

**ON BEHALF**

**OF THE**

**SOUTH WALES**

**COLLIER BOY**

## **BOYS' CLUBS OF WALES – THE BEGINNING .....**

In 1922 the Ocean Area Recreation Union and a combination of the miners welfare association of the Ocean Coal Company's area (extended later to include those of the United National Collieries) came to the conclusion that whilst the provision of new and improved welfare amenities were good in themselves, they would be more fully appreciated if combined with improved facilities for the training of adolescent boys.

This realisation was, in 1922, the beginning of a strongly organised boys' clubs movement in the South Wales mining area. Fundamental to the establishment of this movement were Capt J Glynne-Jones, Secretary of the Union, and Mr David Davies, owner of the Ocean Mining Company (later to become Lord Davies of Llandinam).

In 1929 Capt Glynne-Jones produced a paper which he read to the Welsh School of Social Science. ---

## YOUTH AND LEISURE

### **IN THE MINING VALLEYS OF MID-GLAMORGAN**

I understand that it will suffice, if within the short space of time at my disposal, I try to describe to you the problem of leisure as it affects the adolescent boy of the Upper Rhondda and certain others of the mining valleys of Mid-Glamorgan with which I am closely associated in my daily work.

That problem, as I view it, is not that particular one which is presented in a much more intense and complex form in the more 'distressed' districts, and which has already been discussed by you. The position which I wish to describe to you is the one which confronts people in a mining area where industrial conditions are more or less normal. Incidentally, however, my remarks will apply equally well to the more distressed areas, the general position as regards the leisure problem in those areas being very similar, although undoubtedly greatly emphasised by general unemployment and industrial depression.

At the start I feel quite safe in assuming that no special emphasis is needed here upon the particular importance of this leisure problem to an area like ours; or upon the relationship of leisure and how it is spent to the development of the character, happiness and general well-being of our boys.

We shall also agree, I think, that if his leisure is precious to the ordinary working boy, it is almost priceless to a boy working under the conditions under which the collier boy has to work.

It is an undisputed fact too that nowadays our boys have very much more leisure, and that the use which they make of the leisure is a matter of the gravest importance, not only to themselves but to the whole of our society – at the present time and in days to come.

I am not quite so certain, however, that we shall be so unanimous upon the matter of the treatment of this boy-leisure problem. During my comparatively short experience, I have encountered so many authoritative and influential people who are so immovably established in their knowledge of 'how to handle boys' as they style it, and who, without being very anxious to 'try-out' their particular systems, can tell those who are trying to do something exactly how this and all other boys problems are to be solved, that I have long since come to the conclusion that the most useful course I can adopt is the one in which any ideas which one may have are 'aired' in public as little as possible but instead are worked out conscientiously and intelligently in some simple, practical schemes.

Those who care to face the facts, and who are in possession of the correct attitude, know that the more they are examined and experimented with the more baffling do these problems of adolescence become. We all know what they are with boys brought up under almost ideal conditions. Let us try and imagine, for a moment in passing, what they may be when associated with overcrowding, with few or no restraining influences, and with the questionable and uncontrolled attractions of an industrial community.

Let us start therefore with the consciousness that we are approaching one of the most difficult of our social problems - a problem which should be a matter of the gravest concern to us, a task which we have not yet really tackled seriously, sympathetically and intelligently, and a position with which our churches, our schools and all our social organisations will have to get to grips before we can check the retrograde drift which we are now bemoaning so volubly.

For our present purpose, I suggest that we commence with a sort of broad analysis of the ordinary boy's 'make-up' and give what might be called a perfectly simple exposition of what one often reads under the more terrifying title of 'The Psychology of the Adolescent'.

Our analysis can very well commence with a list of the more noticeable and important cravings and desires which seem to well-out in our boy at the age of adolescence, and which naturally seek for, and must then have, some outlet or form of expression.

First on our list comes the thirst for freedom, a growing intolerance of discipline, a hatred of restraint, and a ready will to rebel at any time against any form of authority, whether it be policeman, parent, or employer. Obviously, I cannot expand upon this or really upon any other point; but we all know very well that to most of us adolescence stood for the long-looked-forward-to period of freedom from all forms of authority, from everything that stood for suppression, from all associations with the days in which we were classified as 'kids'. The influence of parent and teacher is on the wane, and the boy is developing a sense of independence and has an exaggerated view of his own importance and powers.

