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A VIEWPOINT ON VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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The subject of the proper preparation of an inmate for his successful economic adjustment upon parole from a Correctional Institution, may be considered as falling within three different groupings; procedures that will lead to a proper evaluation of his ability to perform any particular type of work or to learn any particular type of trade, the development of facilities within the Correctional Institution to bring about the proper training of an inmate, and the organization of resources of the community for the proper reception of a parolee from a Correctional Institution so as to secure as easy and effective an economic adaptation as possible.

The determination of a man's ability to perform any particular task better than any other work that he might choose is not an easy matter. Most of the inmates coming to Correctional Institutions have had all manners of jobs, usually staying only a few months on each job and drifting to something else as the occasion presents itself. The average chronic offender is inclined to work on a job only long enough to get money for as much loafing as he possibly can do. His aversion to going back to a job after his money has given out is so great that he will turn to crime instead. Of course, reference is hereby made to the recidivist and not to a fairly large group of first offenders or to those who have accidentally stepped over the bounds of social demands. For these highly teachable types of inmates special methods of instruction should be devised. Concerning this, mention will be made later in this paper. In general the polyglot training received at the various tasks that young men drift into can be considered altogether inadequate as a training for any special trade. At most, young men drifting from one job to another learn only the experience that comes from changing human contacts and a certain knowledge about the work. Valuable though this is, it does not lead to the development of the special technique necessary for trade training. In some instances, the inmates have been highly trained specialists from certain types of jobs such as, printing, glass bulb blowing, expert automobile repairing, and the like. These men require no vocational

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development but easily find their way into a highly important place within the prison routine and later, of course, have no difficulty getting a job upon parole. The portion of such easily adjusted inmates coming to Correctional Institutions is relatively small however.

It becomes the task, therefore, of the reception prison for new inmates to evaluate the capacities of the various new admissions on a basis somewhat different than a mere listing of previous occupations. All new inmates should be detained in a special reception unit for a period of thirty days incommunicado with the general population. During this period they should be tested in various ways so as to determine their fitness for adjustment within the Institution itself and to determine as much as possible, the various training procedures that should be applied to the individual in question. Foremost among such procedures is the determination of the men of general level of intelligence. Obviously, he cannot be placed at certain tasks if he is feeble minded. He should be segregated among his own kind, preferably at a different Institution. The next battery of tests determines his mechanical aptitude and general performance abilities. The Pinter Patterson battery of tests is the most valuable for such purposes. These should be supplemented by the mechanical aptitude tests of Stenquist. By such methods we can determine the degree of "hand mindedness." Another series of tests such as, New York State Literacy Tests, the Woody-McCall and Thorndyke Tests, and the Stamford Achievement Tests determine the proper placement of the men in school. The determination of the general level of intelligence of the school ability and the performance ability of any individual are to be considered as necessary concomitants to any vocational training program. The next procedure is to analyse the various industries within the prisons and the various utilities available to determine special talents demanded of an individual for particular trade or industry processes. An analysis made of the Correctional Institutions about three years ago revealed in the prison industries that six general types of response were demanded of the inmate. These were grouped as follows:

1. Operations requiring high special skill and training.
2. Semi-skilled operations.
3. Clerical occupations.
4. Operations demanding special mental alertness.
5. Operations demanding quick muscular response.
6. Unskilled or laboring type of operation.

These divisions are self explanatory and logically indicate that

certain types of individuals can be assigned only to certain types of work. For example, the feeble-minded or dull normal types do the laboring jobs such as, carrying lumber, shoveling coal, digging ditches, to much better advantage than can other types. On the other hand, one cannot place a feeble-minded individual in charge of a highly intricate type of machinery because of his awkwardness he may well cause considerable damage and be inefficient in his work. The clerical jobs require a certain amount of education particularly in the reading, writing and spelling abilities. Quick muscular response is required on certain types of machines where feeding into the punches or presses must be exceedingly quick and require considerable amount of judgment. This judgment quality is something that requires considerable thought. The cutting of cloth for suits in the tailoring shop is an important matter because judgment is required so as to cause only a minimum amount of waste material. In the furniture shop, the same thing is required to secure economy of use of materials. The placement of borings for dowls and mortises requires quick, accurate judgment. Semi-skilled trades are those that require the operation of automatic machinery and are acquired quite rapidly. Highly skilled trades of course are those of plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, etc.

Certain psychological tests are available to determine the various functions just outlined. This becomes a proper part of the observation and study of the inmate upon his first thirty days in the Institution. Where the inmate has claimed previous experience in a skilled trade, this must be checked because often he has some definite purpose in mind in making such assertions quite aside from any ability he might have along that line. The Chapman trade tests devised during the war for a rapid determination of trade abilities of enlisted and drafted men are of considerable use in Correctional Institutions. This is composed of three parts, a short written examination, a picture test and a test with objects in the trade as a practical demonstration test. The first two types of tests are only necessary in rapid evaluation of a man's trained ability for Correctional Institution work.

