struck in the home, and I have slapped them myself.. Tensions build up in institut-

ions, and it does happen. Then later on I would have a word with the girl, and sort it out.

Was there a book you had to write it in, or who would you report it to?
You weren't required to keep a record of it or tell anyone.

Was there much contact between the parents and the Principal or the institution?
 Not much. Weymouth is a national institution, and they often come from elsewhere. People can stay overnight, though not many do. Most contact is with the Home District Officers.

Is there staff democracy on the job?
 There is a weekly staff meeting of 1-1½ hours where things can be brought up, but they seldom get taken up further.

Are there handbooks or regulations for the staff?
You are only given the rules of the institution.

What is the ratio of staff to girls?
 There are 3 shifts, so the overall ratio is more than one to one. There are 12-15 girls in each hostel, and 3 staff on at a time.

Is there any group therapy?
 No, because nobody is trained to do it.

Why do the girls receive so little contact in Secure?
 Partly as punishment, and also because contact is up to the staff.

Is there a daybook kept?
 I don't think so.
 Weymouth Secure is different, freer, than Bollard or Allendale.

What is the class and race background of the girls and the staff?
Some staff at Weymouth are Maori. I deny that there is any prejudice. 80-90% of the girls are Maori and so working class. Nearly all the teachers are women.

As a trained social worker, do you think that refusal of human contact is ill-treatment?
 Yes.

What is the sex breakdown of the staff?
 Mainly women.

Were there any fire drills?
 Yes.

Did you have to file a report when you slapped a girl?
 No. I didn't feel it was necessary. If I had felt it necessary I could have covered myself.

If a teacher hits a child, you have to file a lengthy and detailed report with the Principal immediately.

Both Mr Jones and Mr Pollard have technically broken the Official Secrets Act today, and could be liable for up to 14 years. We thank them for coming, and note that the Official Secrets Act makes informed public evaluation very difficult, as it prevents people from making information available, or coming forward to speak.

MR AND MRS LYALL

We live near Wesleydale. I have no axe to grind, as I have no sons. In mid-1977 we found a boy of 11 in our garage one day. He was like a cringing animal, all bruised. He was also bleeding from barbed wire scratches he got escaping, and soaking wet. He said, "Don't let those men get me".

ict "What men?"

"Those men chasing me".

He was covered in bruises, old and new ones. The muscles of his legs were knotted from P.T. I bathed him and put him to bed. It was really shocking. He wouldn't let me put sticking plaster on the cuts because he said they'd just pull it off. We didn't know what to do, so in the end we rang the Police.

They took him back to the Home, wrapped in a blanket - I had thrown his clothes away. He cried and held on to us, and we promised to go and see him. I felt like Judas. But we were never allowed to go and see him or take him out, we could only write to him. It was about this time last year. If I hadn't seen it, I would never have believed it. He was wearing a pair of boxer shorts and a T-shirt.

In the end a lady from Social Welfare rang and said he'd been shifted. They blocked all contact. You'd think they would welcome somebody taking an interest in a child and wanting to develop a relationship. This boy was from Whangarei. The home is for under 14s: he was a tiny 11. He didn't seem to know why he was there - probably for truanting or something. We asked why he had run away.

"I want to go home. I want my mother".

We should have taken him to a doctor, I see now, but you don't think straight. They aren't homes, they're prisons.

MRS BICKERTON

I have 7 children, and I've had 14 foster children. I like kids. Thirteen years ago, in 1965, I answered an advertisement to relieve as housemaster at Allendale. I thought I'd be supervising Art, and things like that. When I arrived, I was given a set of keys for everything, and told I must make sure they wore pyjamas at night, and their clothes were locked up so they couldn't run away. I lasted for 3 weeks - it wasn't what I went for.

I could hear them in the cells, banging and screaming. I found it very traumatic and upsetting. Often they were all refused to use the Recreation room, the TV etc., because someone had run away. One time I pledged that if I took them to the Rec room, they wouldn't run away and I told them that I'd get in trouble if they did - and of course none of them ran away. Once I arrived and found them sleeping naked, in June, because someone had run away. I issued pyjamas.

When they had showers, you were meant to watch and make sure they washed between their legs, but I felt they still had their pride and a right to privacy. When I turned away they were surprised.

"Aren't you going to watch us?"

I told them that I knew they could all be trusted to wash properly.