In the case of our own particular type of boy, who has to pass through one of the most repressing forms of industrial discipline as well as a dark confinement underground, this period of freedom during leisure naturally becomes a matter of more than average importance. That is probably why the liberty of the dancing hall, the cinema, the fair ground, or the ice-cream bar often appeals to him very much more than even the restricted discipline of the boys' club or scout troop. That, coupled with the next point upon which I shall touch, is undoubtedly the reason also why the prospect of a strike or lock-out has always a certain amount of attraction for many adolescent boys.

All this of course emphasises the need for a closer link between the period when the boy is more or less satisfied to be under discipline – such as his period at school, - and the period of his adolescence. In many of our boys' clubs, where we have already felt the need of this link, we have found that if during the early years of adolescence, when the effect of school discipline are still apparent, the club leader has become a close personal friend of the boy, that boy will continue to respect and obey his leader. If, on the other hand, the boy reaches the age of 17 without respecting the leader, he will not tolerate discipline again, he complains of being ordered about, he chafes at normal club rules and eventually drifts off.

Secondly, the awakening of the boy's imagination brings with it a desire for knowledge and adventure. He is always seeking some form of strong, emotional stimulation, some thrill, something with a touch of excitement about it, and he wants this very natural characteristic of a robust life to be attached to his leisure occupations. Generally his craving is partially satisfied at present by the hectic situations of a film or cheap novel, the excitement of the boxing booth, the uncertainties of the horse or grey-hound race, or the gamble of the football coupon. If they are illegal, like a game of cards on the mountainside, or a bit of street betting, or if they appear to challenge some form of authority which, in the past, has suppressed him, they generally possess an added attraction. The possibilities of thrills in what he regards as the 'good' life certainly do not seem very apparent to him. As our boy sees him, the good man will have nothing to do with thrilling things; his may indeed be a mighty soul, but it is shrouded in a very dull, sluggish, and uninteresting shell.

We also have to bear in mind the change which takes place in the boy's attitude with his increased earning power. Until he is 17, a few coppers represent the difference between his total earnings and the sum he has to give his mother. But when he has worked for two or three years, that balance becomes silver, and we find that this extra spending-power, combined with his new sense of independence, opens out to him unlimited possibilities for self-amusement outside our attempts at providing for him. All this increases our difficulties considerably, and should show us the degree of consideration which this aspect of our problem calls for.

Next on our list come the desire for self-expression, the characteristics of the herd, and desire for a leader. Generally these are now closely associated with a general noisiness and unruliness, the activities of the street gang, and the reign of the bully; but all these objectionable characteristics, which often make the boy such a 'nuisance,' can be sublimated, as we all know, into useful activity in games, community singing, team work, and the holding of general positions of responsibility at our clubs.

Let us not forget, that whether we like it or not, boys will instinctively form groups. We ourselves have to do more than lecture and condemn. Upon us does it depend whether a group is to

become a noisy and destructive street gang or a wonderful team: whether a born leader, bursting with an instinct for self-advancement, becomes an objectionable bully or extremist or a priceless captain and useful co-operator.

A sort of hero-worship, too, is very evident; a form of adoration which the boy will not always acknowledge, and which is often sadly misdirected. The professional boxer or footballer may be its summit; almost invariably it is some one or other who is a healthy, robust man of action, and who is some form of what is commonly termed a 'sportsman'. This tendency towards hero-worship emphasises two great needs as far as boys' movements are concerned. In the first place comes the importance of enabling the boy to get into close touch with a really good and sensible adult leader. Space will not enable me to make an effort at describing this rare and priceless person, but we may be sure of one thing, namely, that although they do not actually express it, the boys will soon weigh-up a club leader who is a humbug, who is not a man of his word in every respect, who has his limits, and who is not, in every way, what they call a 'white man' and 'a good sport'.

Secondly arises the necessity of having at our clubs and boys' institutions, not only one or two such leaders but as many people as possible of varied types, interests and tastes, who in their different groups and because they are so varied are much more likely to make a stronger appeal to boys similarly constituted than a single club leader could possibly have exercised.

There are many more of these boy characteristics. A passionate desire for a friend, a generally careless attitude towards life, a wonderful sense of humour which makes him sing a comic song when buried alive, and which is often used so glibly with serious things that it is mistaken for profanity; an abnormal knowledge of life and some of the more intimate secrets of man's estate; a knack of weighing-up people, often in the most uncanny manner – these are a few of them.

