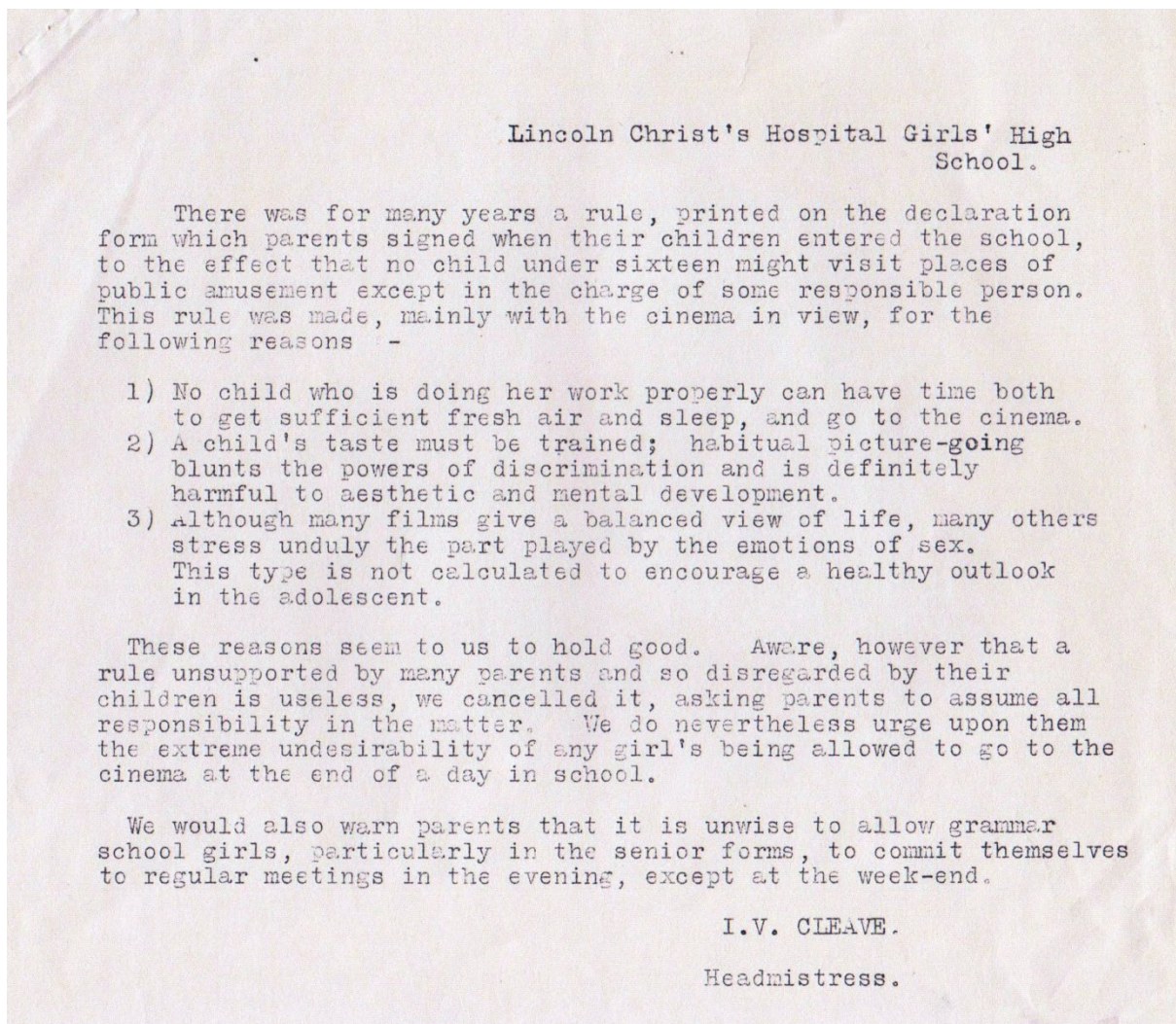


FROM THE GARTON ARCHIVE: CURIOSITIES NO 13

Headmistress Cleave and her 1950s Rules

Below is a list of rules at Lincoln Christ's Hospital Girls High School (LHS), kindly sent to me by a former Head Girl of LHS, Ruth Miller, née Montgomery. The rules were implemented by Miss Cleave and her staff during the 1940s and '50s, but later rescinded with some apparent reluctance, or possibly even disdain! The message to the parents is quite clear; the Headmistress expects!



You will have your own reactions to these rules of course, but here are a few issues of interest to me that might also be worthy of debate in class:

1. I wonder how students manage to have enough sleep in today's culture? I'm sure many still go to the cinema, and also have all the gadgets and other distractions to keep them awake! It seems clear to me that the students at LCHS still work very hard to achieve their qualifications.
2. Surely there is a place for leisure time in our society? All work and no play.....?
3. Is there something intrinsically inferior to the cinema compared to the other arts, reading, etc? It seems to me that Miss Cleave had a misplaced élitist attitude to the cinema. Surely the cinema as an art form has the power to train the mind, to nurture the powers of discrimination and to develop aesthetic and cognitive development?
4. It is my view that addressing the 'emotions of sex' is a major adolescent task, and needs to be confronted and celebrated with help and support from parents and teachers? I wonder what Miss Cleave would have made of today's 'sexting', provocative 'selfies' and explicit Facebook images? Her approach seems to be to sweep sexual issues under the carpet, which in my opinion is much more likely to lead to an 'unhealthy attitude'. In the 1950s, sex tended to be repressed, and was only 'discovered' during the 'swinging '60s!
5. The debate about whose responsibility it is to support and educate children in understanding and coming to terms with their sexual development and identity is not new! It looms large as a topical issue as I write!
6. From a linguistic standpoint I find the sentence beginning, "We do nevertheless urge..." somewhat cumbersome. Is it grammatically correct? I suggest that it is certainly not a construction likely to be found in current usage. Perhaps it is another example of how language use changes over time.

I do recall a similarly censorial attitude by one Headmaster at Lincoln School, who banned a play from being performed because of a reference to sex. However, I also remember the legendary Mr 'Shep' Shepherd encouraging his upper school French scholars to attend the showings of 'artistic' French films at the Grand cinema in Lincoln! I'm not sure that they improved my French, but they certainly developed my 'aesthetic' judgement!

Your own responses, and indeed those of students at LCHS would be much appreciated.

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