

Selection of Boys

8. The pressure to secure maximum numbers in Boys' Units has led to inadequate care in selection. Boys of insufficient educational standard or undesirable character have too easily made their way in, and there has been delay and even difficulty in discarding the unsuitable material. When over 40 per cent. of boys fail to get an intermediate certificate, as was the case in one unit, it must mean that many will never make N.C.Os., and that much work and money is being wasted. The recent decision to exclude S.G. 4 and 5* is already leading to improvement, but much remains to be done. In the Apprentices Schools the stricter system of references and the examination have led to a more successful exclusion of unsuitable candidates.

13. Close and natural contact between an officer and his platoon or troop was not sufficiently often achieved, partly because the lay-out of buildings makes it difficult, but partly also because too many young regular N.C.Os. with a need to justify themselves may easily form a barrier between the boy and his officer. This raises the question of the proportion of W.Os. and N.C.Os. to officers in both the regimental and educational branches and we believe that it would be an advantage as well as an economy to increase slightly the number of officers and to reduce considerably the number of younger N.C.Os.

Irregular Intake

16. Much difficulty in organizing the training and teaching of boys is caused by the system of accepting boys into Boys' Units in driblets at odd times, instead of by regular intakes, say three times a year. The objection to the latter appears to be the fear that boys would be lost to the Army if they could not join immediately their mind is made up. It is to be doubted, however, whether the number lost by introducing a three term intake would be significant and it is probable that amongst those lost would be some of the least suitable.

Civilizing Influences

21. It must be remembered that the quality of the environment has a powerful influence upon the characters and tastes of growing boys. Poor buildings and equipment and a drab environment seriously militate against good morale. It would seem to us that the absence of any mature yet kindly feminine influence is to be regretted and that more part could be played by officers' and N.C.Os.' wives. A W.V.S. service in the N.A.A.F.I., Library, etc., might be of immense value. It should also be possible to take more advantage of the civilizing influence of music.

33. The fact that a boy has been at an Approved School, placed on probation or committed to the care of the Local Authority for any reason should, in the interests of the boy himself, be communicated confidentially to the Commanding Officer of the Boys' Unit or Apprentices School when the boy joins it. Details of any offences that have been committed should be given to enable the Commanding Officer to decide what special care and attention the boy should receive.

40. The right feminine influence is important in the life of adolescent boys. The wives of officers and N.C.Os. should be encouraged to organize or assist in out of work activities and take a helpful interest in those who are not well or are in trouble or difficulties of any kind. In addition, we consider that wherever possible the Women's Voluntary Service should be invited to be responsible for the Boys' Club and for the organization of suitable entertainments of all kinds. We are convinced that this would help greatly to raise the general tone.

51. The making of music should receive all possible encouragement. Each unit or school should have a band, and choral singing should play a prominent part in the life of the community. To this end instruments and adequate instruction should be made available.