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UNREST IN THE PENITENTIARY

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A. INTRODUCTION

The press has recently brought to the attention of the public shocking evidence of unrest in certain penitentiaries. This has culminated in riots, "breaks" and fatalities. Editorials express the forthright opinion that the public has a right to demand an explanation of such disorders and reassurance of remedial and preventive measures. To be sure, the public has the inalienable right to protection against the terror which such incidents strike—indeed to protection from all facets of crime, considering its fantastic costs, property-wise, alone. ("Wild estimates of total money costs in the United States have run as high as \$18 billion annually.")¹

But what explanations and what reassurances can be given? Riots and fatalities are not new to the penitentiary; indeed a cyclic pattern of investigation, explanation and reform has developed in the history of these events.² A prison riot is publicised; the public is frightened to blind outrage; its representatives conduct an investigation; an explanatory formula appears which includes overcrowding, idleness, filth, low budgets with its consequent hunger, inefficient personnel and brutality; recommendations are presented; officers are fired; the incident is closed—until the next episode jolts the public from its false sense of security.

The recommendations include honest emphasis on the need for liberal changes from the court to discharge from parole. Underscored is the tenable conclusion that probation and earlier parole machinery be utilized to reduce overcrowding. Moreover, it is suggested that better classification and segregation be exercised for the rehabilitative pro-

1. TAFT, D. R., *CRIMINOLOGY*, Macmillan Company, 20 Ed., 1950, p. 11.

2. ETINGER, C. J., *THE PROBLEM OF CRIME*, R. Long and R. R. Smith, Inc., New York, 1932, p. 454.

gram, with emphasis upon individuation. Of course, many people, including officials, will with righteous indignation scream that this attitude is mere coddling, point to the fantastic cost of crime and recidivism, and insist on higher and thicker walls and a "lock em up treat em rough" philosophy. Nevertheless, some constructive changes are made and things quiet down—but unrest still remains.³

One may inquire what tools, other than, or in addition to those already in operation, can be employed in this connection. What can the dynamically, the psychoanalytically oriented psychiatrist offer? In the light of what is now known, experts in this field are at best cautious about what can be done effectively. Schmideberg⁴ believes that the penal system may even worsen many inmates. Roth⁵ insists that a remedial and constructive approach to the problem of crime revolves about a comprehension of unconscious motivation. This is conspicuously inadequate. Moreover, one may question whether motivation alone is sufficient to account for criminal behavior. Bergler⁶ emphasizes that the criminal act is not explained by the most complete of confessions and descriptions of the circumstances of the crime. It is a sober claim, however, that criminosis, a nosologic term for which we are indebted to Foxe⁷ has its pathogenesis along with neurosis in early childhood in the impairment of ego structure.⁸ The aim of therapy is to unlock repressions in a dynamic sense and to bring unconscious motivants within the correctional sphere of the conscious ego. Psychoanalysis is claimed⁹ to be the only tool available to do this. But, quoting Bergler⁶ "clinical experience is lacking and theoretical misconceptions are rampant." Indeed this same authority continues, "The simple fact is that we 'just don't know.'" Finally Alexander and Healy¹⁰ also remark that psychiatry is . . . "still concerned with provoking thought rather than the formulation of a specific program." This practice of psychiatry is unimpressive indeed for a people who demand immediate action and results. It would be naive to deny that action is imperative, but equally necessary is it that some of this action be utilized for a

3. ETINGER *Ibid.* p. 350.

4. SCHMEIDBERG, M., *THE TREATMENT OF CRIMINALS*, *PSYCHOANAL. REV.*, 36:403, October 1949.

5. ROTH, N., *Factors in the Motivation of Sexual Offenders*, *JOUR. CRIM. L., CRIMINOL. and POL. SCIENCE*, 42:5, Jan.-Feb. 1952.

6. BERGLER, E., *APPLICATIONS OF THE MECHANISM OF ORALITY IN NEUROSIS AND CRIMINOSIS*, *Handbook of Corr. Psychol.*, Philosoph. Library, New York, 1947, p. 611.

7. FOXE, N., *Criminosis*, *ENCYCL. OF CRIMINOL.*, Philosoph. Library, New York, 1949, p. 115.

8. KARPMAN, B., *THE INDIVIDUAL CRIMINAL*, Nerv. and Ment. Dis. Pub. Co., Washington, D.C., 1935.

9. ALEXANDER, E. and STAUB, H., *THE CRIMINAL, THE JUDGE AND THE PUBLIC*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1931.

10. ALEXANDER, F. and HEALY, W., *ROOTS OF CRIME*, A. A. Knopf Co., New York, 1935.

penetrating study of the criminal mind so that a realistic criminotherapeutic program would be possible.

