



## DORMITORY LIFE: Is it living?



FOR INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL  
Portage La Prairie, Man.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS... BRANCH OF EDUCATION  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

UNITED STATES  
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by  
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS . . . BRANCH OF EDUCATION  
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You are a dormitory attendant.  
You are a boys' and girls' adviser.  
You are a guidance department head.  
You are a boarding school principal.  
You are a boarding school superintendent.  
You are an area educationist.

Let us imagine that some day you are passing a newsstand. You see a new magazine which we shall call CONTEMPORARY OUTLOOK. A headline on the cover catches your eye: **WHAT'S WRONG WITH INDIAN SCHOOL DORMITORY LIFE?**

You pay 50 cents and thumb the pages hurriedly to the scathing article. It reads something like this.

*What started out to be a report by CONTEMPORARY OUTLOOK MAGAZINE on progress in education of our oldest minority group has turned out to be an exposé of life in Federal boarding schools for Indians. Our team of investigators uses such terms as dismal, disturbing, and depressing. Field notes read like description of life in run-down, third-rate orphanages in the days of Dickens rather than today. Not in every case. But in enough instances to be quite common. Only a vigorous new look will correct the situation.*

*What are CONTEMPORARY OUTLOOK'S findings? Specific names and places are necessarily held in confidence. Your editor suggests that individuals or civic groups who are interested make their own investigation of various Indian schools to see for themselves at firsthand. Here is CONTEMPORARY OUTLOOK'S view:*

*"Now what?" you ask yourself, and read on.*

... Walk up the worn stone steps to the high porch of an old brick building at one of the Indian schools. It is a boys' dormitory designed in the 19th century. Well over 60 years' old. Try the front door. It is locked. Walk down and around to the west side entrance. That is locked too. You wonder what is so valuable inside that requires such staunch security measures. Or is it symptomatic of a lack of esteem by the advisers for the student body?

A boy passes by, and you inquire how to locate the person in charge. He points to the east side ground floor entrance. You push the door open. Coming in from the bright sunshine you try to adjust your eyes to the gloom inside.

The room is long and narrow. A single naked bulb of feeble candle power hangs from the pipe-lined ceiling. The cement floor—tired from years of effort—sags and heaves with deep cracks. The dingy walls mutely call for warm, strong colors that would add a touch of coziness.

"Can't be my school," you say. Or do you?

There are no chairs. No, you are mistaken. At the far end are a dozen or so steel folding chairs. Their cushions are frayed, their frames bent. They are lined up auditorium-like in front of a TV set perched in a high unpainted cabinet. And there is one forlorn wooden bench along the wall. This is the main living room and recreation center for the 150 high-school-age boys who occupy the building.

Upstairs, in a little office, you find the man in charge. He is pleasant and gracious. Yes, this is where the older boys live. Yes, he is glad to show you the place. He carries a massive cluster of keys. Everything is locked. The sewing room. The room where everyone's clean clothes are kept. The boys rarely use the lockers or chests in their sleeping rooms. "EVERYBODY steals," the man says. There is no living room. (What was originally intended for a small living room for the building has long since been partitioned into sleeping rooms for additional students.) Every student sleeping room is locked. You are shown into several. They reveal a drab, overcrowded hodgepodge.

In a typical room designed for two students, three double-deck beds may fill most of the floor space. The frames are chipped. The springs sag. Bedspreads are monotonously institutionalized stripes. The mattresses which peek out from a corner of the sheets are faded with age. There is one chair for the six occupants, its arms are off. There is a scarred oak chest of drawers. Four army-green metal lockers battered and chipped line one wall. You try to look into one. They are all locked. What

kind of young criminals are being educated in the place, you wonder.

You start out the door and notice some newspaper pictures taped to the wall alongside one of the beds. Proudful reaching for something private? Something personalized? Something pretty?

"What do they expect of us? The impossible?" you complain silently. "Why don't they try working here for awhile?"

What you have seen so far is a far cry from house beautiful. If this is the Indian child's major exposure to modern "comforts," you wonder how many youths it will inspire away from Indian untrammelled life.

You ask about the toilet and bathing facilities. You hope to find something more enticing. Something to be proud of—good plumbing is a big thing in American life.

You are on the second floor. Really the third floor, for the basement is on ground level. You are led down two flights of stairs into what resembles ancient catacombs. There you see a long enameled trough. It's for washing—one's face and hands. There is no mixer faucet. The "mixing" is done by the attendant who carries a wrench to the main pipes. The students take it hot or cold, whichever comes. There are no mirrors where they wash. The number of water closets is obviously inadequate. A look at the showers makes you shudder. They didn't expect you; the place is a mess.

"Sure is not my school," you say. "Wonder which one they are talking about." You skip a number of paragraphs and turn to the end of the article.

Is this 1858? No, this is today!

In every school? No, but in many.

In every building? No. And it is not nearly so bad in most of the girls' dormitories. That old Mother Goose rhyme flashes through your mind. "Scissors and snails, that's what little boys are made of."

Our reporters talked to members of the staff. Asked questions. Noted some of the replies: "Boys are naturally not good housekeepers. . . . There are too many students to clean up after. . . . We get all the bad ones. Just welfare cases. . . .

