

1946

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Recommended Citation

Edmund R. East, Correctional Objectives Today, 37 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 230 (1946-1947)

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CORRECTIONAL OBJECTIVES TODAY

Edmund R. East

The author has made several contributions to this *Journal*. The last was entitled *Classification Reception Centers*, XXXVI, 4, November-December, 1945. Dr. East has served in the U. S. Navy as Classification and Assignment Officer in the Naval Prison at Portsmouth, N. H. In civilian life he is Director of Classification in the Industrial School at Camp Hill, Pennsylvania.—EDITOR.

The opinions expressed in this article are personal to the writer and are not to be construed as official or necessarily reflecting the views of the Navy Department or the naval service at large.

Now that our country has lately been experiencing its greatest trial of all time for survival, when all resources of men and material were being coordinated and activities directed toward the ultimate goal of victory, it is well for us in penal institutions to evaluate what we are accomplishing. By taking inventory, we may ask ourselves if our thinking is in all respects fundamental to the problem involved and if we are applying to the fullest advantage the modern facilities of equipment and methods at our command.

There can be no doubt that many of our penal institutions have been utilizing to their utmost capacity the physical facilities at their disposal in the production of war and critical civilian material. Prison administrators and inmates alike have entered into this new phase of directed activity with a spirit and performance equal to, and in many cases, surpassing that manifested by comparable outside agencies of production. Many examples may be cited throughout the country of this spirit and productivity.

Of greater importance, however, is the question of what are we accomplishing with the tremendous and potential resource of manpower confined within our institutions — the most precious resource the nation has in an all-out war effort affecting every individual within its boundaries. This is a moot question; yet, on reflection, we are accomplishing and can further stress certain objectives concomitant with our goal of salvaging manpower.

One of our greatest accomplishments in this endeavor can be the instilling within each individual inmate well ingrained habits of industry. It is true that many inmates who are released from penal institutions find an opportunity to engage further in some work activity or continue some skill either developed or perpetuated following some prior experience while incarcerated. The bulk of men, however, do not follow the occupations pursued while in confinement. There are many varied reasons for this fact. Some are not sufficiently trained in a particular work activity to warrant a further continuance;

some have not been engaged while in confinement in any occupation that can be made available or is desirable to them in the outside world; others are not sufficiently motivated or interested in an institutional form of employment to continue along this line after release. Often, suitable placement along a certain line cannot be made because of the stigma attached to confinement within a penal institution. Yet, there is one attribute common to the undertaking of any institutional work assignment which can be stressed and developed during the period of confinement and utilized in any form of outside employment at this or any time — that of a well founded habit of work industry. An ability and desire inculcated within each individual inmate to proceed at the proper time in the proper frame of mind to a work assignment, to comprehend the nature and detail of the job to be done, and to perform this work in a purposeful and productive fashion, can be utilized very advantageously in any form of employment today following release.

It has been demonstrated today in the need for men to be trained in the many highly complicated tasks of war material production that our stress on vocational training in itself along our now laggard institutional lines is not sufficient. The emphasis should be on the individual and not on the mere general application of trade training.

An analogy to this system of thought may be found in the curricula of many colleges and universities today. The student is encouraged to avail himself of a broad, diversified, yet related cultural training program instead of interesting himself solely in one course of study. Many employers in business today are more interested in securing prospective employees with this type of background because they can develop more successfully along their own desired lines of thought and operation than those who may otherwise enter with some conflicting pre-conceived ideas and training.

Good habits of industry may be directed and fostered by the system of disciplinary training in penal institutions, tempered and further motivated by the officers who have jurisdiction over the work activities of the inmates. It is then the task of these officers to interpret the work, place an increasing degree of meaningful responsibility upon the inmate, and to supply the proper motivation that may be developed with the passage of time into well founded habits of industry.

The social development through the media of group association and participation in group activities is to most of us engaged in this work a real and constructive accomplishment in our attempt at salvaging manpower. This accomplishment has come as a natural by-product of our modern penal philosophy

and practice. The former principles of an all embracing system of continued solitary confinement, the limited or otherwise closely defined association of one inmate with the balance of the population and the lack of all socializing agencies no longer constitute the basis upon which an institutional treatment program is predicated. It is understood today that the subjection of an individual inmate to such an extremely abnormal and artificial situation, denying him the means of self-expression and group association, does not enable him to adequately cope with the complexities of social life and person-to-person interaction upon release into society.

A survey of any penal population, particularly apparent in the youthful offender groups of our correctional institutions, will reveal that a large proportion of them, for varying reasons of circumstance, have not heretofore engaged extensively in group activities or experienced the socializing and personality developing influences concomitant with association with individuals representing highly diversified backgrounds, viewpoints, and experiences found in any group. Here, for the first time in many instances, individuals learn what is expected of them by others, become cognizant of the norms of social behavior, develop individually through personal experience a suitable approach for the solution of a problem, and determine themselves what courses of action may be followed and objectives realized without undue conflict and distress. They may become through necessity more sensitive to the demands of the group, develop a capacity through association to comprehend the interests and values of others, and come to realize that their own welfare is contingent upon the demands of others.