Continued research is essential to illuminate the nature and dynamics of crime. What better place provides a laboratory of human experiences than the controlled environment of the penitentiary. But how to enter the criminal mind to obtain his "secrets," both conscious and unconscious, is a challenging problem; or better, how to arouse the interest of the inmate to welcome the assistance of psychiatrists in learning of emotional conflicts and their cure. Bromberg¹¹ puts it nicely in discussing the dynamics of the psychopathic personality, "there is a need for developing a technique which might *foster a rapport* (italics mine) of such a nature as to allow psychoanalysis of such individuals." Elsewhere¹² I developed the theme of rapport on an individual basis in the penitentiary to contribute to this end and the response of subjects to narcoanalytic¹³ studies. Lindner¹⁴ had excellent rapport with the inmate body and made effective contributions in hypnoanalysis.

In this paper my aim is to help foster rapport by promoting empathy in the criminologically minded professional worker. I propose to present the superficial dynamics of the penitentiary climate and to deal in a general way with those forces which interfere with the development of rapport, which is so essential for the study of the inmate. Reference will be made to the inmate's needs, his attitudes towards the painful situation of incarceration and finally his common reactive patterns. At the outset, I wish to emphasize that this material is oriented exclusively to the inmate's point of view and this only—even if it does mean "The squeaky wheel gets the grease," for denying grease to the squeaky wheel will ultimately destroy the wagon!

B. THE PENITENTIARY ATMOSPHERE

1. *The Inmate Before Commitment*

Behavior patterns however complex are divisible into three aspects for study: the individual, the situation, and the reaction. For our purpose the individual is the inmate, the situation is the penitentiary, and the reaction, symptoms varying from psychosomatic complaints referable to the physician for that "magic pill," to aggressive, impulsive

11. BROMBERG, W., *Dynamic Aspects of Psychopathic Personality*, PSYCHOAN. QUART., 17:58, 1948.

12. TRAIN, G. J., *Rapport in the Penitentiary*, HANDBOOK OF CORR. PSYCHFL., Philos. Library, New York, 1947, p. 422.

13. *Ibid.*, *Pentothal Sodium—An Aid to Penologic Psychotherapy*, p. 641.

14. LINDNER, R. L., *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*, Grune and Stratton, New York, 1944.

behavior dealt with by the disciplinary court with punitive suppression.

In considering the inmate I wish to bring into relief his needs and his feelings prior to commitment. He, like other human beings, experiences certain autonomic tensions which are registered as needs in his "mind." These needs are many and varied. Absolute material needs—food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention are essential for survival and must be quantitatively satisfied. Others, relative needs, describable as wants, namely sexual gratification; freedom of motility and expression; protection from danger; social and educational opportunities as well as that for spontaneity and initiative are not essential for survival; they are situationally conditioned. The society to which the individual claims membership, demands compromise from him in the satisfaction of these wants. Those individuals who are incapable of compromise will attack society with criminal action in a strong attempt to shape it to their needs. This reaction is based upon complex biogenetic and psychogenic phenomena which sum up to determine a personal state of homeostasis.

These needs, both absolute and relative, are adequately gratifiable only on interpersonal terms in which love abounds. Otherwise there results a hunger for love and its derivatives, understanding and consideration. Generally speaking, if an individual has been deprived of his measure of parental love during infancy and childhood, he suffers proportionately love or affect-hunger and insecurity. This is manifested by more than normal anxiety and hostility in social intercourse. Ordinary competition, for example, becomes corrupted into a severe struggle by the intense need to be the exclusive recipient. These feelings are transferred from the frustrating parent to authoritative surrogates in society. Some criminals completely rejected by parents, starved from love, as it were, show such deep and fixed narcissism that a love object is impossible and hence transference therapy unavailing. Nevertheless, if one penetrates through this facade, one finds often enough, unmistakable evidence in the inmate's behavior of an attempt to conceal fears—fears of death and of being alone, and an intense plea for love and protection. Actually he is suffering, be he the accidental offender or the recidivistic psychopath. Schilder's¹⁵ comment regarding the sick, applies equally well to him. "The mere fact of suffering makes the individual more dependent upon other human beings and he justly expects to receive more consideration and love." To complicate matters, however, the inmate frequently disclaims his need for love or evinces

15. SCHILDER, P. W., *PSYCHOTHERAPY*, W. W. Norton Co., New York, 1938, p. 32.

it in a "peculiar" way, such as gaining attention by rebelling for punishment.