They were all bored: there was no education, no stimulation. Some of them had done nothing - till they ran away from the Home a couple of times. They might run away from home once, then from the Welfare Home, and then they were in trouble. Some of the parents should have been in there. One 11 year old left home and was sent to a Welfare Home, but she left home because her mother had a new boyfriend who wouldn't let her into the house till very late at night. One 15 year old had run away from home because her mother made her leave school. Her mother was a prostitute, and she didn't see why her daughter shouldn't help out with her share of the clients.

Of course some of them are tough cookies, and you have to have somewhere for them. But what's the best way to treat them? I used to kiss them goodnight, and give them a little cuddle. For some of them it was the first time they could remember ever having been kissed in their lives. Then I'd say goodnight and ask them to keep quiet or I'd be in trouble. Matron asked what I'd done - had I tranquilised them? I said that I'd just treated them as human beings.

I remember one girl being brought back by the Police. She was dragged in struggling and screaming

"Don't put me in the cells again!" over and over. In the end she was dragged by her hair.

Working there made me ill. They asked me to come back but I said

"I cannot work with sadists".

This was Allendale, 13 years ago. I rang the Sunday News. They made the mistake of ringing up first: and when they went they got shown a special front. So then they said to me that I was quite wrong, and it was a great place, and I said

"Just try working there".

It makes even 12 year olds start running away. Then they start sleeping with boys for the first time, to get away from a Social Welfare Home.

MRS MARJORIE PARRANT

I want to talk about Melville Boys Home in Hamilton. My grandson was being neglected by his parents and beaten; he is a good boy. He ran away, and his mother took him to Welfare. They took him home, and his mother sent him over to his grandmother. The Welfare lady was a friend of my daughter's. They agreed he was not to go to his grandmother, though I'd had him for 7 weeks. Not one word of our statement went into her report. I got hold of the boy's father, though it was Welfare's job. I was accused of breaking up the marriage.

My grandson was in the home for 5 weeks. All they haven't got in that home is tight handcuffs and chains to the wall. There was no schooling. No visits from Grandma. He didn't deserve it; he hadn't done anything. Homes are cruel to children, they're just as bad as these parents in the news for child abuse, with boots up the behind and getting hit over the ears. He didn't want to see his mother in there, but in the end he saw her for 10 minutes. He's 15 and wants a farm job. Why can't he leave school and get that job? Why should he live with his parents if he doesn't want to? We know who the boss up there all right. They said he'd run away. Well, he doesn't know why he was there. "The dungeon" is as big as a bathroom. They get let out once a day for a shower. He got 1 comic a day, to read over and over again.

No children should be treated like that - no wonder lots of them get into trouble. Staff people leave because they can't take the way the children are treated

M.J. HAMPSON (Statement read by Vapi Kupenga)

I endorse anything within reason that could be done to improve the general atmosphere of a Welfare Home, and, particularly, the attitude of authority to the children in the care of the State.

My comments could by now be old hat and out of date. I was night supervisor at Market Road Reception Centre from February to September 1974. The following items could seem trivial but, to me, they are indicative of an overall lack of understanding of the needs of the youngsters. Nominally, the needs of the children came first, but

it riled me to find the matron gave more importance to completion of ironing, mending and various kitchen chores. My hours were 9.30 pm to 6.30 am. The babies slept in cots in the nursery at one end of the house, the boys' dormitory was fairly central and the girls' dormitory was at the other end of the house. In theory, the duty sub-matron had a room in staff quarters, but the general practice was for her to go home, leaving a 'phone number for use in emergency (her home could be Ponsonby, New Lynn, Meadowbank or anywhere). My constant concern was how one person would cope in case of fire - the gas fire in the common-room burned all night, with various items of laundry draped nearby for airing.

Newcomers were often restless for a few nights and needed reassurance - sometimes a drink of hot milk or cocoa and honey, a couple of biscuits and, possibly, a little fairytale, talk or story by the fire, then back more happily to sleep. A few required one, two or three nappy-changes every night. I didn't approve of the "punishment" for bed-wetting by older children by making them go to bed wearing napkins. Night time bath-and-into-pyjama routine appeared to commence around 3 pm so that most would have been dressed for bed before the evening meal.