The organization of the Institutional facilities for giving a man correct trade training is extremely important. In all frankness, it may be said that Correctional Institutions up to the present time have not been successful in a complete organization of this kind. The Reformatories have established trade shops where no attempt is made to produce anything that will be sold for profit. This places an altogether inferior valuation on the product itself. As a result there is a tendency to make things that will be torn up and reassembled or remade again and again. Psychologically, this is an unsound pro-

cedure for anyone cannot become properly interested in something that he does not believe will have some lasting value or use. There is altogether too much of a tendency also to throw emphasis upon the continuous repetition of certain essential technical manipulations of a trade such as the wiping of joints in plumbing, the sawing to a line in the carpentry shop, etc. This constant repetition of some simple procedure tends to kill initiative or interest in the work. Some means must be devised in the trade shops to make the work interesting and useful and we may even go a step farther and say profitable also. Trade analyses, unit plan of trade work, and definite practical objectives in mind are the goals to be achieved. As much as possible, trade schools should work on projects that make for the practical management of the Institution itself. There are many things to be made about an Institution that can be done in the trade shops; book-cases, desks, chairs, wagon tires, hinges for gates, and many other innumerable objects required in any Institution, can be made in the shops as a practical lesson in trade training.

In the prisons, emphasis has been thrown upon production for the purpose of profit. The training that the individual would get has been considered altogether secondary to profit making. Paroled at a proper understanding of this situation, one must consider retrospectively the history of prison development. For many centuries there has been a feeling on the part of the community that any offender should pay for his depredations. Convicts were let out to public contractors for work on public construction of various kinds at various wage rates. This practice continued for a great number of years until manufacturers and labor organizations finally restricted the activities of prison industries. In many states, the State itself, took over the employment of the inmate, restricting the sales of prison made goods only to municipalities and state agencies. In other instances, especially in past years, the contractor was permitted to come into the prison and to utilize prison labor at a certain rate. Only recently the idea has developed that the inmate and his rehabilitation should be made paramount to any profit that may be derived from his efforts. Meanwhile, there are several obstacles that stand in the way of utilizing the prison inmates' efforts for trade training exclusively. In the first place, the State has invested a very heavy sum of money in buildings and equipment for prison industries. Most of these industries are almost useless as trade training units in themselves, although they have a certain training value that can be utilized as will be explained somewhat later. Then again, prison industries have shown in past years a very handsome profit. Some of this has become

a revolving fund for the purchase of additional machinery but still other portions of this fund have been diverted to the general maintenance of the Institution such as payment for light, fuel, power, etc. In some States, practically the entire Institution has been built out of the profits made from prison labor. A third obstacle to be met in doing away with the prison industry system as it now stands is that the profits derived therefrom are paid in part back to the inmates themselves as inmate wages. The scale of wages of inmates can be run anywhere from five to fifty cents per inmate per day. In New York State, half of this money can be used by the inmate in purchasing anything he desires within the Institution and in some instances, articles from the outside. The Commissary is an important feature in every prison. From the Commissary the inmate may get many articles of delicacy that are not made available to him through regular prison fare. He can get candy, cake, pie, tobacco, special makes of tooth paste and quite a number of other articles not otherwise available. These serve to make his prison life somewhat more acceptable and are to be considered by all means a proper object to a well run prison. To deprive an inmate of these little extras in his life is to work a very considerable hardship upon him. Administratively speaking, a great deal of restlessness and trouble would develop among the inmates causing administrative difficulty to the administrative head if inmate wages were withdrawn. Besides the preceding three obstacles to doing away with prison industries, there is the fourth very formidable objection that will be raised by the average man of the community himself. There still exists a very strong feeling on the part of the public that the offender should be placed upon the rock pile to do out in hard labor the results of his misdeeds. Prison industries are substitutions for the rock pile in the imagination of the average man. It will be felt by many people within the community that to substitute trade training for prison industries is another attempt on the part of prison administrators to coddle the offender.

Despite the seriousness of the obstacles mentioned towards developing such a program, every effort should be met nevertheless towards considering the rehabilitation of the inmate as paramount to all other objects of prison routine. Until such a millennium is reached however, certain compromise measures may be taken along these lines. Adjacent to each set of prison industry shops, should be a vocational training unit. This should be, if possible, a separate building which would be made the headquarters of all vocational efforts for that Institution. A highly trained vocational director who understands trade training objectives as well as practical commercial

industry, should be in charge. Within this vocational unit, the director should gather together his staff. He should have certain types of machinery within the shop that are to be supplemented by such trade activities as can be obtained from the industries themselves. There are certain operations within the industries that give certain training in procedures that will supplement the highly specialized training to be given within the vocational units itself. An illustration of this is the furniture shop. Many operations in the making of furniture can be utilized as a part of trade training in carpentry. A carpenter, however, cannot be evolved out of a furniture making shop. Certain other procedures are necessary to be learned which deal largely with essentials in the handling of tools, in the dressing and making up of lumber, etc. Most of these activities are taken care of within the furniture shop by highly specialized machinery. The vocational training unit, therefore, will supplement such carpenter training essentials, such, the use of the saw and the plane.