Incidentally, I have long since come to the conclusion that most of those characteristics which are commonly regarded as the collier boy's faults are really only the direct result of the careless and casual attitude towards everything and everybody which he develops because of the rough nature of his work and surroundings. On countless occasions I have discovered that if only that boy could be placed in a position in which he can come into contact with cleaner and more beautiful things, and be helped to pause and to reflect, one can draw from him a response which, time and again has shown one that without any doubt whatsoever, we in the South Wales Coalfields are dealing with the most wonderful and responsive material which anyone could ever desire.

Let us not forget, too, that in such an emergency as a fall or an explosion these very characteristics to which we often object become virtues of the very highest order. Incidentally, too, they have often created a cheery optimism during times and conditions which would have driven most of us to the verge of suicide or revolution.

Lastly, we cannot leave out of our list the sex question, and, quite apart from the many other intricate aspects of that overpowering biological urge which is now surging from within them, the simple fact that most of our adolescent boys have their girls, and that for some considerable time at least these young ladies will absolutely command the greater part of their boys' leisure, probably at the expense of everything else good and bad.

We all know very well that to make any effort to break this boy-girl friendship is sheer waste of time and a certain way of losing the boy for good. Gradually he himself is able, or is compelled by circumstances, to limit his courtship activities to a certain extent; but the path these young people tread together during this critical part of their leisure will certainly have to be considered a matter of very great importance to both of them and to all of us. Incidentally, I am quite sure that we are really afraid of this particular problem at present, but that is not a point for me to pursue here.

This particular aspect of the problem however, emphasises more than anything else the need for the wise and sympathetic club leader who can win the boy's confidence, who can talk to him kindly and usefully, and who will help him both with counsel and with healthy activity to steer his little barque through these tempestuous waters during a period of his life when he is really hungering for

a little helping hand, but when almost every hand he knows of and values is employed with 'higher' things.

Instead of plunging further into the intricacies of adolescent psychology, let us now try and ascertain how far the present conditions in which he finds himself enable our boy to use the very natural and legitimate instincts to some advantage to himself and to the society in which he lives.

We can safely start by stating that undoubtedly the average boy does not make the best use of his leisure.

To begin with, he himself has a hopelessly haphazard outlook in the matter. The tendency is one of drift; he has no sort of plan or system for most of his spare time. Undoubtedly, this evil of drift is indeed at the root of most of our troubles with the adolescent. We know that our boy is certainly drifting, and with a strong flood-tide – away from our Sunday schools, our church services and our continuation schools – whilst the rest of us, still with our coats on, are standing uselessly on the banks lamenting, reading 'papers' and delivering addresses, looking at it all taking place, and piously hoping that in some way or other he will clutch at some floating matter and gain the shore.

Today, let us ask ourselves what indeed the boy has to help him in the matter?

Until he has reached 'the bridge' we have held his hand to a certain extent – through our homes, our day schools, our Sunday schools, bands of hope, and so forth. We have led him to the edge of the stream and placed his feet upon the narrow plank which is to take him across the swirling waters below.

Do we really do any more for him except push him in to sink or to swim somehow or other to the other side?

We reply that our chapels and churches are as they always were; that our system of evening education is better than it ever was; and that there are such wonderful organisations as the boy scouts, lads brigades and so forth. Yet, all these are now wondering what is wrong with things, and bemoaning the fact that they are not attracting the adolescent boy, who is muddling along without them, and falling into the arms of undesirables.

I have almost invariably found that, whenever I have tried to arouse some interest on the part of our religious bodies and others for a boys' club effort, the inevitable reply is, 'Don't you see that we have our own boys to look after. We have our young people's guilds, our literary society, etc., etc'. And so a very thin, anaemic sectional effort, generally on behalf of the sons and daughters of parents who will exercise every useful home influence on their behalf, and who will never let them 'fall out of their prams', becomes the invariable justification for our appalling neglect of the vast majority.

Undoubtedly we shall have to realise sooner or later that the problem is a very much graver one than we appear to think it is; and that we shall have to do very much more than offer the boy the opportunities that were good enough for his father and leave him to drift if he does not take them.

In our crowded mining valleys, where almost everything which a youth needs is harmful – where the air he breathes is foul; where his sleep is unhealthy; where his home is a place to get out of; where his recreations are the livelihood of tricksters and parasites; out of which everything artistic has been crushed; where the whole atmosphere is poisonous in more senses than one; and the whole purpose of earth and life in his eyes, appears to be merely the satisfaction of some outsider's terrible lust to draw up wealth out of the earth, at any price and regardless of every consideration. Under such conditions as these is it not really rather ironical to refer to such matters as soul-development, self-expression, rational development, aesthetic pursuits and culture?