Bed-wetting by the older children could be an isolated case but, more often, seemed to affect a group: and this often happened when staff were having an edgy time. Coming on duty at 9.30, when departing staff often had coffee before going home, I normally got a run-down on the day's events; and nobody could describe it as a happy family atmosphere. A night entailing complete bed-change and fresh pyjamas for three or more youngsters often followed a day of staff upset in one way or another. Another factor was absence of an under-blanket. A waterproof square between mattress and cold sheet is not really conducive to a night's comfortable sleep in the middle of winter. I campaigned, with, I fear, limited success, for underblankets for all the youngsters.

One newcomer was described as "retarded and unable to talk". He turned out to be a bright lad, fluent in French, and eager and quick to learn English. I was told that some time before February 1974 a service club had offered to give the Centre a minibus, but acceptance was vetoed by somebody in Wellington because the State was supposed to provide amenities, and accepting such a gift could have put the Department in an unfavourable light. Since then I believe the Centre can get a car, on occasion, from the Public Service Garage, provided one of the staff has a licence and is willing to play chauffeur. But what of the emergencies, visits to Hospital Casualty, the Chemist, up to the store for more bread, etc.? Also, prior to that time, some of the staff had taken a group of youngsters to the Easter Show, or a Trade Fair. The staff concerned finished up about \$20 out of pocket. I'm not sure whether the Department refused or whether the matron was reluctant to press for reimbursement for her staff.

I believe school age children were entitled to pocket money, but they didn't appear to be getting it, as the administrative problems would have been too much of a hassle.

Help with school homework was a hit-and-miss affair, depending on personnel of the afternoon duty roster. The Principal of the nearby school was genuinely concerned and helpful, and did all he could to save the children embarrassment and to make them feel happy at school.

One night I arrived on duty to find written instructions to "feed baby before midnight and again before 6.30 am and prepare formula for next 24 hours". No details for this spinster in her mid-fifties. Even the nappies are folded differently these days, and my vague memories of helping at home would not do. I believe present-day formula alters with age and condition of the child. Eventually discovered Karilac etc in cupboard under kitchen sink and then rang a niece who got out her Plunket book and read me a standard recipe. She was a fount of commonsense and reassurance. I enjoyed these evening sessions with the baby even if the ironing, mending etc didn't get finished. The disturbing item was the possibility that, instead of being returned to his mother, he might be fostered out.

The last straw for me was a call one night from Central Police: would I accept a 3 weeks old baby? Yes, we had a spare cot at the time but, from past experience, my reply was a) when did it have its last feed? and b) Do you know what formula it is on? The reply was staggering:

"The baby is breast-fed".

The caller seemed relieved to have to report to his superior:

"No way. That baby must stay with his mother".

The Minister claims to act 'in loco parentis' or expects his deputy to do so for him. Schoolchildren must be able to hold their own with their peers. When Susie has a tooth extracted at Dental Clinic, her mates will ask her next day if the Tooth Fairy called. A trivial matter possibly, but it means a lot to a youngster, particularly one already feeling 'different', because away from home and parents and coming to school from 'an institution'. Staff who care are happy to play Tooth Fairy, but it should be funded by this guy who claims to act in loco parentis.

The fact that these comments are out of date does not necessarily mean that the situation has improved. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this, but have been told that there is less disturbance and wakefulness at night now because the possible "offenders" are dosed with Vallergeren...

Youngsters would naturally get excited at the possibility of going 'on holiday'. Before being fostered out, they might spend one or two weekends with future foster parents, then a shopping day with matron for fresh outfitting, and off and away. It was pitiful to see the change in the child when it returned, weeks or months later if that particular foster situation failed. This happened too often, and each time the child was more affected. I used to wonder if the Department awarded grading marks to its officers solely on the number of fosterings arranged.

It might also have given grading marks on the number of children admitted to the Centre. I feel very strongly that children are whisked away from their parents far too quickly and too often. It's easy enough to walk into a home and say that a child, or, more often, children are in an "environment detrimental to their well-being", swear an affidavit to that effect and have them admitted to the Reception Centre. I wonder what percentage of children admitted to the Market Road Home are eventually restored to their parents. I contend that more effort should be made to help the home situation BEFORE children are separated from their parents. A little domestic help, possibly counselling, budget advice or even an arrangement for a fortnight's holiday for the mother while the family is kept together in the family environment would be a more constructive way of dealing with potential trouble. A mother doesn't have her problem sorted out by sudden and traumatic deprivation of her children. If she isn't particularly conversant with the law and the language and is under stress, she is the one who needs understanding and help. It is positively monstrous and inhumane for a Government official to waltz in, label her a 'bad parent' and whip away her children. If that is acting 'in loco parentis' then it's time our wonderful welfare state substituted a little warm red blood in place of its inhuman, cold red tape. I think even a computer would spit out more constructive answers.

