

THE BOYS' BRIGADE

ADDRESS GIVEN BY SIR DONALD FINNEMORE TO BRIGADE COUNCIL, 5th SEPTEMBER, 1964

Shortly you will be called upon to make a very vital decision about the future of The Boys' Brigade. I noticed quite by accident the other day in my diary that thirty years ago, in 1934, we met in Oxford, a very proper place to meet, and one Battalion proposed a resolution that the leaving age of The Boys' Brigade should be raised from 17 to 18. That resolution was defeated which no doubted served us right by going to what is sometimes called "the home of lost causes!"

Today, some 30 years later, by the whole mighty Executive, you are asked to increase the age to over 19 but of course with a difference. I don't imagine that Sir George Haynes, who has been brought into close touch with The Boys' Brigade, expects the whole of his report would pass without any kind of criticism or opposition. If so, he would not know The Boys' Brigade very well. I don't know whether it was a warning or an encouragement but the first telegram which was read out to us today began with the words, "Fight the good Fight." We are going to discuss this problem together. I hope with unprejudiced minds. With one thing in view; what is best for the Boys of our country.

I am sure we are not going just to get up and say "The Boys' Brigade is a jolly good show; leave it alone." We have done this for years, let us go on doing it." If you are inclined to say that sort of thing, let me say it ^{to you} first, with all sincerity, that The Boys' Brigade today, in our country and in the world, is doing a very magnificent job. We meet with good hearts and with high spirits and I believe that The Boys' Brigade is still easily the finest youth movement in the world. That does not mean, however, that we are necessarily perfect. Nor does it mean, ~~that~~ and this is more important, that we close our eyes and ears to the needs of a new age and to the call which is the real essence of the Haynes Report to a still harder task than we have had so far and it is in that spirit that I am sure we shall all approach this Report.

Can we do more. Overseas Boys' Brigade shows an increase, I think I am right in saying. You know that here at home, with one exception, we have had to face a decline. Not a ^{catastrophic} / one but one which led Lord Maclay to say, ^{improvements} let us take a look at ourselves and see if there are changes and ~~amendments~~ that we ought to make to meet the new challenge. And he did, as the President has said, ^{as it were looking into a looking glass.} a more courageous thing still. Don't let us do it just by ourselves. Let us call in people from outside who are not concerned directly with The Boys' Brigade and let us ask them to take a look at us and tell us what they think

I think,
about us. That can only have been done/by a movement which had very great confidence in itself. Let me say I think the only test that we ought to apply to this Report and the proposals which the Executive suggests to you, based on the Report, is ~~is~~ what is its effect going to be on the Boy? Will it help to produce more Boys for The Boys' Brigade? Will it help to stop these leaks and help us to keep Boys longer so that our work can be more effective for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Don't let us worry//about Leaders or about Officers. I don't want ^{today, anyhow} I am sure it won't be. I would rather forget the word 'status' in the Report. this to be taken as a challenge to Sir George Haynes./ I don't believe any one of us, Leader or Officer, Lieutenant or Captain, really cares at all about status. We are in a big job to try to extend Christ's Kingdom. We are dedicated people and whether we work with the smaller Boys as Leaders or whether we work with older Boys as on a quasi military basis, we ~~have done the same job~~ are doing the same job for the same Lord and the same Master and, when we have done it all we shall admit we are but unworthy servants.

Remember that the Haynes Report has underlined completely the Object of The Boys' Brigade and it^{is} obvious, if we like to drop the Object of The Boys' Brigade and say our Object is simply to train Boys, we would get many more in our ranks. That is not what we exist for and we are glad that the ^{a religious,} Committee has underlined it for us. Keep your standard high, remain/a Christian movement 100%, your only Object being the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom and everything ^{which} else ~~that~~ you do tends towards that.

Also I think it is right to say that the Report accepts the second pillar of our Brigade, the need for Discipline, especi-ally among the teenage Boys, and ^{this,} what it goes on to say in effect is/that the discipline and the religion which The Boys' Brigade can give is needed for a higher age range than it was years ago. Whatever is the right way to deal with it is ^{that} ~~for~~ any single person in this great audience ~~this~~ morning who does not know that the crying need in this country is to get hold of the teenage Boys, especially the older teenage Boys, to turn their minds to something good and splendid and we believe that The Boys' Brigade has got the ansser to that.