The boy's associations with a home are linked up with a tired mother, an absent father, and host of children fighting for existence; with such ideas as minding the baby, clearing out to make room for

others and generally 'getting out of the way', with innumerable child-births, illnesses, wash-days, bath-tubs and funerals; with rough, hasty words, and the use of the strap as the short cut to discipline; and with a general feeling that he is just there as the next item of contribution to the meagre family resources. In most cases there is not, and cannot be, under present housing conditions, any real home life; everything is dull, drab, and cramped, and there is beauty in very little of what the boy experiences. Knowing what we do of the difficulties of cultivating the aesthetic instinct under the most advantageous of conditions how can we reasonably expect a mind which sees so little beauty to think as many of us consider that it should think?

Church influence, too, appears to be losing its grip upon the majority of these boys, and evening schools are very badly attended. In short, in most of our districts our adolescent boy is spending the greater part of his leisure playing football in anything but the team spirit; dancing away the hours in all conditions other than desirable ones; forming gangs in ice-cream shops or street corners; or, with the assistance of so many good people who now provide him with an easy means of getting his 'Woodbines' and all he needs for the present, generally loafing about and drifting hopelessly and dangerously into a state of absolute irresponsibility and uselessness. Really it makes one almost shudder when one thinks of the number of such boys who drift into early marriage and manhood in his state of mind.

Broadly speaking, the people who should be interested in his welfare do not attract him. To him they are heavy, slow-moving, unattractive mountains of responsibility and serious living. They do not appear to him to be awake to his real needs: they will not step forward out of their dull, uninteresting 'religious' atmosphere to get to know him and to take an interest in those things which are important and vital to him. They stand for repression: everything really worth doing is a sin or useless frivolity to them. Those who are really wide-awake and drawing him are generally the undesirable sort, and they are often ably assisted by many of our cheap newspapers and periodicals which achieve large net. sales by prostituting his adventurous spirit through various forms of respectable gambling.

We cannot blind ourselves either to this matter of sex and our insistence upon encouraging the belief in the boy that this strong newly awakened instinct, abnormally stimulated by his living and working conditions, must be regarded as something unclean. We have to realise that his living conditions are all against him, that he has no one to whom he can reveal his secret troubles but must have his young mind scorched by superstition, fear and remorse; that he must meet his girl by stealth and in the back lanes; that he can learn nothing except from people who trade on his ignorance; and that everything he does which is of any importance to him must be done in defiance of his elders; it is not my business here to suggest a rational treatment of this tremendous problem: all I can do is to emphasise the fact that it certainly is a problem which our boys have to face during a considerable portion of their leisure.

We ourselves have to decide how we propose to help them with something more practical than suggestive prohibitions; with warnings which do little else but challenge his adventurous spirit and which are only based on fear. How to do it is indeed a difficult question, and although there are few authoritative people who can point to a sure and universal solution, any scheme which absorbs the leisure of the boy will have to face it fully and fearlessly.

That scheme, we suggest, should certainly be a positive and not a negative one. It should include the development of a clean and healthy attitude towards womanhood, the provision of useful safety valves for those natural instincts which are not yet under control, a wholesome pride in his bodily development, wisely controlled opportunities for meeting his girl friends under healthy and congenial surroundings, and the creation of a sense of confidence in someone who is older and more experienced than he is. Above all things the boy must have a real grown-up pal, someone to whom he can and will confide.

If it is true also that so many of our troubles are due to the loss of the sense of what is beautiful and what is clean, how can we possibly expect our boys to appreciate beauty? An ugly refuse tip, a bare black mountain, or a dirty river outside his window; a squalid street in front; a horrible hooter

to drag him down out of the sunshine into the darkness of the bowels of the earth; none of the joys of craftsmanship or opportunity for self-expression in his daily task; a hurried tub and a hasty meal; a dull drab institute with its cheerless walls, spittoons, sawdust and half-dead lights; the mountain side, a waste patch or the street for play; the stuffy cinema, the blare of roundabouts, the jazz band and the gaudy dance hall for entertainment and an inartistic, depressing and badly-ventilated chapel, and full of people whose society is often only forced upon him by his parents, for worship. A dull, drab, crushing repression everywhere. Is it not truly marvellous that our boys really turn out so well? We believe that it is, and that is the reason why our faith in the collier boy and our boys' movement is so strong.

In spite of pessimistic critics and false prophets we are slowly – only too slowly, I am afraid – laying out facilities for him which he is appreciating – attractive boys' clubs with up to date gymnasia, hobbies rooms, libraries, games rooms, a healthy community spirit and sympathetic leaders; recreation grounds with shrubberies, little gardens and pretty trees; permanent camps at which he experiences a well-organised life and wholesome activity, comfort and attractiveness as against homilies and the 'good, solid, substantial stuff that they can knock about', which from time immemorial has always been considered the right sort for boys.