*There's no use giving them good furnishings. They'll bust it up anyway. . . . Other schools get the good students. Particularly the public schools. . . . The employees are underpaid. . . . Our dormitory is better than the homes they come from. . . . We need a gym. . . . We need more locks. You can't do anything with an old building." And so on.*

*With a feeling that too much of Indian dormitory life looks like a breeding ground of futility, we peeked into a few classrooms. The students smiled—bright eyed. Hair was neatly combed. They were handsome youths busy with the usual lessons. Spelling. Arithmetic. . . . And we went away, wondering.*

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What is CONTEMPORARY OUTLOOK MAGAZINE? When did it publish this article? Never.

There is no such magazine, so far as we know. We hope no magazine will ever publish such an article. We hope that nothing like the conditions described will ever be found at Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Phoenix, Pine Ridge, Chilocco—or **any** of our substantial list of Indian boarding schools and peripheral dormitories.

But we've got a problem. There are many Indian youths still to be educated for successful modern living. We can probably expect a growing number of students in our schools to be welfare cases of various sorts, as well as our having pupils requiring special services of acculturation. All children enrolled in Indian boarding schools have problems which call for a rich program of dormitory living. Always, we must ask: Is it **living**? Do we have a program adequate for the complex needs to be met? How can we achieve more "program" and less "duty"?

The purpose of this pamphlet is to make explicit what are considered to be good programs for dormitory living for education of Indian children.

## Plant Standards Grow From Function

Standards for new construction have been established by the Bureau which should result in all new school facilities providing an acceptable and modern physical environment for the number of students intended. As such new facilities become available, they will help to serve unmet needs and in many instances either replace or relieve the overload being carried in some existing facilities.

Also, surveys are under way, and plans being completed for modernization or rehabilitation of certain existing facilities which no longer meet modern standards of safety, sanitation, or adequacy of function. In addition, during the summer of 1958, funds became available for bringing dormitory furnishings and equipment at the secondary age level up to a high standard in most of our schools.

We may therefore set aside, in this discussion, those physical standards which are the subject of other studies and publications. It should be noted, however, that standards for rehabilitating existing facilities, standards for construction of new facilities, and standards for use of space derive in large part from the type of program to be conducted.

Take the simple matter of teaching children to acquire the habit of reading as a desirable home pastime. This is a commonly recognized desirable habit as a goal. To help develop the habit, dormitory life should supplement the classroom where reading skills are taught. The dormitory should have a good supply of books suited to the age and reading level of the group. They should be titles which will entice children from a non-literate, non-reading family background. Students' sleeping rooms should be provided with a comfortable chair for each student. Student rooms should have adequate light. Otherwise, the reading habit is likely not to be fostered. Adequate wiring, sufficient convenience outlets, suitable light fixtures and suitable reading lamps become an important physical standard for student sleeping rooms. Where artificial light is poor, study desks in students' rooms should be placed near a window—not deep in the dark room—to take advantage of good daylight on week ends and leisure-time hours in the early evening.

As another illustration, consider the relatively simple matter of space for luggage storage in each dormitory. Bureau standards call for a luggage storage room which is dry, with arrangement for easy access by the students—rather than suitcases and trunks being stacked high on each other in some inaccessible cubbyhole. A nearby table is recommended so that students can have a clean, convenient place for opening their suitcases.

Unless those in charge, however, see the importance of these functions, setting up these conveniences will not be undertaken. How is luggage handled in a modern home? Unless the importance of avoiding stacking suitcases on top of lockers, or otherwise crowding and spoiling the appearance of student sleeping rooms is recognized, little effort will be made to find special space suitable for luggage storage somewhere in the building.

In short, physical standards for boarding school dormitories have been tacitly based upon a good educational program. Clearly, dormitory life cannot be totally separated from academic, health, and other phases of the curriculum. A boarding school with attractive classrooms and adequate sanitary facilities in the classroom building but with drab sleeping rooms and inadequate, inconvenient, and unattractive sanitary facilities in the dormitories is an anachronism.

### **The Primary Function of Dormitories**

In placing an Indian child in a boarding school, the primary function of the dormitory is not merely to provide shelter as good as the child would have at home; or food that is merely abundant; or clothing that is good enough for an Indian. The primary purpose of the dormitory is to provide a well-rounded, rich home experience as good as **any** child might have.

Reasons for this are twofold. First, the Indian child enrolled in a boarding school is particularly handicapped. He is away from home because of some special need. He probably comes from a home in great isolation, removed from common modern experiences. Perhaps he is already several years over-age for his grade—behind in schooling through no fault of his own. Worse yet,

he may be either an orphan or a child of parents who are delinquent, jailed, permanently hospitalized, or in other serious difficulty. Perhaps the child himself has already begun to get into minor difficulties. These are the conditions underlying enrollment of an Indian child in a boarding school today. For humanitarian reasons alone, the boarding school should provide a warm-hearted, rich home life for the Indian child. He has no other home.