Addition of male staff could improve the atmosphere to something nearer the ideal family situation. The youngsters rush to have a word with the plumber, electrician or anyone who calls for a spot of maintenance work. They miss Dad as well as Mum - and remember, these youngsters are not at the Centre for any form of punishment. They are there because the State has deemed their home an unfit place for them. The State reckons it is transplanting them to a better, more wholesome environment.

To summarise:

1. Does bedding include an underblanket?
2. Are the schoolchildren receiving regular help with homework?
3. Are they receiving their pocket money?
4. What social attention is given a child who returns to the Centre from breakdown in foster home - the first time, the second time, the third time?
5. Is the home situation given help and attention for at least a month before children are removed from their parents?
6. Do the parents, particularly those not conversant with the law and English language, have their position and their rights explained to them?
7. Is any child being given Vallergeren at night without a doctor's specific directive?

VAPI KUPENGA

I can illustrate some of what Ms Hampson says. I dealt with the case of a woman with 5 children under 5 who had a custody problem - she was separated from her husband. She got the children for a few days (interim custody), then the husband got the court to rule that the children should go into a Home, pending investigation. I had taken them home with me, and went out leaving the woman, her 5 children and my 3 children at home. When I got home, my 3 were very upset. Two welfare officers had turned up about 9.30, after all the kids were in bed and asleep, and took the 5 children away. Of course the mother went with them, and mine were left alone.

This was over Easter. I sent some telegrams and kicked up a fuss. Social Welfare was only carrying out orders from the court, and said it was so late because they couldn't trace the family till then. But at that time, carrying out 5 under 5 children, waked up and screaming! They wouldn't allow the mother to go with them, but she insisted and went anyway to settle the children.

Her problem was with the husband, not the kids, yet she had to prove that she was a good mother. She visited them every day. Nobody else was allowed to visit them, even me. 9.30 at night is brutal for such young children, and for their mother too.

Splitting up of families by sex and age means that they are never together as a family, which might be a comfort to them; and they are often fostered separately.

I know a woman who asked the Department for interim help with accomodation, but the Department became the judge of whether she had OK accomodation, and whether to give them back. They sent 2 children to the North Shore, and 2 somewhere else. They do that all the time, but they have no right not to give them back when asked.

We (the Welfare Department) have no legal status, so we must give them back to the mother in a case like that. Sometimes we take the children at the mother's request, for example, a solo mother going into hospital for a few weeks. It is hard to find foster parents for more than two kids at once.

If we have a warrant, we usually can hold the children till the next sitting of the Children's Court, when we must present a case - a week at most.

We also get them in a custody dispute sometimes.

What about this business of the return of children from foster homes, often in a worse state than when they left the Centre?

Sometimes "bonding" doesn't occur - it doesn't work out. It is hard on the foster-mother, but harder on the kids.

There is a difference between being 'under supervision', 'under care' and being a State Ward, which is the most extreme.

WENDY POKROY

I worked as an Education Department psychologist in Hamilton till this year. I had dealings with the children's homes in Hamilton - Day St Girls, Melville Boys and the Reception Centre.

Generally, I was asked to initiate a training programme for staff in all three, because at present there is none.

I was given a guided tour of Melville - the cells horrified me. I saw a small boy of 9 or 10 who told me he was there because he swore. He said "bloody" - and this was confirmed by the person with me. It could have been my child, or the child of anybody I know. The attitudes there (Melville) are bad, and are set by Chibnall's so-called

"environmental counselling" - that is to cut off all the child's support systems and make him dependent on the internal system within the home, and its staff.

I approached the three Principals. Chibnall refused the training programme because I had the "wrong attitudes". The Reception Centre followed his lead. Only Day St. (which had a new Principal) would try. I took four sessions, and then I said in no way was it possible. My area is interpersonal work, and counselling in a positive way. I was trying to give this to the staff, and to approach them as other equal people: and to get them to approach the children as other equal people. But they wanted an absolute, pedestal position, with no emotion or feelings to be shown. They were hostile and antagonistic, and I could/would not continue. Half a dozen of the staff are very, very good, but they are ineffective because of shifts which have the direct effect of undoing the work of the good staff.

