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REHABILITATION PROGRAMS IN AMERICAN PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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It is not surprising that a surge of popular criticism of prisoner treatment has followed the recent wave of prison riots and escapes. Why, demands Mr. John Q. Public, do we not get the protection we pay for? Why send the malefactors to correctional institutions at all, if they do not correct? Does not the high recidivism and broken parole rate demonstrate a bankruptcy of ideas in prison administration? Where does the fault lie, in our courts, in our laws, in our inadequate administrative methods, or in the system itself? Why does the situation seem to be getting worse rather than better?

In answering such categorical questions, three general facts should be kept in mind. First, there is no American penal and correctional system as such, but rather a federal system and 48 independent state systems. Some of these systems are patently indefensible; many are doing fine work under difficult conditions; a few, in organization and efficiency, are without equal elsewhere in the world. Second, the prison population is much more difficult to "correct" than ever before in history. With an increasingly efficient probation system, the more hopeful risks are siphoned off, and only the more serious offenders and incorrigibles are "sent down". Some modern judges frankly admit that commitment to the state prison is a last resort. Third, many in this selected prison residue, because of low-grade intelligence, suggestibility, psychotic or near psychotic personalities, or long-ingrained anti-social habits and attitudes, are unable to profit by any correctional methods, however good.

Such observations do not answer the questions or meet the implied criticism, if indeed the questions can be answered categorically. Perhaps the best response to the critical challenge is to determine the extent to which re-socialization programs are being used by American prisons and correctional institutions to fit their inmates for participation in community living. With this object in mind, a study was made by the writers.

Questionnaires were sent to 317 prisons and correctional institutions in continental United States, including those for adults and juveniles of both sexes, whether on Federal or state levels. Prison farms, work

camp, detention homes, municipal and county jails, and hospitals for the criminal insane were omitted, as the brief detention, specialization, or small number of inmates involved precludes the effective use of any re-socialization program. From the 176 questionnaires returned, it is obvious that no new magical re-socialization formula has been elaborated. Rehabilitation is being attempted through improved or improving religious activities, academic or vocational education programs, correspondence courses, library services, recreation, and social education. While it is possible to discover the degree to which such programs are operative, no attempt has been made to estimate their qualitative effectiveness. A sequel study of the latter would greatly contribute to the standardization and systematization of the rehabilitation programs in all institutions in this field, but this lies outside the immediate area of inquiry.

In connection with the religious activities, the returns show that all but seven of the institutions employ chaplains, hold religious services and offer religious counselling of some sort. All civil federal places of confinement and the Naval Retraining Commands have such a program. The exceptions are smaller institutions on the state level. There is much literature written on the benefits of religion as a re-socializing agent and it appears from the survey that American penal institutions are making full use of this type of therapy.

In the area of vocational education, 82 percent of all institutions indicate some use of this program. All the Naval Retraining Commands offer a program in this field, as well as 94 percent of the federal places of confinement. Juvenile institutions offer the program in 89 percent of the male and 79 percent of the female establishments. State prisons for adults have vocational education in 75 percent of the male and 71 percent of the female institutions. Usually enrollment in such courses is optional and, as might be expected, juvenile institutions have proportionally higher enrollments—51 percent and 44 percent respectively for males and females. It is rather surprising to find 32 percent of all adult females in state institutions participating in some form of vocational education, whereas in the comparable adult male institutions, the number participating shrink to a mere 10 percent. Federal institutions enroll 13 percent of their populations in specific vocational education programs, some of which compare favorably with work done in technical high schools. In other institutions the programs are so closely related to production and maintenance that one suspects the main objective lies in those fields and that the rehabilitative motive, if present at all, is quite incidental.

Representative of the institutions reporting well organized vocational education programs are the California State Prison at San Quentin and the Apalachee Correctional Institution at Chhattahoochee, Florida. In the former, 30 courses, distinctly vocational in nature, are offered. These vary from the artistic to the clerical and mechanical. The courses make wide use of visual aids and are taught by special instructors in classes not exceeding 26 students. All instructors are certified by Marin College and San Rafel High School. The Florida institution offers 20 vocational courses and assigns inmates to these courses on the basis of their choice and suitability as determined by aptitude tests. The course work is supplemented by instruction in job availability, employee loyalty, and other phases of social education.