Secondly, the Indian boarding school pupil is in particular need of becoming adjusted to modern living. Chances are that he has little or no social security among his people. Chances are that he has little or no economic security back on the reservation. If he had access to even moderate wealth back home, he probably would not be in a boarding school. Someone else would have made other provision for him. At best, he probably comes from a home which is at the extreme scale of illiteracy, poverty, sickness, instability. He comes from a background of what we call a low degree of acculturation. Because increasingly the Indian child accepted in a boarding school is both socially and economically handicapped in his own society, there is little hope for his future in traditional Indian life. Most of what he comes to know firsthand about modern American life will be based upon his dormitory environment. It is to the national interest that his school experience assure successful acculturation.

To be precise, it is to everyone's interest that the student succeed in wanting to become self-supporting and keeping off the bread line as an adult; in keeping out of jail and wanting to be a contributing, respected citizen; in keeping physically and mentally healthy, equipped with skills and habits that yield maximum personal satisfactions. He needs to feel secure and at home in good modern surroundings. He needs to experience a modern home life sufficiently rewarding and enticing to want to sweat and work hard for something similar upon graduation. Otherwise, for what goals will his vocational skills serve him, if not for niceties of modern living that have become impelling desires?

Such broad functions are functions which the academic classroom cannot provide even though it concerns itself in part with such functions, as every parent knows. In day schools this is self-evident. The academic classroom develops intellectual

capacities. It is where one spells, pronounces, writes, and acquires arithmetical skills, and such things. Nor can a home economics laboratory or vocational shop achieve realistic home-living goals for the student. A girl may acquire skills of cooking and sewing in a home economics laboratory. This is far short of what constitutes a rich experience in home living. A boy may acquire skills of sawing and filing and fabricating metal and wood and other materials in a vocational shop. These are skills for **earning** a living. In the environment in which one actually **lives** during the 138 hours outside of the 30 classroom hours is the best opportunity for the MAIN job of experience in living to be done.

A school program which is primarily academic is unbalanced. If the program is primarily vocational, or primarily athletic, it is unbalanced—like a car with one wheel missing. In many ways, the total program of the boarding institution needs to be re-centered. The academic needs to do the academic as broadly as possible. The vocational must do the vocational. The dormitory must become a center of dynamic living. The dormitory must function truly as a home. It must operate in the mode and subtle nuances of the **best** of homes. In all reasonableness, neither Johnnie nor Mary can properly be expected to be any more than we have led them to be by firsthand experience in their dormitory living with us. They will go out with the strengths we have successfully given them; they will depart with the weaknesses with which we have failed them.

### What Are the Big Goals?

We know why Johnnie and Mary are here. They are in a boarding school because they are welfare cases, because if left in their former environment they might well become problem children, or because they live in physical and cultural isolation. Now, we face the question: Where are we trying to lead them? What are we trying to assist these particular students in achieving?

It is difficult to separate goals from method. In some ways they need to be considered concurrently.

One is tempted to make an analogy. We want to take a trip. We'd like to travel somewhere. If the method of travel is

to walk, we may as well admit it, we won't travel very far—just down the block a way. If we have roller skates, and are enthusiastic enough, we might go a few blocks farther. A bicycle will do a bit better, but not too much. We can go still farther by car if the tires will hold up; by bus if we have the fare; by boat if there are rivers to cross. By plane if we have ample funds and the distance is great.

Let's not stretch the analogy. Just note the point that goals and method are closely intertwined.

We return to the problem of goals for dormitory living. **That** is a much more complex problem. There are baffling matters like, who sets the goals? Who determines the method? This is complex, because we are not dealing with transportation of inanimate objects. Administrators, advisers, attendants, teachers—all personnel—are involved. Students, parents, the general public have a say in the matter, not to mention The Congress, churches, and a few others.

Nor can we make such a clear-cut choice as the simple one of choosing a bicycle versus roller skates for transportation. Educational goals and method for home living come from sources much more complex, much more diverse, much more abstract. To use another figure of speech, it is much simpler to furnish a dormitory with material things than it is to permeate it with things spiritual and intangible.

Yes, goals are an elusive thing. Paradoxically, it is the **big** goals which are most easily obscured in life pursuits. There are so many little distractions. So many imperfections and annoyances clutter the way. Attention gets diverted. Yet it is the BIG goals which are most enduring. It is the big goals on which we must concentrate continuously.

Where do we find the big goals for dormitory programs? For this discussion, let us suggest four key sources.

One source is Johnnie and Mary themselves. Johnnie is a unique individual—one-legged, undersized, mixed-up in his peculiar way, or whatever his case may be. Some of the goals and some of the method necessarily grow out of what kind of a Johnnie a particular Johnnie is. What his individual needs are.

Another source of goals is the kind of environment from which Johnnie and Mary come. Isolated? Urban? English-speaking? Stable? Deteriorated? Johnnie's and Mary's previous experiences must be reckoned with in determining educational goals for **their** dormitory life.

Still another source of general goals to be fostered in the dormitory program comes from a look ahead. To assist Johnnie and Mary we must try to visualize, as well as we can, the future to which they must adjust. Here we seek to ascertain the demands of society. Our concern for Johnnie and Mary are the anticipated demands of the final quarter of the 20th century.