In numerous ways we are finding a kind appeal which, when coupled with a sense of humour, seems to get the best out of him, as many of the little incidents that happen weekly in our boys' clubs and our permanent camp at St Athan are proving to us. Instead of irksome rules which ask to be broken, and wearisome prohibitions which are always disregarded, we are basing our method on a greater faith in that instinct for faith play, and the clean and generous life which is stronger in the boy than many people realise. And seven years of it has convinced us that our belief is a sound one. But it is slow work, and often full of disappointments – mainly because of lack of whole-hearted support and appreciation from those who should be giving it.

But, as time is flying, let us now try to lay a little more fully what leisure interests are beneficial to the ordinary boy, and ascertain what can be done and is being done to provide him with them.

These interests have been grouped very effectively in the recent C.O.P.E.C. report on 'The Citizen of Tomorrow', where they appear under the following heads: - home life, religion, physical pursuits, hobbies and service. A complete scheme must enable the boy to taste the advantages of most of, if not all of these groups.

The home is the foundation of all things, and housing conditions must be radically improved before any serious change for the better can take place. In our area, housing reform is not taking place to any serious extent. There are still a great many houses in the Rhondda which are as unfit for human habitation as any in the worst of London slums.

I know of one poor woman who goes out to char in order to maintain an idle husband and a family of five children, in two small bedrooms and a living room she not only keeps that family and a male lodger, but recently accommodated and nursed a married daughter during a confinement. Yet her little home is a picture of brightness and inexpensive comfort, and she can sing as she does her washing. On this spirit indeed, rather than upon any hope we have at present from our more dignified institutions, is our faith founded.

Unfortunately, the long period of industrial depression and future uncertainty give little hope of immediate relief as far as this housing problem is concerned. At present we can only concentrate upon schemes like pithead baths, maternity homes, cottage hospitals and communal laundries – institutions which, to some extent, relieve the strain upon the home. We can also establish organisations and centres at which the family element can be developed to some extent. How to achieve all this with the local rates and calls upon the few people ready to assist even now proving to be an unbearable burden is itself a very grave problem.

Whilst nearly all religious bodies too are bemoaning their empty Sunday Schools and loss of grip of these boys, very few serious attempts are being made by them to adapt their methods to meet his

needs. With little parental influence, and an attitude which condemns as sins of the flesh most of his pleasures and excitements, with no great social sense, but with a general policy confined into denominational compartments and based on little else but sheer prohibitions, and an attitude to life as black and as dull as our funeral clothes – is it any wonder that we fail to attract the boy?

Undoubtedly we shall have to spend less of our time in studying the adolescent 'from an easy chair' in reading and listening to papers at monthly meetings, and broadcasting condemnations; and spent it rather in forgetting our souls, in becoming in our religious efforts a little more like the people that we are in our businesses and pleasures, and in getting down to the real root of this trouble: in adapting our methods, and seeking the new outlook towards youth and its problems which undoubtedly we shall have to acquire.

On scores of occasions in camp or boys' club I have found boys who never attend any place of worship, and who are generally regarded as noisy, destructive and irresponsible young hooligans, respond in an amazing manner at an ordinary simple service or talk about some religious subject which directly affects their own lives together in camp or at the club. I have found the same boys too, display the most wonderful characteristics of a splendid character in ordinary games played under proper conditions and carefully controlled – when they are properly appealed to, when they are playing for a team, when they are given an opportunity to help a weaker pal, when they are pulling together, when they are up against obstacles and so forth.

Indeed one of the tragedies of St Athan's Camp, year after year, is the certain knowledge which we have that these wonderful boys are returning home, not to a club at which our effort will be continued, but to the same depressing conditions which they left the previous week.

I suggest that we certainly need a very much more enlightened point of view in our religious institutions. We need more St Martin's-in-the-Fields and fewer 'little Bethels' in our country. We can also well afford to take 50 per cent off the importance of sermons and to give it to service. I know one minister who has a church full of young people; he also has a mouth-organ band, a football club, and a Christy-minstrel troupe – all properly conducted, and showing activities of the same nature outside the church. How superior a really well conducted thing is to a poor one. I have no doubt that there is a connection between his church membership and all these groups of activities, and I certainly know that this particular individual has more than the average influence for good among the young people of his church.

