

2.9. 4 Kings Langton St. S. Bence 244501
BIRKBECK COLLEGE STUDENTS' UNION



BIRKBECK COLLEGE
(UNIVERSITY OF LONDON)
MALET STREET,
W.C.1
LANGHAM 7941

6th. December 1956

Dear Sir,

I understand that you are interested in making a news feature of the students of this college converting a damp, deserted country house into a habitable, furnished hostel for Hungarian boys.

Two weeks ago, a Hungarian priest begged us to find a house for 30 Hungarian boys, from 14 to 21, who were under his care and not being catered for by other organizations. Within half an hour we were successful...a 25 room Victorian country house, rent-free for 6 months, no electricity, no gas, no water.....and one chair.

The next day, Birkbeck students set to work, scrubbing the place from top to bottom. Every drop of water had to be fetched from neighbouring houses, ^{and} heated on wood fire ~~s.~~ and When the light failed we carried on by candle light.

As a result of a brief mention in the Press, we were inundated with offers of furniture, bedding, china and cutlery from all over the London area. These are being collected in three-ton army trucks....we haven't finished yet.

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The work continues, there are no curtains, no carpets, the garden is a wilderness, more furniture will be arriving, and more boys too, the painting operations will begin....a working party will be down there all this weekend. The address is Winchester House, Kingston Hill.

Any help you can give us in drawing attention to our venture will be very much appreciated. Publicity is our only hope! We have no funds behind us and are entirely dependent on public interest, to set the place going.

As far as we know, no other students have undertaken to set up a hostel from scratch as we have done. It has been an exciting, strenuous and infinitely worth while fortnight for us, and I hope you will agree it has the makings of a good story. We shall of course be only too glad to co-operate in any way we can.

Please ring Covent Garden 2468, Ext. 110 any time tomorrow, Friday, before 6.0. and I shall be glad to give you any further information you may require. John Berridge, who initiated the scheme, will be available at Birkbeck, Langham 7941, Ext. 48 from 6.0 onwards.

We hope that in spite of the short notice that you will be able to send a photographer down to Kingston this weekend.

Yours faithfully.

p.p. John Berridge.