Finally, cues for goals for dormitory programs come from general knowledge of the psychology and sociology of children—applied to the particular children for whom we are responsible.

Let us discuss these sources briefly in reverse order. The subject is so broad, and so different from area to area and school to school, that only a general discussion can be considered here.

### **The Social Psychology of Adolescents as Cues for Dormitory Living**

A governing principle is that a student dormitory should be a place where children want to come, where one finds friendly associates, and where one gets help on things **he** wants to do.

It is easy to find instances of the negative. Many published studies of juvenile delinquency point up the need of the adolescent for **a sense of orderliness, a sense of responsibility, and a feeling that somebody cares**, or a sense of love. When these three characterize the climate of the adolescent's environment, delinquency seldom results. The negative of these—disorder, mistrust, indifference—can be expected to produce signs of rebellion. On this score, youth is very sensitively alert.

It is for these reasons that the detached observer may well wonder about schools where everything possible is locked up: exterior doors, interior doors, lockers. Sometimes not just one lock, but double locks. Generally one finds such concomitants as badly damaged furniture, an obvious lack of things of interest

to challenge every student, unguarded statements that express mistrust on matters of honesty, inadequate care of property, concern about boys and girls getting within half a mile of each other. There may be a high rate of dropouts from such a school. Such symptoms accent the negative. Very little forward-movingness in meeting students' fundamental needs can come out of such relationships.

It is futile to settle for a police approach or a mass locking approach. Much better to take some risk and to experiment with remedies that really may cure!

In this connection it is interesting to note that every school has its own character. Every school has a kind of culture-pattern or tone.

"A college or school without a culture-pattern is no more possible than a person without a character. Whenever a group of individuals live together in an organized community as a school or college is, they develop forms of behavior and a culture exists which determines the conduct of the members of the group. The control of this group behavior comes only when we understand the mechanisms of group living."\*

Since the tone or culture-pattern of a school results from the interaction of students, staff, and physical surroundings, it is something which educators **can** change. To do so, the unofficial as well as the officially organized aspects of the entire group—both among students and staff—must be taken into account. For example, the expectancy regarding dress, language used, common courtesies extended to students, the social gap between hierarchy and lower echelons, considerateness, the extent to which other members of the staff besides guidance workers come to visit dormitories, the interest displayed by staff in student dances and other extracurricular activities—all such things go into the culture-pattern of a school. The tone of the school is evidenced

\*Kelley, Janet. "Varying Mores in School and College Cultures", **The Journal of Educational Sociology**, p. 244, March 1958, Vol. 31, No. 7. New York University, N. Y.: The Payne Educational Sociology Foundation, Inc.

at all levels, in all phases, among students, staff, and local community. We need to consider fully various ways of developing a tone that will enrich the life of the students and the staff.

The trick is how to exploit the social-psychological phenomena of group-living. For example, we can establish a relationship which expects the best of students, not the worst. Let's avoid launching courses of restrictive action for the entire student body when **some** students do not immediately respond to responsible trust. It is better to ascertain specifically who are the offenders, and then take up specific educational measures for **their** needs. That is the business we are in. Our business is to find out **who needs what**. Too many good programs in dormitory life never get launched for fear they won't immediately succeed 100 per cent.

A good working principle in this regard is to assume that youth wants to do well. Youth wants to test its strength. Adolescent youth is an age of idealism. (Little wonder that theirs is also an age of easy disillusionment!) Adolescents are reaching out for something better than they frequently find among adults. Let us give our students the responsibility and trust that challenge them to achieve high ideals about honesty, sobriety, and other expectancies to their maximum strength.

You may ask, do we dare? Don't we have too many undependable students in our midst already?

The percentage that lets you down, or "takes advantage," will be relatively small. (After all, we're licked before we start if we consider them **all** little stinkers.) Having established the tone of expectancy, then let us determine goals and take up creative **educational** measures for education of the recalcitrant percentage.

Another characteristic of youth in group living is the general principle that **youth wants to get along with youth**. Much experimentation and rapid changes among children take place here. Adolescents are having first experiences on nearly everything in life. Girls wearing men's shirts hanging out of blue jeans; girls deliberately breaking eyeglasses which they should

wear, just because someone called them Owl Eyes. Girls wanting eyeglasses which they do not need, because they think glasses will make them look mature. Bulging petticoats. Pony-tail hairdos. Cerise lipstick of startling redness. These are harmless illustrations of adolescent herd instinct. Indian girls are just as prone as other races in trying to avoid opprobrium of other girls. Acceptance is their goal.

Girls clinging to boys' arms, engaging in sly flirtations. Uplift bras. Tight sweaters. A walk with a wiggle. The cosmic search for glamour. For feminine attractiveness to male classmates. These are accoutrements of girls wanting to get along with males.

With boys, the facts of adolescent life are the same. A leader is one who finds ways of expressing what his peer age group wants. Bird-nest haircuts, sideburns, bullying tactics are some of the more annoying manifestations. Nicely pressed slacks, fancy neckties, clumsy table manners are among the more droll. A fundamental urge of boys in a group is to get along with boys. It's axiomatic that boys want to get along with girls too.

