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Correspondence--Criticism and Rejoinder

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CORRESPONDENCE

CRITICISM AND REJOINDER

[The following correspondence has been received relative to an article that appeared in the last November issue of this JOURNAL.—Ed.]

Robert H. Gault, Managing Editor,
Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology,
357 East Chicago Avenue,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir:

In an article entitled, "The Intelligence of Delinquent Boys Committed to Wisconsin Industrial School" by Morris Gilmore Caldwell, appearing in the November, 1929, Vol. XX, No. 3, Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology the following statement is made on page 427:

"If mental tests as given to Wisconsin boy and girl delinquents by the Psychiatric Service of the State Board of Control are properly administered and give a true measure of intelligence of juvenile delinquents in Wisconsin, the inference is clear that the juvenile courts of the state committed 70% of the boy delinquents and 85% of the girl delinquents in these two studies to the wrong type of institution—that is they should have been sentenced to an institution for the feeble-minded."

Our examinations show no such results and the author's conclusions are unwarranted. The facts are that our examinations show that during the biennial period 1926-1928, 21.9% of the admissions to the Wisconsin Industrial School for Boys and 24.1% of the admissions to the Wisconsin Industrial School for Girls were feeble-minded. The data for other periods run along about the same ratio; for instance, the 1928-1929 figures are 21.1% and 29% respectively.

The statement above referred to is a reflection upon the accuracy of our work. We ask that you retract the statement and put the facts before your readers in their true light. If the author is willing to do this as a voluntary courtesy, we will be satisfied. Where he made his mistake was in assuming that all inmates examined who were given an IQ below normal were classified as feeble-minded which is far from the fact. Only those are classified as feeble-minded who received an IQ below 70—those between the feeble-minded and normal are classified as *Retarded General Mental Development*, which is quite a different and distinct class than the Mentally Deficient or feeble-minded.

Yours truly,

PSYCHIATRIC FIELD SERVICE OF THE
STATE BOARD OF CONTROL OF WISCONSIN,
By Frank C. Richmond, M. D., Director.

Dec. 19, 1929.

REPLY

Dr. Richmond's criticism of my article displays a number of errors on his part: (1) he seems to exhibit a lack of knowledge of the true nature of feeble-mindedness as held by authorities both in this country and in Europe; (2) he

makes certain admissions regarding the percentage of feeble-mindedness among boys and girls in Wisconsin Industrial Schools which materially lessens the potency of his criticism; and (3) he has a misconception of what I actually said in my article in the November number of this Journal. Now let us briefly examine these inconsistencies found in his criticism.

In the first place, I wish to point out that all authorities do not accept Dr. Richmond's definition of feeble-mindedness as "only those who have an IQ below 70." Professor Lincoln of the Graduate School of Education of Harvard University says:

"The most generally accepted definition of feeble-mindedness is the one proposed by the Royal College of Physicians of London, and adopted by the British Royal Commission of Mental Deficiency. In substance it is as follows:

"A feeble-minded person is one who is incapable, because of mental defect existing from birth or from an early age of competing on equal terms with his normal fellows, or of managing himself and his affairs with ordinary prudence."¹

Goddard accepts this definition of feeble-mindedness and in addition says: "Persons who are recognized as being below the line of normal intelligence have been at different periods called by different names As a general term for all, the expression 'aments' is sometimes used. In America we have used the expression feeble-minded both in a specific and in a generic sense, specifically to designate the highest division and generically the whole group"²

Additional support for this type of definition is given in a similar one by Tredgold: "we may accordingly define amentia (feeble-mindedness) as a state of restricted potentiality for, or arrest of, cerebral development, in consequence of which the person affected is incapable at maturity of so adapting himself to his environment or to the requirements of the community as to maintain existence independently of supervision or external support."³