It is very difficult to propose this resolution. I think it is the hardest task the Executive has given to me. I imagine that this is likely to be my last. Let me say this. You are asked this morning to approve in principle what this Report lays down. You are not asked to decide, nor can we decide, to

amend our Constitution in this way or that way. We have got to think over the detailed problems over the next twelve months so that next year we can accept, actual and decisive ^{propositions} ~~proposals~~ put before us, ^{but} you may well say, as I have said to myself more than once, approval or disapproval of principle depends on the details by which it is going to be carried out and we have got that difficulty and we have ^{just} ~~got~~ to face it, but what you are asked to say is, ^{with} what has been called by and large do you agree ~~of~~ this new idea of a three tier Company and of course this is a vital part of this Report especially do you agree with this attempt to bring in the older teenage Boy, not on the ordinary B.B. lines as we know them, but on the B.B. principles as we know them and ideals as we know them adapted to those ages.

I am going to venture to make one or two suggestions on some of the details which we have got to decide later and which you have got to think about during these twelve months. Please remember I am speaking entirely for myself. ^{involved in this three tier business.} ^{at the beginning dealing}

There are two main changes. (1) Certain changes ~~done~~ with the Life Boys and the second, and please do not misunderstand me when I say, the more important, ~~and (2) at the opposite end.~~ because the more difficult, at the opposite end. ^{made in the Haynes Report,}

The criticism about the Life Boys is that we have allowed it to become very much as a separate movement. That was done ^{mostly} ~~mainly~~ I think, at the Life Boys suggestion to give them a very large measure of home rule and of self-government but it is thought, and this is what the Committee suggests, that we ^{should} ~~could~~ improve the system now by bringing the Life Boys within the scope of the one whole Company. It is not suggested, certainly by the Executive, that you should in any way train the junior Boys with the older Boys. That in our view would be fatal. It is not proposed that they should go to camp with you, ^{not proposed} that they should parade with you. It is proposed that the Life Boy will be taking part in the Parade Service. What is suggested is ^{this.} The problem has been that there is a leakage of Life Boys in their ^{third} ~~three~~ years and there is also a leakage in the number of Boys who ought to go into The Boys' Brigade but who don't and also a loss of Boys who come from the Life Boy Team during their first year in the Company. Don't let us worry about whose fault that is, if anybody's. The Report suggests, and the Executive agrees with it, that in future the Life Boys should be the junior section - whatever words we use - of The Boys' Brigade. That the Boys should be 'promoted' rather than 'transferred' to the Seniors at the age of 12. ^{in this coming 12 months because, however wide that may be} I think you may have to consider that ~~maybe~~ we have got to work in step with the educational system of the country, & you may well think that, when a Boy ^{goes} ~~moves~~ to his Senior school, he has got to move to the senior part of The Boys' Brigade.

Again it is suggested, and we agree, that instead of having the Life Boy in ordinary clothes for six weeks, like the other recruits, in as much as he has been a junior in the ^{Boys'} Brigade already, ^{and is being promoted with} he should start ~~in~~ his uniform straight away.

It is also suggested that, if you don't have a separate display, the Life Boy Team should be able to give an item or items at the Display, a thing some Companies have been doing for a good many years. The final suggestion is ^{that we have been rather overtaken by the advance of the small Boys and the programme of the Life Boys, excellent as it was, as we drew it up 40 years ago.} that we need a rather more advanced programme, ^{It is now necessary to have a} rather more advanced scheme of training or play, but always, I hope, and I am ^{this} sure the Executive would say, remembering that we do not introduce the Life Boy too soon to our normal Boys' Brigade activities. The lower ^{the} age in which you put a Boy into uniform, the lower ^{the} age ^{at which} you start normal Boys' Brigade activities, the less chance you have ^{got} of keeping him to the end. Don't let us be afraid of the Boy coming from the junior to the senior section and finding it quite different. He ought to. The Life Boy ought to come into the next grade with something of the thrill of a change. Something of the thrill of something new. We used to express it in the early days that the Life Boys were based on the playground and the older B.B. Boys on the parade ground. I think we want to keep that distinction.

Many years ago a Boy who came to our Life Boy Team went home and said to his Mother "I don't know how I can wait until next week." I believe that is the right spirit of a Life Boy Team. A very happy place, full of happy Boys, led by Leaders, not controlled by Officers, who are very friendly with him and who, at the end of his course, send him on to all the excitement of the higher B.B. Company.

The ordinary B.B. Boy going in at 12 ^{should} ~~and~~, at 16, going into the top tier, ^{that} and that ^{should} last until he is past 19. That is the real thing which I think ought to challenge us and ought to lead us to say "is this something we ought to do? Is it something we can do? Is it something which, with God's help, ~~we~~ ^{all} if we ^{with one heart, we can} go into it, ~~can we~~ succeed? If we do it we shall be doing one of the finest things ~~that~~ for our country that we can possibly do.