You don't dare let them hold hands? You don't dare let a boy take a girl to a movie overtown while enrolled in your school? You don't dare let a group of girls have the homemaking experience of staying several nights in some suitable apartment on your campus—unchaperoned—during their senior year? How do you dare graduate them? How do you dare put your name on their diploma?

In short, what is the **real** tone of your school? How does it test out? Many reports indicate that "failure" of Indian school graduates placed out on jobs frequently comes under such categories as overindulgence of alcohol, premature purchase of cars or otherwise incurring of excessive debts, illicit cohabitation, and just plain lack of interest or indifference to one's job. Boys and girls without sure social skills in getting along properly with others. Young men with vocational abilities but aimless. If our program had been richer and more meaningful, might some of these pitfalls have been reduced?

Another important social-psychological fact about the nature of youth is that **youth wants to organize - to do things**. Unless the culture-pattern of the school builds on this need for youth, the students will surreptitiously organize for activities which may be antisocial, or they may be headed for painful mistakes. Not only a school newspaper, a band, hobby clubs. Not only interscholastic competition for the few. We need intramural competition year-round. Dormitory councils. Boys and Girls Scouts. Small-group activities. A hobby crafts room in the dormitory. Something for everybody. Something constantly new to keep youthful zest agoing. By such social interaction does the student body build and assess mores and learn to adjust to the total culture.

Thus, the training of youth for responsible citizenship and self-discipline must be grounded in good organization—with student participation. In handling personal laundry. In keeping sleeping rooms to good standard all day long. In use of the TV. In care of one's locker and dresser. In cleanliness of washrooms. In reporting and assisting in prevention of thefts. Orderliness and responsibility must be a guided maturing process of growing complexity. These are "natural" goals of adolescents.

These are just a few illustrations to point out that in building the dormitory guidance program for your school, a major source of lifelike, natural goals is the social-psychology of group life. The student presumes dormitory life to be a representative sampling of the larger culture. Anything less, fails to prepare him properly. And unless it richly fills adolescent social-psychological needs, the Indian student is not likely to want to go on with it.

#### **Demands of Society As a Source of Dormitory-Living Goals**

The primary purpose of tax-supported educational institutions is to lead the nation's youth to adjust to the diverse demands of society. In the case of Indian youths enrolled in Federal boarding schools today, it means in practicality, training of most of the students for life in modern society rather than training for traditional Indian life.

This circumstance is not taken with philosophical ease. It is more easy to lament the passing of an old way of life for any Indian group. We should be keenly aware of the importance of preserving room in our society for innumerable life-ways. But what is equally mistaken is to fail to meet the real needs of the Indian youth who now comes to a government boarding school.

Except for the shrinking proportion which is accepted due to remoteness of the pupil's home from a day school, the Indian child is accepted in a Federal boarding school today only because of breakdown in Indian life. He has little economic or social future in traditional Indian life based upon Indian-held resources. The child may be orphaned. The parents may be in jail; in a hospital; declared incompetent. The reasons come under the general category of being welfare cases, or under jurisdiction of some minor court—often a tribal court.

So, the Indian child in a Federal boarding school must be helped to meet the demands of modern society. Some of these are easy to list. Promptness in getting to work; thrift which results in promptness in meeting one's financial obligations; compliance with the rules of the firm or the boss' way of wanting things done; fashion in dress; initiative to the point of competitiveness. These are some general contemporary social demands. Where and how they are to be learned should constitute an ingenious portion of the dormitory guidance program.

One of the greatest clusters of deficiency among Indians in gaining community and neighborhood acceptance is lack of attention and interest in improving one's domicile. Adding comforts and conveniences to the home. Keeping the yard neat and attractive. Adding beauty to the home. Adding recreational facilities and recreational pursuits to home life. Finding increased companionship in improving one's home and individual family life. It is around this role of the home in American life that many of our basic industries are built, in spite of our mobility.

The more typical modern American, we like to think at least, is seldom one who has so few interests centered around his place of living that he characteristically walks the streets at night—aimless; inevitably finding only loneliness and trouble-

some escapade. These, nevertheless, are characteristic pitfalls of many Indians who try town-living.

The Indian boarding school program may well tackle this problem. The boarding school pupil of the past has all too often done everything on a mass, group basis. The students all get up by bell or whistle. They line up for roll call. They play in a mass. Much of this is inescapable when living in an institution. But what are the antidotes? More mass games? More mass activity? "Free" time, with nothing to use it for? With nothing to stimulate productive use, free time only becomes aimless time. Aimless time as an adult, at the end of a day, is what we're talking about avoiding.

The adjusted adult has learned to live alone. He is self-sufficient. He has habituated interests such as music, reading, model-making, photography, TV, painting, sewing, prettying all sorts of things. He has a way of home life to which he can look forward at the end of a day of toil.