Further, Pressy states: "Really, instead of speaking of feeble-mindedness we might better speak of the 'feeble-mindednesses.' There are really a great variety of conditions of amentia, or initial lack of mentality, due to a great variety of causes; one might almost say that there were as many kinds of feeble-mindedness as there were kinds of mental disease . . . by definition the term 'feeble-minded' is applied to those individuals who are markedly lacking in mental capacity as a result of incomplete mental development."⁴

In the second place, Dr. Richmond reveals considerable confusion in terminology in his statement "those between the feeble-minded and normal are classified as *Retarded General Mental Development*, which is quite a different and distinct class than the mentally deficient or feeble-minded." No less an authority than Dr. Hollingworth states that the term "retarded" has no place in a scientific discussion. She says: "'Backward' and 'Retarded' vaguely and erroneously imply that the condition is one which will disappear with time, that the child is temporarily behind in his development, but may be expected to 'catch up' eventually. In a scientific treatise all euphemisms are inappropriate."⁵

¹Lincoln, E. A., *Beginnings in Educational Measurement*, Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1924 pp. 87-88.

²Goddard, H. H., *Feeble-mindedness*, Macmillan, N. Y., 1920, pp. 3-4.

³Tredgold, A. F., *Mental Deficiency*, N. Y., 1922, pp. 8-9.

⁴Pressy, S. L., and Pressy, L. C., *Mental Abnormality and Deficiency*, Macmillan, N. Y., 1926, pp. 215-216.

⁵Hollingworth, L. S., *The Psychology of Subnormal Children*, Macmillan, N. Y., 1929, p. 39.

Further, Dr. Richmond in his report⁶ for 1926-28 to the Wisconsin State Board of Control attempts to discriminate between subnormal intelligence, retarded general mental development, mental deficiency and feeble-mindedness. Dr. Hollingworth points out that no such distinctions should be made, when she says: "Many different words are used to designate those who are subnormal in intelligence. Mental defectives, aments, the feeble-minded, the mentally deficient, the very inferior, the subnormal all are terms in common use today . . . All are used in this discussion, being employed interchangeably, as they are synonymous."⁷

Now suppose, for the time being, that we accept Dr. Richmond's definition of feeble-mindedness, the facts are clear, according to his own admission that 21.9% of the boys and 24.1% of the girls, committed to Wisconsin industrial schools were feeble-minded. It is the opinion of the writer that an industrial school is no place for a boy or girl with subnormal intelligence. These facts seem to weaken Dr. Richmonds' criticism of my original article.

In the criticism Dr. Richmond assumes that I said that 70% of the boy delinquents and 85% of the girl delinquents were feeble-minded. Nowhere in my article have I made any such statement but I did say: "Almost 85% of the girls have an IQ below 90 and slightly over 70% of the boys have an IQ below normal. . . . Both groups have a tendency toward mental dullness and mental defect but the girls lead in this direction by a little over 13%."⁸ Since such large percentages of both boy and girl delinquents have subnormal intelligence, the writer still feels justified in the conclusion which he made in the original article that these delinquents should have been committed to an institution for the feeble-minded rather than an industrial school. The author strongly contends that an industrial school, which is, of course, a correctional institution, is no place for a juvenile with subnormal intelligence, that is for an individual with mentality below the normal IQ range.

The sum and substance of Dr. Richmond's criticism is that he is disposed to quibble and quarrel over terminology used to designate various grades of subnormal intelligence. It seems to me that a more constructive policy for Dr. Richmond to follow would be to formulate plans whereby those juvenile delinquents with subnormal intelligence could be removed from the industrial schools of the state to institutions adapted to their care and treatment.

This reply to Dr. Richmond's criticism is not to be considered by any manner or means a retraction of the statements which I made in the original article in the November number of this Journal.

Respectfully submitted,

MORRIS G. CALDWELL,

Ashland College, Ashland O.

⁶State Board of Control of Wisconsin, *Nineteenth Biennial Report*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1928, p. 118.

⁷Hollingworth, *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁸Caldwell, Morris G., "The Intelligence of Delinquent Boys Committed to Wisconsin Industrial Schools," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, November, 1929, p. 422.