You don't need a Judge to tell you of the quite appalling conditions in this country among the senior teenage Boy, not just in dishonesty, ^{but what troubles me far more is this} The wave of violence and vandalism and destruction which affects so many of the present generation.

This is a new idea. It is not just extending the B.B. age to 19.

It would not do any good if that was all. We are not holding all our Boys to 17 and 18 now and we shall not hold them ~~to~~ ^{till} 19 by merely extending the B.B. age. This top tier has got to be something new. It has got to offer to the young man something new. It has ^{I think} got to offer ~~something~~ ^{Churches} to the ~~Church~~, something new and to the community as a whole, something new, ^{and} as you know from the Report the whole idea of it is service. I think with the Report that that is going to mean a change of uniform. The Report rather makes fun of us that we have got two different uniforms. If the members of the Haynes Committee had been with me, and one or two others of you here, who negotiated in 1925 and ¹⁹²⁶ ~~the~~ union between The Boys' Brigade and The Boys' Life Brigade, they will know why we have got two uniforms. There would not have been the slightest chance of any kind of ~~uniform~~ ^{unity} except on the basis that each Company should keep the uniform to which it had been accustomed. We did make some minor alterations but the Committee think, and it may be right, that that has gone on long enough. After all it is easier, I think, for the whole of the movement to change together than for one half ^{to be told} to take the uniform of the other half. I ~~do~~ think this has got to come ~~next~~ ^{because,} if we are going to put this thing across we have got to put a new image of The Boys' Brigade to the world at large, ^{and that is one obvious way in which we can do it. Also} I assume the Haynes Committee are satisfied that the older Boys will take to a uniform if it is the right sort. I don't envy them but I ~~expect~~ ^{respect} the Committee which is now sitting to try to find the right uniform which you will unanimously accept.

The second thing is to get a good name. The Executive are not tied to these names of Juniors, Boys and Seniors. I confess I like the name Life Boy. Whether you call the first tier Juniors or Life Boys, I am quite sure that you must not call the middle tier ^{the 12 - 15's} 'Boys'. ^{The Boy of 12 goes to a senior school.} They are, and most be, the Seniors. There is a danger in these proposals and the danger is that the middle age Boy, the 12/16, the very Boy for whom The Boys' Brigade was started, may be crushed between the two, and if we fail with that Boy, we fail with everything. We have got to keep the Boy from 12 - 16. One point on the 16 - 19 is that will be something to help to attract that Boy. From 12 - 16 you keep him very busy with the normal B.B. programme, a smart uniform, drilling well, earning his badges, enjoying himself at camp and doing all the other splendid things which The Boys' Brigade programme gives for him. At 16 he is offered something different. I would like to call that senior section "Service Corps" or, if you like, "The B.B. Service Corps." I would like to call the members of it "Servicemen."

That ~~it~~ is carrying out the military or quasi military/organisation of The Boys' Brigade ~~because~~ which I think we still want, for the purpose of discipline, and drill and being able to do the many other activities we do in The Boys' Brigade. I would like to see Life Boy William Smith, or Junior William Smith, if you like becoming Private William Smith, maybe Corporal or Sergeant William Smith, then becoming Serviceman Smith.

The other difficulty ~~is~~ has been what is the whole movement to be called? Sir to the Executive that we might go all out very boldly and George Haynes did suggest/that we might call it simply "The Brigade." has taken the view, for reasons which I am sure you will understand, that The Executive/~~think~~ it would be better to keep the name we have had for 80 years and call the whole organisation "The Boys' Brigade," in which case

I would respectively suggest to you that you divide it into Juniors, -I think it is terribly important that these middle age Boys, teenage Boys, should be Seniors, and not something less than that - Seniors/and the Service Corps. Add A - B

We have got to ~~attract~~ strike and so the imagination of the young men of the Churches and the community, We want a new image, a new name for the older Boys, a new uniform. We have got a new ideal - not really new because we have done a lot of service in The Boys' Brigade as it is - but extra emphasis on the one and purpose of the top seniors being service of other people.

Again let me emphasise, let us never forget the 12/16 Boys on whom everything/~~ultimately~~ else depends.

You are now being called upon to adventure further and to do something new, something ~~different~~ difficult. This scheme will not work by itself/~~because~~ just it is printed in a book. It has got to be worked by men and you are the people who have got to work it. We have got to have a great deal more training. We have got to have Officers of a very high standard. Those of us who are old have and to be trained in the new ideas that we have got to put over. got to be prepared to go back for a refresher course, If we adopt this scheme we have got to go into it with enthusiasm.

