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POSTWAR MILITARY TRAINING IN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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EDITOR.

The basic element in the undertaking and successful conduct of any war is trained personnel, educated in the unique activities of waging war and trained in its attendant discipline and mode of life. In the recent period of national emergency, the suddenly apparent need for military training of our huge raw manpower resources has been met temporarily by programs rapidly instituted at newly created military establishments, by further development and intensification of programs at already existing centers, and by military program affiliation with existing media of educational training. Undoubtedly, many lessons will have been learned through our participation in the war, among which must be the realization that there should not again be so much strategic and valuable time lost in preliminary training of our man-power, in pre-induction screening and selection of military personnel, and in the fruitless training of individuals unable or unwilling to adjust to military life and its obligations.

State and federal correctional institutions of young-adult population, with decided additional advantage in institutional administration and in productive treatment programming, can assist in this firm resolve never again to be found as woefully unprepared in the training status of our potential military personnel as was evidenced at the time of our entry into World War II.

National Advantages

The contribution of institutional military training programs to national defense is of primary importance. Not all youthful offenders of our large institutional populations can be called upon for military service; however, we have seen in the last war that a large proportion of them, estimated between 100,000 and 200,000, were anxious and able to discharge effectively their obligations of military service to their country. Obviously, the military training program pursued by each institution would vary somewhat in application and comprehensiveness with available personnel and existing physical facilities. Nor could it be

expected that such a program would approximate in detail, or equal in result, the intensified curriculum provided by a military service for men devoting all their energies under purely military conditions. However, basic military training of youthful offenders would provide an excellent foundation upon which more specialized training could be later predicated by a military service organization. In this manner, the factors of opportunity and time, often considered lost or inconsequential with institutional confinement, can be utilized to advantage in the interest of national defense.

Personal Advantages

Few will dispute that military training offers many personal advantages to its individual participants. It is generally believed that it is of distinct value physically, educationally, and morally to those select young men fortunate enough to receive it in our academies, colleges and universities; it is not illogical, therefore, to contend that the program could similarly benefit the youthful population of our correctional institutions who, it might be argued, are more especially in need of constructive training and its worthy results.

Exponents of military training have long declared, and with well-founded reason, that certain desirable manifest qualities as neatness, poise, presentable carriage, dexterity and courtesy, may be developed within its trainees through continued participation in these controlled activities.

(1) Development of a Constructive Social Feeling

Of greater personal advantage, however, is the development of a constructive social feeling made possible by the group experiences of military training. It is particularly apparent in the youthful offender groups of our correctional institutions that a large proportion of them, for varying reasons of circumstance, have not heretofore engaged extensively in wholesome group activities. They have not yet learned social techniques of successful living nor yet learned individually how to live harmoniously with others as one of a larger unit of differing individuals. They have not experienced the socializing and personality developing influences attending association with individuals representing highly diversified backgrounds, viewpoints and experiences.

Through the group experiences of military training, individuals, for the first time in many instances, would achieve certain socially acceptable attributes: (1) become through necessity more

sensitive to the demands of the group; (2) develop through association a capacity to comprehend the interests and values of others; (3) develop through personal experience a suitable approach for the solution of a problem; (4) realize that their own welfare is contingent upon the demands of others. Military training would, in this respect, provide a well-defined, constructive emotional education too often found lacking in our youthful civilian academic institutions.

It cannot be disputed that many associations in themselves, formed in correctional 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 take part. However, it is contended that through the media of group associations and group activities, especially provided by military training, the opportunity is presented each individual to acquire or strengthen a constructive social feeling—a regard for others and experience in the discipline a group can exercise over the individual. This experience can be of advantage 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.

(2) Respect for Authority

Of paramount importance as a personal advantage derived from military training is the development of a respect for authority. The attempt to instill within each member of its inmate population a well-founded and all embracing respect for authority is fundamental to the aims and activities of all penal institutions. This can be a notable accomplishment of these institutions, 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 participant 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.