It cannot be disputed that in themselves, many associations formed in penal institutions are not productive of results in accord with the best interests of society. Men do tend to take on the characteristics of the group in which they travel. However, it will be agreed that in our penal institutions today, through the media of group association and group activities, the opportunity is presented each individual to acquire or further strengthen a social feeling — a regard for others and experience in the discipline a group can exercise over the individual. This experience can be of benefit to the individual inmate in a sincere effort to make a successful adjustment in society; it can benefit society also by instilling within the individual returned to it a stronger propensity to conform with the social expectations of the group and a more wholehearted desire to participate in concerted community activities.

The truth of this thinking may be demonstrated by the many individuals we have known personally who have acquired this sense of social feeling and also, through penal experience, an

ability to adjust to a system of discipline and regimentation and who therefore have been able to adjust far more satisfactorily today in the armed forces of the nation than individuals who have come from civilian life and who have not had similar socializing experiences of group life.

Group activities on a constructively planned and operated basis, along military drill, work, or recreational lines, should be extended as far as is practical within each institution. Opportunities for individual recognition should be provided wherein excellence in these activities has been demonstrated. Group activities not only provide within the institution acceptable outlets for the manifestations of emotional feelings and generally exert a wholesome steadying influence upon the entire inmate population, but also are conducive to the social development of the individual, providing the opportunity for the acquisition and development of a series of personal attributes and techniques fundamental to the earnest attempt by many at a more successful adjustment in society.

Fundamental to the aims and activities of any penal institution is the attempt to instil within each member of its inmate population a well founded and all embracing respect for authority. This can be an accomplishment by our penal institutions of paramount importance to society, particularly at a time when our society in order to survive must now manifest a greater degree of harmony in outlook, purpose, and activity than ever before.

It might be theorized that in each commitment to a penal institution, there is evidenced the lack of respect for authority — the authority of personal ownership; the authority of social control advanced by the home, school, church, and other community agencies; the authority of the law and its agencies of enforcement. Following this line of reasoning, it is therefore the obligation of each institution within its avowed objective of protecting society to remedy this deficiency in the personality make-up of each individual it receives.

Respect for authority can be introduced to the individual inmate by a sound system of discipline aimed at self-control and acceptance of a social code of ethics which is fair, consistent, and all-inclusive in its application, allowing no relaxation for the few which cannot be made for the many. The respect for authority so introduced can be maintained overtly or become more fundamentally implanted within the personality of an individual inmate only as long as each officer of the institution places his share of the treatment program into intelligent and understanding use and in this undertaking commands the respect of the inmate. An institutional treatment program or any phase thereof cannot exist apart from the officers who

must necessarily place it into effect; nor can the success of any program in its application be any greater than the success demonstrated by each and every officer in his application to the duties of his office.

Therefore, in this or any other phase of an institutional program, it is necessary that the officers possess certain acceptable qualities. Primarily they must be of good character and personality. They must be well adjusted individuals, socially and emotionally, interested in human beings and their problems, be possessed of the traits of tolerance, patience, and understanding, be decent in attitude, clean and honest in outlook, and able to inspire confidence in deed.

The desirability, therefore, of maintaining high standards in the selection of institutional personnel to realize this objective cannot be disputed. It is extremely difficult, however, in a time of national strife to maintain these standards of acceptability or to further elevate them in the interests of better administration and more productive treatment planning. Many officers were inducted into the armed forces of the nation or left their respective penal services for other varied reasons. Moreover, the reservoir of men usually available for this type of work is increasingly depleted.

It is apparent that our only recourse under these conditions is an added emphasis upon and increased use of in-service training programs. Through this medium we may better prepare ourselves to more adequately discharge our duties and our aim to instil within each inmate under our jurisdiction an increased respect for authority.

No one can state with assurance today that penal institutions in themselves rehabilitate individuals. Nor, for that matter, can an institution necessarily be held responsible for the further participation in criminal activities by any individual formerly confined therein. Neither accomplishment, good or bad, must necessarily be credited to a penal institution simply because it was the last agency to have contact with the offender. Rehabilitation of attitude and activity along socially acceptable lines or the continuation of criminality are due to a complex series of interacting factors and, in this series, the penal institution is but one item.

Penal institutions can, however, prepare a new foundation, or further strengthen a foundation already begun upon which future behavior may be predicated. It is possible that any individual inmate, despite the nature of his outlook and attitude toward future criminality, may conform very satisfactorily to the regimentation of an institution. This adjustment, then, is not the test. Only through normal social interaction following release in a more normal social environment can the

success or strength of any institutional rehabilitative measure be evaluated. Even then, as has been stated, we cannot be certain that it is the institution and not some other agency responsible for the type of activity manifested.

It is our attempt, therefore, to prepare as excellent a foundation as possible during the period of confinement which, through the assistance of other outside agencies following release, will enable the offender to make a successful acceptable adjustment. In this attempt, and particularly in view of our recent war effort, additional stress may be placed on at least three of many objectives: the instilling within each inmate well founded habits of work industry; the development within the individual of a social feeling; and the introduction and maintenance of a respect for authority within each member of the inmate body. Each of these accomplishments, if realized, will prepare the individual inmate to more adequately assist in our concerted war and peace efforts than if these measures had never been directed at him.