I hate to criticise our wonderful little nation; it is almost fashionable nowadays to attack the religious institutions to which we all owe so much. But I certainly do think that our conception of what we should do in the name of our religion is hopelessly narrow; that we have no social sense; that we are too slow in adapting ourselves to the needs of the times; that we are obstinately refusing to study carefully the new conditions, and to amend our methods to meet their needs.

We appoint deputations to the courts and, very rightly lay our objections to the granting of undesirable licences. We emphasise and lament the pleasure-seeking and Sabbath-breaking tendency of our age. We look about us, and very easily discover evils and abuses. Do we sometimes ask ourselves why all these things arise, and if channels which produce them are eradicated, whether we can fill the gaps with opportunities that will maintain the same interest but serve a greater purpose? Do we ask ourselves if the fault may not be more attributable to our own blind obstinacy, lack of sympathy, and refusal to adapt ourselves and our methods to the needs of a very new age? We can indeed spend a great deal of time eloquently excusing ourselves, but we cannot blind ourselves to the truth that we are suffering because of all these very facts.

Neither do I think that the adolescent boy fits very well into our ordinary mixed congregation; or that he finds very much interest – except perhaps in the singing, at an ordinary church service; that we pay anything like the attention we should do to him and the peculiar difficulties of his group; that those of us who refer everlastingly to the past realise sufficiently what a vastly different world to the young man the world of today is; or that indeed we really do anything to make the boy feel himself

to be anything but a wicked little misfit in our scheme of things, who has to struggle through somehow, just like most of us had to do.

It is truly wonderful what a church with a well-organised social side can do for its adolescents; a boy has a sneaking admiration for things well-organised and properly conducted. Would we really lose anything real if we spent less energy on sermons and devoted it to becoming real leaders in a more important sense?

May I suggest, too, that it is a great step forward if we can get the boy to feel that his parson and religious leaders are even human? Let us ask quite frankly how many of these have spent any time in a really serious study of modern adolescent problems and their treatment? Those of us who have done so to some extent will know how tremendous and how baffling they are, and one is always positively wondering how any minister can possibly lead a congregation or any person manage a Sunday School with so little attention to such an important matter as is generally given.

Undoubtedly also, in the case of a youth working in cramped, unnatural conditions out of the sunlight, and living such a confined existence at home, the matter of physical recreation must have a prominent place. We have to encourage and control it rather than hand it over to undesirables.

Unfortunately, our valleys are monopolised by houses, roads, railways, pit-tops and rubbish tips. Work, and the production of coal, is the main purpose of life; a player of the game is still a waster of time, and a playing field essentially a valuable piece of property mis-used.

Even assuming that our boy is working and not idle as the great majority is at present, it is still true to say that everyone seems to have ignored the greater human fact that if a miner has to work in a sunless confinement he must be compensated for it with some sunny open spaces during his leisure.

The control, too, of many of our physical recreations has either passed into the wrong hands and been prostituted accordingly, or our boys have been left to play their games in their own way, and 'dirty play', the winning of cups and medals at any price, the laying of protests and the clever avoidance of rules – these are the main features. Indeed our physical recreations are now, in my opinion in a most parlous state, and constitute the most damning indictment possible of our past apathy in this direction. It is true that to some extent the recent activities of the Miners' Welfare Fund and the industrial welfare schemes set up by some of the more enlightened coal-owners are having a good effect – at any rate as far as providing actual facilities is concerned. But the very necessary process of eliminating evils already deep-rooted, and of safeguarding these new amenities from the pernicious results of years of neglect, is necessarily and lamentably slow and difficult.

Our effort must be towards playing the game for the love of the game, towards more playing and less 'spectating', towards effort for everyone in everything. Cheap locomotion, the attractions of the cities, some of the 'stunts' of the cheap press, and new thrills like greyhound and dirt-track racing will make our task an extremely difficult one. That indeed is the reason why we should be stripping off our coats and getting on with the work.

Here I feel I must digress a little and express a sense of danger which I cannot help but feel in regard to the beneficent and extensive operations of the Miners' Welfare schemes which are now springing up all over the coalfield. Whilst it is undoubtedly a great advantage to have all these new facilities coming into being, there is always present the danger attending anything secured without self-sacrifice and cost. With none of the finer elements of the public school spirit to help him; with few enlightened individuals ready to lead him; with little or no education in how to 'play the game', but with every encouragement from those who are already playing it to imitate their example and do so for every possible object except the love of a good clean game; and yet, at the same time, with all kinds of facilities almost lavishly provided for him free of cost to himself, the boy may lose that self-respecting attitude which should be one of the essential virtues inculcated through these new recreational facilities, and which nearly always used to characterise the self-sacrificing and

healthier efforts of his parents. We can never disregard or over-emphasise today, the old saying the something 'secured for nothing is worth nothing', and the activities of the Welfare Fund need, more than anything else, the boys' club movement to supplement them with the creation of the right spirit.