Military discipline is intelligent, willing and cheerful obedience to the will of the leader. Its basis rests on the voluntary subordination of the individual to the welfare of the group and as such, upon a respect for authority. It is a trait not imposed upon an individual but acquired by him through learning with experience and growth. It may be contended, therefore, that the application of military training and its attendant discipline in correctional institutions would, as in military establishments, effect more than mere outward signs of social conformity in its impressionable trainees. The constraining influence of military training, through the moral obligation it imposes on the individual to heed the interest of the group, would be far more conducive to the development of a respect for organized authority than any other possible institutional medium.

The truth of this thinking may be demonstrated by the many individuals whom we, in the correctional field, have known personally. Men have acquired this sense of social feeling through correctional experience, and also an ability to adjust to a system of discipline and regimentation. They have thereby been able to adjust far more satisfactorily in the armed services than others from civilian life who have not had similar socializing experiences of group life.

Institutional Advantages

Like every other community, the correctional institution must be orderly to perform its function and to be productive. Lacking voluntary association for a common purpose which is a basic essential to the natural development of social control among its population, and comprised of youthful offenders who have shown little capacity for self-discipline, the correctional institution must necessarily depend upon a system of constructive treatment and a system of intelligent discipline for its order and conformity. In this endeavor, military training can be of distinct institutional advantage. We may not only expect order and conformity, i.e., desirable institutional discipline, through inmate participation in a well-defined, recognized system of military training, but also a needed emphasis upon personal hygienic attributes and general sanitation, which is desirable in an institutional community wherein men live closely together.

A military program offers, secondly, an excellent outlet for the expression and alleviation of emotional feelings. There is need for an acceptable medium for the alleviation of pent-up emotions in any highly controlled and regimented institutional atmosphere wherein the day's activities are repeated day after day, and the opportunities for individual expression and the satisfaction of individual desires are at a minimum. Brooding, depressed and tensed minds breed restlessness, discontent and open rebellion and make for serious custodial difficulties. A constructive work and recreational program can accomplish much in this respect. However, the addition of an institutional military training program can accomplish even more as a stabilizing force upon the entire inmate population.

Thirdly, a military training program offers a powerful, and administratively controlled, medium for acceptable inmate recognition. As involuntary members of institutional communities which they mutually dislike, and because they are usually aware of being rejected or ignored by society, the inmates of penal and correctional institutions develop a strong sense of loyalty and sympathy for their fellow-inmates through their common experiences of trial and confinement. With the natural desire for acceptance by others as a powerful motivating force, it is common that an inmate will govern himself in such a manner as to achieve recognition from the inmate body. No matter how hard he may try, he cannot completely and loyally identify himself with the workers of the institution, and accept their dictates and best efforts, when he realizes that their primary function is to keep him securely confined. Thus, there are in any institution at any given time, two clashing disciplinary codes in effect—administrative and inmate. Under these conditions, it is usually difficult for an inmate to enter wholeheartedly into any administrative measures although designed for his benefit and improvement. A change in attitude can come only through his willingness to enter into opportunities for self-improvement—through his interest to achieve recognition along constructive lines. A military organization underlying all inmate activities, with its recognized benefits to participants individually, yet permitting complete administrative control over inmate recognition therein, can overcome many of these usual inherent difficulties in administrative measures.

Coordination with National Compulsory Service Legislation

In the event that a national program of peacetime compulsory military training should be enacted by our Congress, these minor

institutional programs could be coordinated to excellent advantage with the central code agency. The service records of this national agency could be supplemented with significant, elucidative data determined by institutional services concerning its military age eligibles. Early attention, moreover, could be called to obvious misfits, such as those diagnosed as psychopathic, psychoneurotic, mentally retarded and physically incapacitated. Thereby, the fruitless expenditure of time and effort by military authorities in attempting to train these individuals for military life and service would be prevented. The pre-basic training provided other potential service draftees by our correctional institutions would unquestionably be of decided value to the participants and the military organizations receiving them.

Conclusions

Military training of the youthful offenders of our correctional institutions can be of decided advantage to the nation, to the individual trainee participants, and to the institutions in which they are confined. It is a premise which should well be considered by those charged with the direction and treatment policies of our correctional institutions.