While on this subject of trade training, certain view points should be expressed in this place in our discussion regarding the value of the so-called trade training. The economic revolution that has been going on in this country for the past twenty or thirty years has tended to do away with apprentice training for special trades that was so highly important in our father's and grandfather's time. There has been a tendency for large manufacturing concerns to take over most of the production in this country. This means highly recognized procedures with highly specialized machinery that tend to do away with skilled man-power to the utmost extent. Many operations that were formerly done by hand by skilled artisans are now being performed by highly intricate machinery that can be run by a man who has had a few days training only. Many concerns would much rather take a young man and train him for the specialized procedures of their requirements than to take in someone who is highly technical and who will have a difficult time changing his ideas over to the special requirements of that trade. This, of course, is not true of all trades. We shall still need carpenters, plumbers, electricians, automobile repair men, printers, shoe makers and other skilled artisans. The point is that opportunities for placement in such trades are becoming fewer each year. The average young man, unless he is professionally trained, has to consider either clerical occupations or going into some concern and performing monotonous, repetitious, semi-skilled operative procedures on highly complicated machinery.

Granting that an inmate has been trained along a certain line and given what would be called a trade training, the question arises as

to whether the training he has received with slightly antique and obsolete machinery which cannot be kept up to date in prison industries on account of the cost, will be of value to him in that particular trade in more modernized shops outside the Institution. Perhaps the opportunity does not present itself in any particular moment for employment in that trade, but he can obtain a job along some other line. An analysis of the placement of parolees from Correctional Institutions indicated that a very high percentage of inmates do not follow out the trade that has been taught to them in Correctional Institutions. This is not only a lack of opportunity for placement in that particular trade but in many instances, there is a strong desire on the part of the inmate to get away from anything that will even remotely remind him of his previous connection with the Institution. The problem, therefore, for Correctional Institutions becomes increasingly one of training the inmate along a number of allied lines. It is advisable to rotate a man through a number of trade procedures so that when he goes out upon parole and any particular job offers itself to him, he will have at least some training along that line. In addition to this, a varied training in the essentials of allied groups of trades brings about the development of a person who is qualified to perform a number of multiple functions. A janitor in a small apartment house in the medium sized cities may be called upon to fire the furnace, to do minor electrical repairing, a certain amount of carpentry, painting, etc. An inmate trained in a number of mechanical essentials of several trades can perhaps run his own automobile repair shop to very much better advantage than if he had only one skilled trade at his command.

The most useful facilities can be brought to bear upon the trade training of an inmate in a correctional institution and is the so-called institutional utilities. An Institution is a little city in itself. A multitude of jobs in construction or repair offer themselves constantly. New ditches must be dug, new concrete conduits must be put in, shelving must be made for storerooms, repairs have to be made in roofs, small shop buildings have to be constructed, new electrical wiring has to be put in from time to time. The organization of classes of instruction under a competent boss foreman is the most practical training any inmate can get within a Correctional Institution. Even the kitchen, storehouse and mess hall activities can be utilized for training of a sort. This aspect of Institutional activities has been fairly well developed but there is a tendency for the construction foreman to have a limited number of men occupied on such activities.

We have now reached the point in our discussion where we can consider the third aspect of the vocational training, namely, the organization of the community itself for the proper placement of a

parolee from a Correctional Institution. The writer strongly feels that the community fails to realize its responsibility in the rehabilitation of the prison inmate. The general tendency of the community is to forget the offender once he has been sentenced and the total responsibility of his proper readjustment is thrown upon the shoulders of the Institutional head. If the community does not have a job ready for the parolee from a Correctional Institution, the chances are very much in favor of that parolee becoming an offender again instead of a respectable citizen. There is a widespread and easily understandable distrust towards employing any individual who has been an inmate of a Correctional Institution. Nevertheless, the problem must be faced squarely and provisions made by the community for taking back unto themselves the offender after he leaves the Correctional Institution. Suggestion is made at this point that it is highly advisable to have organized committees among personnel managers and leading manufacturers and employers who are interested in this prison problem. Such a committee could indicate the avenue of placement of parolees from Correctional Institutions provided that certain minimum training were given these men while they were in the Institution itself. We can say, for instance, that the head of a large manufacturing concern putting out shoes, would indicate that the minimum requirements for the acceptance of any parolee from an Institution for his factory would be a certain course of instruction. It would be necessary, therefore, for the Institution to see that an adequate course of instruction were given.

It will be understood, therefore, that the brightest prospects for the economic readjustment of the offender lie in a triumvirate composed of the institutional heads of Correctional Institutions, the Parole Boards and well organized committees of personnel managers and employers of the community itself. Such an organization would bring a decided hope for a direct attack upon the problem of recidivism. There is nothing more discouraging than for a man to go out from prison with only a ten dollar bill in his pocket and the hope of getting a job. The Parole Board have far too heavy a burden to be able to do very much for individual offenders. Their work has been herculean in nature and great results have been accomplished, but facilities are always lacking in this field. In addition to these obstacles is the present era of unemployment, which magnifies many times the difficulties a parolee from a Correctional Institution has in securing proper employment. The question may well be asked—"What greater service can we render the individual offender in his attempt to rehabilitate himself than to give him adequate training within the Institution and the sure knowledge that a job is waiting for him on the outside?"