When I and my attitudes became known, I was approached and asked to do something by parents and people with similar stories to those we have heard today. I felt disbelief at first, but seeing so much smoke, I came to believe that it is true, and these things certainly happen, with horrifying frequency. Some staff also came to me. I could do nothing, being a different Department. I suggested one woman kept a daily diary, and copy from the Day Book to support her record. A record of counselling meetings with this woman show that she has made successful changes in a difficult boy's behaviour, yet questions were raised as to her competence - this was Tower Hill Reception Centre.

Ms Pokroy then played a tape recording of a telephone conversation with the woman reading from the diary she kept. The tape was difficult to hear at times.

"Probably most of these children were under 7 years old, but I remember one case where a terrible fuss was made because one of the little boys was caught masturbating. The response was out of all proportion - very old-fashioned - and not at all like the attitude advised in modern books on parenting for example.... I remember a staff member repeatedly calling a little girl a "bitch". ... The treatment is non-therapeutic they aren't treated as children, but as "little soldiers". If I tried to make changes, they would say "Mrs -- has funny ideas". There is a conspiracy of silence about that place - nobody will speak out. Most of the positive ones have left, for example because of having to force food into the children's mouths."

People are afraid to speak out because they might lose their job; not get a job; be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act; but I think they are responsible for perpetuating this child abuse, and they should speak out.

GRAHAM MOORE

I have had dealings with the Social Welfare Department through a friend who went to Bollard. She was found guilty of an indecent act in a public place. She was put in Secure, the same routine, she was 14 years 9 months. She pleaded guilty to the charges, on the advice of a social worker, who said otherwise she'd never get out of Bollard. I pleaded Not Guilty, and got off the charges.

She was placed "under supervision", and I got a letter from Welfare which forbade me to communicate with her. The social worker refused to see me, but that social worker is not able to help my friend at all.

We were both arrested and charged, but I was out on bail while she was put into a Home, and into Secure and so on. There has been such a difference between how she has been treated and how I was treated - either because she is female, or because of her age.

She is in Bethany. Her parents said I was a bad influence and mustn't see her there: but they hadn't ever met me so I think they must have been advised to say that by Social Welfare. Now I have met her parents. The Social Worker at Bethany is more help.

NZMS 521, 3-343

RAYMOND REDCLIFFE

I am 33 now. I was a State Ward for 15 years, from when I was 18 months old. I went to Owairaka when I was 6 or 7. It is all quite true about the ill treatment, the P.T. etc. We used to be waked at 2 am to do press-ups. I hadn't committed any crime, except being a State Ward: but because I had a brother there, we were singled out for humiliation. I remember having to kneel and cut the lawn with shears. I was hit across the small of the back with a cane, for being too slow.

Once we were playing peg ball, and lost the ball. I said, "Use a tennis ball".

This was interpreted as getting smart. I had to run around till I dropped, then was put in solitary. When I was there for release, a senior boy, working at the time for 8 hours a day, I still had to join in this P.T.

Ricketts has been there since 1949. Ricketts gets one of his boys to hit you; he can hold his temper. Willis hit me over the face. In 1950, Owairaka had 5-15 year olds, but even now they have too young kids there. There was no education for my son, during his short stay there.

Homosexual activity develops due to being in an institution. I don't know of any staff activity, though I have heard rumours.

aged 33 in 1978

DOB 1945

in Dunedin in early 1950s

APPENDIX

NOTES FROM PRELIMINARY REPORT FROM PANEL

PANEL MEMBERS:

John Hippolite
 Rebecca Evans
 Donna Awatere
 Poe Tuiasau

Submissions alleged cruel and inhuman treatment in Owairaka Boys Home, Melville Boys Home, Wesleydale, Bollard and Allandale Girls Homes, Cornwall Park, Market Road and Tower Hill Receiving Homes.

Summary

CRUEL AND INHUMAN TREATMENT

- a) Secure Units: conditions and automatic admission on entry
- b) Violence and Assaults
- c) Venereal Disease Examinations: given to all girls regardless of age or sexual activity: fully internal - swab taken from a sample obtained by full internal vaginal extraction: use of stirrups and strapping down
- d) delousing and stripping down: lack of privacy and dignity
- e) Blistered Feet: PT in sandshoes without socks
- f) No Underwear: resultant chafing
- g) Ill-fitting Clothes: Wearing Pyjamas all day: Wearing Shorts all day: when worn continuously, including PT, repulsive stench: inadequate warmth
- h) Spirit-Breaking Procedures: the "Nodding" system: mowing lawn which had already been mown and digging holes and filling them in: continuous physical education until boys returned after running away for those remaining
- i) Health and Hygiene in Secure Units: lack of fire drills in some homes: using same cleaning cloths repeatedly for cleaning both toilet and hand basin: issue of four small squares of toilet paper per day to girls.
- j) lack of communication, stimulation and education in secure units.