Unfortunately, like a car produced on mass production lines, our boy is on a sort of moving belt. In spite of our best intentions, and unlike the car, he never seems to pass through anything like the complete process of training which he needs. We may let him meet his girl at a dance under the congenial conditions of a boys' club, but we always feel that on either side of our little effort is a situation full of hidden dangers for which we have not provided. We may teach him in our clubs through carefully controlled boxing activities to take and to give hard knocks and still smile, and to undergo the long self-denying process of hard voluntary training which is necessary if he is to excel.

At the end of it all we think of the wonderful will-power, self control, stamina and splendid give-and-take attitude which he is cultivating. But we still know that round the corner the boxing promoter is waiting for him, and that sooner or later the boy will become a professional prize-fighter. In nearly all our activities we never feel that we are working out a complete scheme, but that the inevitable hope-for-the-best attitude has to be adopted.

All this emphasises more than anything the need for that co-operation and co-ordination of local effort which are now so conspicuously absent. At present we are almost competing for the boy's 'patronage', and often our appeal to that boy fails because some other body carrying out work which can very well be dove-tailed into our own, is attempting to draw him and retain a sort of sole right over him. I think that the day will have to come when there will have to be a council of youth in each district which will carry out this kind of work, and many other useful functions upon which I cannot elaborate here.

In regard to the matter of culture I think that we can say that although we cannot overstate the loss we have sustained through the growth of our congested valleys and the consequent loss of touch with nature, the aesthetic interests of our boys are certainly receiving a little more attention nowadays than has been the case in the past. Certainly not in our buildings and general surroundings, but rather through the influence of wireless, the schemes of the National Council of Music, and the growth of the drama movement. We cannot possibly regard all these, however, as meeting the situation to anything like an adequate degree, but the movement, we believe, is a growing one.

In our particular scheme we are trying to do a little through our boys' clubs – through inexpensive but artistic decoration, through organised tours to other areas; through our club libraries and hobbies rooms, through drawing, photography, reading, drama and study circles, and our many boys' clubs federation activities.

Briefly, we believe that the lines on which we should develop should be the organisation and co-ordination through our boys' clubs of all the resources at our disposal. Visits to picture galleries, museums, places of interest and foreign countries; rambling and cycle clubs; classes in drawing, painting, and craftwork; circles in reading, music, and drama; and interesting talks and lantern lectures – these should be linked up at the boys' club with the many other activities of a different nature which the boy finds there. Perhaps it is often necessary almost to camouflage our attempts in this direction: it is truer than we appreciate I think, that the average boy has almost an intense dislike to being 'cultured'.

But he certainly enjoys a trip to a city club for the purpose of playing that club at football or cricket, on which auspicious occasion he would not object to patronising a local museum or art gallery with the visit.

The absence of any opportunity for developing the qualities of craftsmanship in his daily occupation makes the development of all forms of hobbies very essential. Apart from the intrinsic

value of such pursuits, the opportunity they provide for the possible development of a reserve occupation is in itself a most useful and necessary factor in a boy's development, particularly during a crisis such as the coal industry is now passing through, and in an essentially mono-industrial area

Any system of education or scheme affecting leisure pursuits should therefore include within its scope the widest and fullest possible provisions for the exercise of all forms of craftsmanship.

It appears to me also that with the present trend of the coal industry towards amalgamation and a possible reduction in managerial staffs, the present concentration upon mining education, although admirable in many senses, is possibly carried too far; and that a great part of the resources spent in that direction could very profitably be expended in technical education of a wider and alternative kind – such education as would enable the boy, if necessary, to turn his attention without much readjustment to another occupation. It is obvious that the more intense our instruction in mining becomes, the less capable will our boys be in making any readjustments as may be necessary in their lives later. In any case, we should certainly compromise and keep a 'weather-eye' on the alternative aspect, particularly at the present time.

I often wonder, too, how far we could develop profitably amongst our boys such hobbies as poultry and rabbit keeping, the cultivation of allotments, and others in which they can be assisted over the initial outlay, in which local facilities are easily obtainable, and where the costs of upkeep are relatively small. With a good system of disposing of the products – perhaps on a co-operative basis – I believe that a great deal could be done in this direction, and we are now contemplating making a start in the direction of a poultry-keeping scheme through our camp at St Athan.