In the case of the child brought up in a reasonably stable home, both home and community provide these interests and skills. They are part of the culture in which the child grows up. They will never result from being brought up in a dormitory that provides no opportunity to do such things. A dozen beds in a dormitory room—not even a wall on which to hang a picture; no chair to sit in for reading, for writing, for painting, for just plain whittling! Perhaps a drawer for one's clean socks, but a matron keeps them locked up in a central place. What is there to take pride in which is associated with home improvement and fun in the dormitory? **Is dormitory life living?**

Do we encourage braiding and hooking rugs to beautify the floor space? Do we stimulate putting model airplanes, boats and other toys together in our own room? Even grown-up men do such things. How often do we get boys and girls to make hanging bookshelves, coffee tables, sewing boxes, and other things for their own room—on their own time? Outside of the vocational and home economics instructional time? How does the ordinary boy and girl elsewhere get into such activities? How does **your** home function along these lines? How can we make the dormitory life similarly function?

A suggested principle here is to build a program which will result in student sleeping-study rooms being **better** at the end of the school year than at the beginning by virtue of being occupied by a human being. A program which will lead students to accomplish this is likely to be on the way toward being a good program.

Altogether, a study of home life in the better homes today is one important source for listing goals and seeking fruitful method in preparation for demands of modern society in successful living. A study of "failure" of former Indian graduates, a hard look at our own dormitory program of activities, consultation with local townspeople, and a sharp ear everywhere for demands of modern society need to be considered in building a better dormitory program as preparation for better Indian living. Only by meeting realistic demands of society can our schools succeed in their special mission.

### **Backgrounds Determine Pupil Needs**

We have touched briefly upon the proposition that goals for meeting pupil needs in a good program of dormitory living may come in part from the social-psychology of group living, and in part from a look into the future—the anticipated demands of society. A third source to be investigated and taken into consideration is the background—the past—of the students.

Johnnie No. 1 is a Sioux. His people, from way back in the days of the buffalo, developed extreme patterns of generosity. And stoicism, to the point of indifference about many things. Johnnie doesn't have very much. His folks live in an almost unheated, drafty cabin through the cold Dakota winters. You'd think he'd want to get away from that. Have an ambition for a better life. But Johnnie is stoical. He doesn't seem to mind going without things. He even has the horrible habit of spitting on the floor! Poor as he is, he is careless about money. Gives everything away to his friends for the asking. Seems to fear the ridicule of being called stingy by fellow Sioux. It will take some truly creative work in building up in him a real desire to meet the demands of modern living.

Johnnie No. 1's problems are very different from Johnnie No. 2. Geography and history make the man. Johnnie No. 2 comes from high deserts of the southwest. He is a noncompetitive Zuni. Singling him out for praise in the group seems to drive him into reverse. He just doesn't want to get too far ahead in anything. Not even in basketball, of all things. To get too far ahead, in the opinion of his people, is to destroy group cooperativeness. Most values in Zuni life come from the group. Generations of life experience seem to have proved the point to them. Yes, he could do a fine job of leadership, but he will never volunteer.

Johnnie No. 3 is Cheyenne. Northern Cheyenne. His people could live just across the road in the wintertime Cheyenne village, you say. But they don't. They're off wandering somewhere. Seems like the Cheyennes are all rovers. Never know for sure where they are. They will sell their furniture; have a feast today; move on to live with relatives when they get broke again. What kind of a program will touch Johnnie in some little way? Start him in your direction?

There are so many different kinds of Johnnies. Johnnie, the tense, studious Cherokee. Johnnie, the easygoing, placid Papago. Johnnie, the gay Comanche, the affable Choctaw, the hesitant Seminole, the defiant Apache. It is trite to those who know to remark that backgrounds vary from tribe to tribe as much as from nation to nation among whites. Dress, housing, foods, customs—all different. Basic personalities all different. The difference is important.

Yes, these factors must be reckoned with in building a school program. It makes a difference, too, whether the school is dominantly Sioux, dominantly Kiowa, dominantly Cheyenne, dominantly Navajo, and so on. Or whether a school is a mixture of many tribal representatives.

Admittedly, none of this makes it easy. Goals and method are baffling. The answers are not easy to find. But that merely describes the problem. Sharpens the challenge. The point, for present purposes, is that backgrounds do make a difference in building the dormitory-living program. If a present program is not succeeding, we should know what doesn't work at least. We should commence vigorously re-examining goals, re-examining procedures, recreating something new to try, re-evaluating results.

### Which Johnnie Is Important in Determining Program?

Finally, in dealing with a particular pupil, **which** Johnnie becomes extremely important? Cheyenne, yes, but which Cheyenne? The one you caught cutting up the newly painted chest in his room? The one whose mother got killed in a car wreck last year, and now his father is in jail for drunken driving? The one who acts so sullen when you get after him about keeping his room neat? Wants to go home?

Or, yes, Johnnie is a Navajo. But which Navajo? The one from Lukachukai where old-time Navajo life remains fairly stabilized? Where most of the people actually have little farms? Where so many of the people are Catholic?

Or is it the Navajo Johnnie from north of Huerfano? From that area where Navajo and Mexican come in close clash? Where poverty is extreme, where most of the people go off to work in the carrot harvest? Where there are so many orphans?

The Navajo who was caught swiping something from the 5 and 10 cent store? What did he take? What did he do with it? Give it to his friends? Eat it? Bury it? Does anyone from home ever send him any money? How much? When?