BREACH OF STAFF REGULATIONS

a) Close Custody and Secure Units

"Confinement of any child or young person in close custody is to be generally regarded as an emergency procedure to be terminated as soon as behaviour warrants release.....Cases are to be reviewed regularly..."

"Not more than one child or young person is to be confined in any one secure room at one time unless in circumstances of real necessity".

b) Constructive use of Time.

"Controlling officers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that children and young persons restrained in close custody are constructively occupied as far as practicable."-

"Comics are to be provided within reason for leisure time".

"Any child or young person of school age held in secure conditions for more than three days must be visited by a teacher, if a teacher is attached to the institution, and encouraged to continue his formal education."

c) Health and Hygiene

"Where practicable it is expected that meals will be taken together in the common roomThe conclusion of an evening meal gives valuable opportunity for discussion young persons should not be locked up immediately after meals without good reason."

Thus in regard to Secure Units, the 24 hour, one day experience of a secure unit is somewhat horrific and dismal at the least. Other than a total combined time of one hour per day of physical education, there was no contact, communication or inter-action; and visual, verbal and all other boundaries were

confined, in practice, to the square measure of the cell, in silence with a couple of comics. Inter-action outside the cells was non-existent also because of the "nodding" system which precluded communication; and any efforts to speak or otherwise communicate during physical education were not only disallowed (in Owairaka) but also monitored for and quashed. Mrs Rakatau stated that her son was punished for singing while in secure in Owairaka.

The Department has breached several of its own regulations.

DISSATISFACTION WITH ADMINISTRATION AND GENERAL RUNNING OF SOCIAL WELFARE HOMES, AND CONCLUSIONS

The racial breakdown of inmate population in these homes reflects a large percentage of Maori inmates - disproportionate to the Maori population. In most of the homes, Maori and Pacific Islanders comprise 70-80% or more of the inmate population. In stark contrast, Maoris comprise 1-5% of the Administrative/Managerial Staff of these institutions. The administration of the system is mono-racial; and if these institutions are ever going to begin to deal adequately with Maori and Pacific Island children, they are first and foremost going to have to implement an immediate programme of affirmative action for Maori women and Maori men in these institutions. This would be the first measure necessary to help eradicate the inherent racism within the homes. Notice testimony that Pakeha girls were treated better than Maori girls who were seen as stereotypically bad, and as troublemakers.

Combined with the racism in these institutions there is also sexism. There is only one woman Principal in a Social Welfare Reception Centre, and no women Principals in any of the Girls Homes. Thus for Maori girls the case becomes doubly bad.

Racism and Sexism, however, are not exclusive to the homes. One ex-staff member noted how Social Welfare Workers made ethnocentric, monocultural judgments about Maori children in the homes, and was horrified by the blatant monoculturalism and monoracial administration of these homes. Institution Regulations did not cater for any non-Pakeha concept of family or parents.

Staff Training is another area of ignorance and dissatisfaction. In every instance of ex-staff members, training was experience, with no formal training or orientation programme, and definitely no definition of criteria or qualifications necessary.

An analysis of staff 'qualifications' held prior to entering Social Welfare Homes shows a predominance of ex-Service Men being employed, as well as persons with university degrees, not necessarily in Social Science. The validity or necessity of these qualifications for these jobs is negated by the behaviour of staff, and the environment which has developed as a consequence of present staffing.

Responsibility for the occurrences in these homes cited in this Report rests with the Social Welfare Department and Social Welfare Department Homes' Staff. By stripping children of all their support systems and identifications and making them dependent on the internal system within the home, and its staff, the Institution makes the child obey in order to survive. Authorities are aware of this "environmental counselling", for they practise it in every Social Welfare Institution spoken of in this Report.

Nothing short of restructuring the race and sex composition, administration and policy of the present institution is needed. A cottage system of smaller home units based on a family type of home set-up would be better, but we must be careful not to repeat the same monoracial, monosex system in a disseminated form. A family system with Mother and Father people, Maori and Pakeha, is implicit in this alternative to the present threatening system.