In any case, during such days as these it is certainly well that our boy should be led to realise that it is unwise to have but 'one string to his bow'; that he has some natural inclination or other which can be converted into a pleasurable and beneficial occupation as well as a form of assistance for himself and his family, and that if work at the colliery becomes slack it is absolutely wrong for him to 'hang about' and rely only upon unemployment pay, or some other form of outside relief, when he has the energy and the health to do something useful.

The educational aspect is in a somewhat chaotic state, but the whole matter is one which deserves a more careful and authoritative treatment than I can give here. The facilities for continued education, so far as they go, are both numerous and varied, but, in my humble opinion, the selection of teachers is not always made with the care which such a matter deserves. Most of the classes are badly attended and die a premature death: they certainly do not appear to appeal to the greater majority of adolescent boys. Reference, however, should be made to the improved facilities of a more vocational sort made possible through the setting up of many new technical centres, and the operation of the Miners' Welfare Fund's Educational Schemes – activities which appear to be proving satisfactory up to the present.

What I believe is required is closer co-operation between the local education authorities and our boys' clubs. If necessary it should be made possible for the clubs to be provided with instructors for classes to be held within the club building where the club leaders could assist in securing attendances. There should be some connection between the boy's educational activities and his physical and other pursuits. He is much more likely to acquire that very necessary but difficult power of 'sticking it' at his club, where there is someone really interested in him as an individual, than he is in an evening class held in a school for which he has never had much affection, and conducted by a tired-out day-school teacher or a professional assistant from a local office who is often only trying to extend a limited family income.

Co-operation between schools and educational authorities on the one hand and voluntary organisations on the other is non-existent. Indeed our boys' clubs are often being charged with drawing the boys from the evening schools. This linking-up of all the boys' activities also is not much in evidence, although there is now a decided tendency in that direction in some of the technical centres already referred to.

More elasticity in the formation of classes is also required. It is more difficult nowadays than is generally appreciated by those who did it in the past, to keep together for a whole session a class of a dozen boys dealing with a single subject. What I believe is required is a large number of intelligent instructors who will collect round them small groups of interested boys, who will exercise a sort of personal touch with the boys and their interests, and who will have a considerable latitude in the arrangements which they make.

I almost shudder when I think of the prospects of employment in the case of the average boy living in a mono-industrial area such as ours is, and with an industry in the state the coal industry is in at present. I have met innumerable parents of ordinary intelligent boys, who have made really heroic sacrifices to give their children what is called a 'good education' who are prepared to do almost anything 'to prevent him going underground'. I have seen these in their despair, after allowing him to spend two or three idle years, with nowhere to turn to, and compelled in the end to send him to the colliery.

Under such circumstances – which are very common, and at present almost inevitable, I suggest that our immediate duty to that boy is to make it possible for him to feel that when he enters the employment of a colliery company he is going to find there a friend who will help him along. To me that involves a boys' club associated with every colliery or group of collieries, and a full-time leader who will be in close touch with the colliery management over the boy's employment, the nature of his work, his general progress and health, and with most of his leisure pursuits. I fear that this is a far-off dream at present – it will mean almost a revolution in the attitude of many, colliery companies – but I believe that it is to this point that we shall have to come – if we are to 'make a real job' of this adolescent problem.

A boys' club starting shortly before the point at which the boy leaves the elementary school, and supplemented during that period by such an activity as a troop of boy scouts, which develops his leisure on useful natural lines and encourages the team or club spirit as a definite habit. Later, a boys' club definitely linked up with boys' employment, harnessing all possible local voluntary service, co-operating with and supported wholeheartedly by the religious and educational institutions of the locality – and absorbing the maximum possible number of boys, both in useful service and occupation – that appears to me to be the first step in dealing with the problem.

Next comes the need for a federation of such clubs and its many advantages.

Lastly should be provided that concentrated period of ten days or a fortnight - or more if possible – when the club leader can live continuously with his boys each summer at a good standing camp. Those of us who have experienced it will know that more good can be done in such period than many weeks of ordinary broken club life. Such a camp can indeed become almost a working boy's public school. The question of standing camps, particularly at the present time, is itself a subject which opens out immense possibilities, but, without extending further upon these already lengthy remarks may I suggest a scheme on such lines as I have just outlined as the most satisfactory solution to what I believe to be one of the gravest problems of our times; as the greatest possible contribution we can make to the world of tomorrow.