The clinical history, however superficial, bears eloquent testimony of rejection and relative denial of practically all needs and rebelliousness as the reactive pattern. These behavioral responses to deprivation carry over to the penitentiary situation. The inmate continues to suffer and rebel in the frustrating environment of the penitentiary and will continue to do so until some technique is developed to satisfy his need for love and consideration. Schooled in fear, rejection and hate by authority, he responds with fears, and rejects and hates authority—he has no faith, turns his back on healthy dependence and compliance, and carries the intense emotional weight of suspicion with him in interpersonal relationships. The very traits indispensable for rapport are repressed and rehabilitators find little upon which to build. Each denial convinces him he is unwanted and the authority surrogate is attacked with little consideration devoted to the reason for such denials and less to self-study and healthy compromise. The little love many of the criminal fringe possess is cherished and fixed to the self.

2. *The Inmate in the Penitentiary Situation*

Upon commitment to the penitentiary then, the inmate is a store of mixed emotions bearing the scars of painful situations in the past. His mood, largely conditioned by affect-hunger is one of fear, suspicion and hate. His preoccupation, largely determined by narcissism, is with his innocence. He has suffered through the circumstances surrounding the "offense," the tension of the "pursuit," the "catch" and finally the "trial," "conviction" and "incarceration." Throughout these experiences, opportunities for projection of guilt are abundant and the inmate frequently insists he is in on a "bum rap." Like a child, he twists the chronologic order of events to support his innocence and condemns society as the responsible agent. In advanced institutions whose aim is rehabilitation, the inmate is admitted to quarantine for a period of 30 days, during which he undergoes a routine battery of interviews and tests. The record office notes general physical characteristics, previous offenses and other legal entanglements. He is finger-printed, photographed and given a number which he bears until dismissal. Then follows rapid rotation through the scrutiny of parole officer, educator, librarian, clergyman, physician, psychometrician, and the psychiatrist. He is lectured to and warned of disciplinary action should he violate any of a plethora of restrictions and rules. Although an attempt is made to acquaint him with the purpose of such studies, little impression

is made since most inmates regard each test or interview with suspicion, intolerance and fear of self-betrayal.

In the meantime, the more seasoned recidivists in quarantine carry on their own educational program. The first offender is warned not to trust "Holy Joe" (the chaplain) or the "Bug Doctor" (the psychiatrist or psychologist), for they are unsympathetic and primarily concerned with eliciting damaging information to use against the inmate. The psychiatrist especially, they learn, is to be watched closely. Instances of his strange powers, his ability to hypnotize and to read minds, even to change personalities over the will of the individual, are related to frighten him into secrecy. One story went the rounds that an inmate had consulted the psychiatrist to learn why he steals. He was informed that analysis would answer this question, but would so change his personality in the process that he would not be able to live with himself and would commit suicide. Hence, early in his penitentiary career, the inmate learns not to yield "secrets," the very material needed to understand criminal motivation and behavior.

Finally, this rigorous and intensive program of official examinations reaches the stage of correlation and program formulation by the classification and assignment committee—comprised of departmental heads. These officials who try industriously to aim at rehabilitation, sit in judgment to assign living quarters and jobs and to encourage the use of educational and cultural facilities which are available to all who would help themselves. To the inmate, however, this body has no other function than to intimidate him. He enters the conference room with apprehension prompted by reminiscences of the court which tried him and on a deeper psychic level by that of parental discipline. There are also the admonitions of inmate rumors, "They are there to get you." The thought that this body of men wish to assist him is alien to his mind. Such are some of the experiences of the inmate in preparation for population. Perhaps, because of confusion, or the strange and novel tests and surroundings, or even close supervision, the inmate in quarantine is generally cooperative. But shortly after release to population basic attitudes appear. Most are submissively cooperative; some hostile and openly defiant. These attitudes are modified or intensified by the group to which they gravitate, their capacity to distract themselves away from personal problems, and by their threshold of frustration endurance.

The penitentiary, naturally, provides essential needs for survival. The inmate receives food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention. The food is unquestionably adequate but, as in all institutions, it is

monotonous and cannot satisfy the tastes of each individual. Mess hours are regimented for expedient reasons and the choice of one's dining companions is restricted. Food therefore becomes an opportunity for complaint even of many whose tastes and needs were neglected at home. Clothing, too, is adequate but equally monotonous and a symbol of rejection. Proud indeed is the inmate assigned to the hospital who wears "whites." Shelter, also is adequate insofar as it is protective against the elements, but it is in restraint of freedom of motility. Medical attention concludes the list of basic needs. The most modern equipment and techniques are available but abused by malingerers who plague the psychiatrically uninformed physician.