The returns show that academic education is provided in all state correctional institutions for boys and in 86 percent of the institutions for girls, with enrollments of 60 percent and 37 percent respectively for the boys and girls. Academic education is available in 79 percent of the state prisons for men and in 36 percent of the similar institutions for women. Enrollments, however, are 14 percent for the male prisoners and 13 percent for females. On the federal level, 94 percent of the institutions offer such educational opportunities, with an enrollment of 22 percent of the populations. All Naval Retraining Commands have academic education programs. The high enrollment record of the juvenile institutions may be due to the fact that their populations fall mainly into the age group for which school attendance is compulsory.

One of the most hopeful indications for academic education is to be seen in the fact that 84 percent of all institutions report the employment of a full or part time educational director; the full time outnumber the part time directors twelve to one. From which it would seem that prison administrators are not paying a mere lip service to academic education as a socializing process, but are making it an integral part of their prison program.

Correspondence, or cell-study courses, as they are sometimes called, are offered by 56 percent of all institutions answering the questionnaire. The state institutions for girls make no use whatever of these courses, although 20 percent of the comparable institutions for boys have such programs. Enrollment for the boys' institutions is limited, as it is with other institutional groups; five percent of the boys are taking correspondence courses. Of the state institutions for adults, 79 percent of the male prisons and 21 percent of the female prisons offer the program. Enrollment figures stand at six and seven percent, respectively, for the males and females. All Federal prisons offer the program and

the enrollment in this group is the highest—17 percent. The Naval Retraining Commands offer correspondence courses in all cases.

The value of correspondence courses lies in their extreme flexibility. They can be tailored to individual needs, so that all variations of age, aptitude, interest and level of experience can be taken into account. These courses are available through universities, correspondence schools, and a few high schools. The wide variety of courses made possible through this medium probably cannot be matched by any other program.

Library service is also used by American correctional institutions as a resocializing agent. Such service is very nearly universal, with less than two percent of the reporting institutions saying that they have no library. This minority group consisted of the very small institutions. Budgetary appropriations made the difference in many cases between a large, good library and small, poor one. The use of inter-library loan services was high in the better administered libraries. The prison library service is important because it offers recreational reading opportunities and is a valuable adjunct to the various educational programs.

Considerable emphasis is placed on recreation as a means of resocializing prisoners. This is evidenced by the fact that 82 percent of all the institutions questioned have full or part time recreation directors. Full time directors are three times as numerous as are part time ones. Federal and Naval places of confinement seem to make the greater use of this type of program. All groups of institutions, however, report some use of recreation. There is a general recognition of the values of physical development, constructive use of leisure time, and the spirit of team work and cooperation, which are furthered in recreational pursuits.

Social education is as yet less standardized than any of the older programs. In general it is designed to acquaint the inmate with his government, with society's industrial organization, with American family life ideals, and with other phases of the social order, of which, on release, he will again become an integral part. All available community facilities are used to help in this work, from lectures and discussions to cooperative programs within the prison. Course participation is usually on a voluntary basis, but is encouraged, since it provides the prison administration with its best opportunity for personal counseling.

The following table indicates the proportion of institutions using social education programs, those contemplating future use, and enrollment figures for the various institutional groupings.

<u>Institutional Grouping</u>	<u>Percent Participating Now</u>	<u>Percent Planning Future</u>	<u>Percent Inmate Enrollment</u>
State Juvenile Male.....	35	9	31
State Juvenile Female.....	14	14	3
State Adult Male.....	34	25	2
State Adult Female.....	43	29	15
Federal	88	12	6
Naval	100	0	Unknown

An awakening to the need of social education as a rehabilitative measure is now evident in all types of correctional institutions. It is abundantly clear that many prison inmates lack nothing in the way of vocational or academic skills but do lack the ability to further their roles acceptably in an increasingly complex society. Social education is an attempt to supply a prisoner with socially acceptable living patterns.

There appears to be no magic single formula for the effective re-socialization of criminals. An intelligently administered combination of the programs outlined will contribute to this end, but evidence points to the need of a systematic, standardized, and integrated program if we are to expect results in the vital area of correction. Such an integrated program is not now universal. Some institutions seem not yet to have awakened to the new concept, the new method, the new function of correctional institutions: to prepare the inmate for reorientation into society. Other institutions are blazing a new way for the world. The working out of a blueprint for effective criminal re-socialization for living in today's complex society is a project that stands out as a challenge to us. The study reported here did not set out to provide this blueprint but rather to indicate the trend in view of the need.