How does he get along with the other boys? With girls? What kinds of activities does he seem to enjoy? Nothing?

Shall we punish? Scold him? Keep him away from movies for a month? Make him pay for the damage? How? Try to get somebody to go out of his way to be friendly with him? Who? You tried it before? Now what?

Clearly, no general statement can give particular answers on any case. We can summarize, however, that sources of program for the group, and sources of program for the individual come from at least four directions: (1) the psychology and sociology of children living in a group, (2) the demands of our culture, (3) the past environment, and (4) the individual.

### Administrative Factors Affect Dormitory Program

A number of administrative steps relate to better dormitory-living programs in Bureau boarding schools. To mention a few:

1. Responsibility for detailed planning has been fixed at the Area level. In each case, local agencies and individual schools, under leadership of Area officials, bear the responsibility for developing a program fitted to the local situation.
2. Standards for new construction, standards for plant rehabilitation, and standards for equipment and furnishings are developed and being implemented.
3. Surveys for rehabilitation of existing facilities are related to program functions.
4. Improved and adequate staffing patterns tie in with improved dormitory functions.
5. Adequate financing for the proper capacity, or the number enrolled, is essential.

In addition, some elements in the day-to-day administrative operations may affect the quality of the dormitory-living program. For example, a thorough review of use of existing space may result in better arrangement, or even overcoming some shortages, in program functions.

Putting into use an unused room, knocking a partition out, putting into general use some room that is used only a portion of the day or week are possibilities. Indian school administrators are generally quite experienced in doing much with limited space when goals and standards are clear. Now that more and more Indian students are advancing to high school, and more coming to school with some degree of acculturation—even sophistication—facilities more readily foregone in the past now become essentials. An attractive living room for quiet social activities, a suitable room for watching TV, perhaps two TV sets for dormitories that house large numbers, an attractively finished rumpus room with equipment for varied activities and games, snack facilities for dormitory social affairs, a student workroom equipped with benches and hand tools for hobbies and crafts. All these are desirable in preparation of Indian youth for acquiring ongoing interests in modern living.

If desirable facilities of this sort are lacking, sometimes a small sleeping room can be turned into such use. On the other hand, we may have been guilty in the past of too readily preempting student activity space in order to accommodate excessive over-enrollment.

For example, new construction standards now call for a minimum of 50 square feet per student in sleeping rooms in order to provide sufficient space to accommodate chests, chairs, study tables and the like considered essential for each older student. Experience shows that a minimum of 40 square feet for such purposes, which is approximately 20 percent overcrowding, is a rock-bottom requisite. Less space than this eliminates chairs, chests, tables and the like and reduces the dormitory program to mere custodial functions.

Wherever taking on GI's for postgraduate work, or providing room accommodations for Indian students at college level, or otherwise over-enrolling that eliminates important facilities is contemplated, the matter needs to be examined seriously. There is danger of wrecking prospects for a successful program for the entire student body. Correspondingly, in enrolling additional numbers to compensate for dropouts and withdrawals (so as to maintain a predetermined average daily attendance) the peak load **at any given time** should rarely exceed crowding beyond an absolute minimum of 40 square feet per student in sleeping rooms. A more vigorous seeking of other solutions (short of depriving a child of an opportunity for schooling) is highly desirable.

A lively concern with aesthetics is another important factor in improving dormitory living. The difference between an attractive sleeping room and a dull or drab one may be the simple fact that in one room there is a pretty bed. In the attractive rooms, chests, lockers and chairs portray a pleasing harmony of color and texture. The bedspreads are more interesting in pattern. The **arrangement** of furnishings is pleasing. There are hanging shelves and attractive bulletin boards on the walls for displaying one's personal possessions. There is pleasing variety from room to room. Such rooms are the kind that one is happy to return to. The occupants can take pride in them. Pleasant sleeping rooms, living rooms and other facilities build a desire to want

to earn money to acquire similar things for oneself when one grows up. Such a room suggests that somebody cares. It subtly furthers the goal of the program. In contrast, the dull and drab room costs just as much to furnish. But it lacks everything that gives life meaning.

Most Indian students will respond to a first-rate deal. All too rarely have they experienced it. Altogether, if the tone of the school is second or third-rate, the students are likely to **feel** second or third-rate.

Let us consider the matter of clothing storage too. Lockers are becoming inadequate for storing clothing for year-round seasonal changes as students grow older and acquire fuller wardrobes. This problem might be resolved by providing special space elsewhere for storage of out-of-season clothing, very much as one does in one's private home.

Is there suitable storage for cleaning equipment like floor polishers and vacuum cleaners? Are there attractive and numerically adequate sanitary facilities on each floor commensurate with the student load? Are there appropriate laundry facilities in sufficient quantity and of the right sort for washing, drying and ironing of students' personal clothing? Finally, is provision made annually in the budget for replacement of equipment and furnishings to keep them up to acceptable standards? These are administrative concerns.

Another administrative element in the development and operation of a good dormitory program involves staffing and supervision. Some schools are probably inadequately staffed. However, schools will probably never be able to employ all of the adults that some administrators would like. Part of the problem is one of organization. Consideration should be given to going much further than has been customarily practiced in organization of responsibilities undertaken by older students themselves as desirable experiences.