We want everyone to go into it saying, we will not worry about the small things at the moment. This is a great challenge, a great piece of work, to do. We are going in to do it. Some people may say, we cannot do it. It will never hold these Boys to 19, I have a fairer and/a truer vision and I see this new, full Boys' Brigade Company. I see a small Boy, happy and joyous as he goes to his evening. I see him a little older when he is promoted to the Seniors, smart keen, alert. Winning his badges, going on his expeditions. Then I like to see him from 16 - 19, a young man still holding the B.B. ideals, still being trained on those pillars of Discipline and of Religion. Catching the ideal of service, serving his Church, serving his community, working in The Boys' Brigade, preparing to be an Officer, doing all kinds of work. Don't you think that that

is not going back on The Boys' Brigade as Sir William Smith gave ^{to} us 80 years
ago , but using the very tool he gave us ^{the very organism he gave us} /to meet new needs and new calls.

A - B

Now these are matters that you don't decide this morning. You have got to consider them, talk about them, think over them and, if anybody thinks of a better name, well all good luck to him because we want the very best that we can.

I would like to say just one word about the ages that we have got to think about. There is a resolution about ages and I am told I ought not say anything about it at all. I do sometimes wish that we could get rid of our B.B. idea of calling a Boy by an age which is not his. For he will be 9 or 12 at a certain time in the future and we call him that now as his Brigade age. I confess I have some sympathy for those who would not take a Boy into the Life Boys until his 9th Birthday, a very fine Birthday present for him. I think, with regard to the age when he goes from Juniors to Seniors you have got to fall in step with the Educational system, whichever country you happen to be in, but I feel very strongly indeed that the Boy should not go to the Service Corps, if I may use my own term, before he is actually 16. I know this document says "in the Session in which he becomes 16". That would mean that a lot of Boys would go into the Service Corps at 15 and would be for several months in the Corps when they are only 15. It would mean something more important than that because the promotion ages are geared from the age that he goes into the Service Corps and you could then have, and would have, a Sgt. at 14 and Cpls. at 13, which, to me, is quite unthinkable. Let the Boy go into the top section when he is actually 16 and not before.

How is it going to be worked? Well, six Companies in Birmingham are starting on it this new Session, as guinea-pigs, to see how it works out, and their experience and other Companies in other places will have their experience to give to you. One Company I know has got 16 Boys of the requisite age. They have their ordinary Drill Parade on the Thursday, the Service Corps Boys will meet separately on Tuesday, they all meet together once a month for Drill Parade and they are still going to be all together for their Bible Class on Sunday in order to emphasise the fact that the Seniors and the Service Corps belong to one Company in one Brigade.

C - D I find it, my Lord, a very moving thing to see this great gathering of dedicated people. Dedicated to the service of God and of Christ to Boys. You are giving of your time, you are giving your energy, you are giving the best talents you have got to win Boys for Christ.

THE BOYS' BRIGADE

CLOSING ADDRESS BY SIR DONALD FINNEMORE, THE BRIGADE COUNCIL, 5th SEPTEMBER, 1964

You are not tying your hands now. You are asked to accept this report in principle and you are asking the Executive to make more precise recommendations. You are of course approving the Report in this three tier structure because that is what the Report is about. If this resolution is rejected today, however you look at it, could I remind you what you set this Committee up to do - "to investigate the difficulty of The Boys' Brigade"

The Committee did that and has produced this Report. The Executive welcomed it and approved it and the first resolution is that you endorse the welcome given by the Brigade Executive.

The real core and heart and point of this Report is the third tier at the top. That is what gives it life, gives it vitality and gives it hope in the future. It is easy to say the Executive do not run Companies. You elect them. I have gone back to Company work. I know the difficulties which you have to face and I have faced them for 50 years now, just as much as you do. This is a hard job. The question is, are we going to try to do it?

Something has been ~~said~~ said of the training of Officers. That is something which the third tier is going to do. To give Boys extra special training which, among other things will enable them to take up work with Life Boys, or ordinary B.B. Boys, or other work in connection with our Boys' Brigade.

Some talk about transferring and taking off all our Badges. If he goes on to the third tier which is still part of The Boys' Brigade that is something he will not do.

What about the Bible Class? Of course we shall consider the question of Bible Class. It is the intention of the Brigade Executive that this scheme should be as flexible as possible. I told you of one Company in Birmingham which is proposing to keep the Bible Class with the third tier as well as the ordinary B.B. Boys.

I ask you, on behalf of the Executive, to approve what they have done in the name of this Brigade to allow this resolution to go forward. It is experimental. We may have to make changes next year or the year after. I merely ask you to consider carefully before you say 'No'. Let us go forward to see how much we can do to help and lead these older Boys in these perilous times.