Again, school administrators would probably like to have dormitory workers who have had more advanced training. Schools would like to be able to pay higher salaries in order to be able to recruit better trained employees. This is admittedly desirable.

But here again, we need to be realistic. We probably never will get employees, either in quality or number, who fill our dreams. Let's face it. Much of the leadership must fall squarely upon the supervisory and administrative staff—not on the employee at the bottom of the heap.

In the staffing pattern, one thing that might well be considered as a departure over prevailing practice, is to seek ways and means whereby more of the feminine touch can be rendered to boys' dormitories. Even older boys need some of the things that the mother in the home customarily provides. Could not certain specific responsibilities needed in boys' dormitories be given to some of the women in the home economics department or the girls' guidance department? If such assignments involve specific types of services, duplication of responsibility could be easily avoided.

### So We Go to Work

So we summarize and go to work to build a better and more fruitful dormitory-living program. We recognize that a dormitory-life program involves much more than mere custody of youth. It involves much more than keeping a student body busy in competitive recreational pastimes. Dormitory life must be a rich educational experience. The dormitory program must provide each child with a sampling of life's varied problems.

The scope of the sampling must be broad. There must be directed experience in meeting personal problems, group living, sanitation, earning, spending, saving. Aesthetics. All phases of life. As the child progresses in age, his dormitory experiences and responsibilities must be of increasing complexity. There should be as evident a progression on this score as there is in mathematics, science and other academic learnings. The student should reach a level, prior to graduation, comparable in responsibility to his advent into adult life.

Cues as to the individual's needs come from a variety of sources. First we shall re-examine these sources; secondly, we shall stimulate creative thinking in developing more effective methods. We shall start seeking more realistic methods on how

a student learns to resist temptation to steal, how temptation to prevaricate is overcome, how one learns to keep sober, how to build sexual morality, how to build many personal strengths. Life in the dormitory, we determine, shall be a training ground for growing into leadership, for becoming skillful in getting along with people, for developing a solid philosophy of life. We shall work vigorously to personalize our task.

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#### *And We Dream*

We walk up the high steps of an obviously old building. The architecture shouts its age. Most of the buildings on the campus give the impression of having been erected many decades before the advent of ranch-style modern. But the grounds are neat. The atmosphere is pleasant—like the patina that comes with well-kept antiquity.

Yam-colored faces with heads of jet-black hair animate the scene. Like high school youths everywhere, you see them teasingly poking, then darting around each other. Two of the older boys approach you.

"Looking for someone?" one of them asks politely.

You are surprised. . . . "Silent, aloof? Indians?" The words flash silently through your mind. These boys appear so much at ease! They must feel secure. Someone has taught them well.

"We are visiting. We'd like to see your dormitory," you reply.

"Sure thing. Come along," the taller one says.

He leads you up the steps and into the building. You enter what must be the main living room. There is a mellow glow of light. . . walls painted in pleasant pastel tones. . . an orange glow from well-placed floor lamps. . . well-chosen, well-hung pictures. . . davenport, chairs, varied texture. . . Sort of tweedy. A nice man's room for reading, sitting, talking.

"Ever have girls in here?" you jokingly ask. Boys like to be kidded, you know.

"Sure. On special occasions." Your guide hesitates. "Can't have them in every day, of course," he adds blushing.

You follow the boys upstairs. A number of doors are open and you glance in as you move along the hall. There is a difference in color of the walls. Beds are double-decked, but different types. Different colors. Lockers too. And chairs.

You see a boy writing at a desk in one of the rooms. In another, a student sits in a comfortable chair—reading. You catch spots of color: school banners, feathered headdresses, basketry, pieces of Indian pottery, pictures of movie queens.

"Here's Mr. Smith, our dormitory adviser. Honorary Chief, we call him," your student host smilingly says.

"How do you do, Mr. Smith," you say. "You seem to have a fine dormitory. Your boys are obviously proud of it."

"Yes," Mr. Smith replies. "It's because the boys keep it that way. Always fixing things up. Many visitors come to see what a fine job is being done for the Indian students. But if you don't mind, I'll let these boys go on showing you the rest of it."

Mr. Smith walks away.

"Do they paint this building every year? It looks like it," you say to the student.

"Oh, no. We just keep it this way," the student replies.

"How do they handle discipline here?" you ask.

The big boy looks at you as though he does not understand.

"How do they handle discipline here?" you repeat. "What do they do when someone steals? Gets drunk, and things like that?"

"Steal? Get drunk? . . . According to the guy, I guess. Doesn't happen very often."

You already know what you came to find out. You hardly remember the rest of the building. Playroom. . . . Boys quietly washing shirts. Ironing - good as any woman could do.

You get ready to depart. "And what do you plan to do when you finish school here?" you ask.

"Get a job, somewhere. Chicago. Dallas. Maybe California."

"Not back to the reservation?"

"Gosh, no. No jobs there. Nothing like this there. Not for me."

You go out into the bright sunshine. You are old enough to enjoy the easy way in which a young man passes by, holding the hand of his girl companion.

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Too much of a dream ever to be true?