It will be observed that "affect-hunger" was excluded from among the absolute needs. This exclusion is not predicated on the supposition that affect-hunger is a lesser need but rather because it is not regarded as essential for survival in a society schooled to respect only the material. A child, for example, may receive a full quantum of basic needs and yet be rejected and starved for love. If this child suffers inferiority feelings, the layman is astonished for he cannot understand how such feeling can occur in one possessing material wealth. While natural care is provided in the modern penitentiary, affect-hunger cannot be satisfied. In its very nature, incarceration is punitive—restrictive—primitiv and so repetitive of the inmate's past. Hence it is unable to meet his need for love from authority, let alone get him in many instances to show this need. Sad indeed is the inmate who is separated from loved ones. Alone, he becomes preoccupied with the domestic responsibilities, disgrace, rejections and guilt feelings of those left behind. He broods about his separation until he is capable of some intra-mural interest which adjustment process should be hastened through rapport with an authoritative figure. A forty year old intelligent inmate expressed anxiety regarding his family thus: "I'm not being punished by being here. I have clean quarters, clothing, and food. I'm too old to worry about sex. I worked hard for my family, but just couldn't earn enough; so I sold liquor. I accept my punishment. But my wife has added responsibilities now, although she is innocent. She is the one that is really punished."

Inmates also express fear of infidelity by loved ones betraying thereby a deeper interpersonal problem and its broad ramifications. A common concern is that "Joe the Grinder", (a real or imagined paramour,) will enter their homes freely now that they are away. They write appealing letters to wives who are contemplating divorce. Some fear the loss of children to in-laws whom they detest or to foster homes

and institutions which personal experience has taught them are schools for crime, bitterness, and homosexuality. Those with better educational and environmental veneer, feel deeply the disgrace visited upon the family and its effect upon their community relationships. Others fear their children may be humiliated and ridiculed by schoolmates because of their father's crime. Irregular mail and infrequent visits, or none at all because of distance or prohibitive cost, plague the inmate. Illness or death of a close relative intensifies guilt feelings because of the expressed belief of some that their delinquency is responsible.

Affect-hunger is further intensified by relationships with penitentiary officials whose very position and authority stir deep-seated conflicts in the inmate. Naturally a variety of personalities engage in this vocation and for a variety of reasons. Personal association with these people has convinced me that the large majority are upright, honest and sincere in their attempts to do a rehabilitative job. Nevertheless, repeated and bitter disappointments and exasperation with their charges, significantly reduces the interest of many. Moreover, being closer to the inmate body and recognizing intuitively if not through actual experience, that they are targets of hostility for the inmate, the officer must ever be on the alert to protect himself and those about him. For example: a sexual psychopath, Rudy, was under narcoanalytic therapy for hysteria. Highly cathected material disturbed him on one occasion and he rose from the couch, passed me by to attack a custodial officer. This officer was an intelligent, friendly person with humanitarian interests and willingness to assist in the research program. In the scuffle, he was fortunately able to protect himself and the patient who "awoke" and quieted promptly. It is naive to expect the officer to deal with the criminal with the scientific objectivity of a thoroughly psychoanalyzed psychiatrist. Several inmates have openly declared that officers are reminiscent of father and provoke in them the desire to kill. But this involves deeper psychodynamics which is not the purpose of this paper.

Pervading the penitentiary atmosphere are the traditional and prejudicial influences of an outmoded emphasis on "free will" which is merely a reflection and elaboration of the natural response to the criminal by both society and its body of representatives. Obviously deeper motivations are overlooked. Overholser¹⁶ noted in this connection: "One fundamental difficulty in the criminal law is the assumption that the human being is entirely a free agent motivated by an entirely free will and by a vicious mind which though right from wrong, chooses to will

16. OVERHOLSER, W., *Psychiatry and the Law*, Psychiat. Quart., 13:4, Oct. 1939.

the wrong . . ." Equally untenable is the conviction that the non-conformist becomes the conformist through punishment despite abundant evidence to the contrary. Warden Merserve's³ comment in 1905 is noteworthy: "men who have been whipped are never as good prisoners as before." The public's demand for punishment should provoke no surprise since it is consistent with the community's treatment of their own children; "spare the rod and spoil the child"; it is also reflected in our language, "chastise" to make "chaste." The custodial officer is an educational and emotional product of the community and is representative. But this is not to suggest that penal officials are alone responsible for inmate unrest, or derelict in their duties. On the contrary, to the best of their understanding and ability, they deal with the duties of isolation of the inmate from society, keeping him under constant supervision for the while he "makes penance" in the artificial surroundings of the penitentiary. They are representatives of a society, carrying out and reflecting the wishes of the policy-determining pressure groups. These must first be educated for a better attitude towards the criminal.

The very nature of the duties of the custodial officer arouses tension, fear and hate of his ward. Of moment is the daily count so that the whereabouts of each inmate is known on the moment's notice. Next in order is the problem of supervision. In practice, this naturally varies with the type of inmate and temperament of the officer. The history of crime and punishment demonstrates extremes of attitudes towards the inmate, varying from sadistic contempt which is still evident in the revenge "treat 'em rough" oriented penitentiary as noted in some states, to that of judicious warmth and understanding which is in practice with the well-chosen officer in the "rehabilitation" oriented penitentiary of, for example, the Federal System. Indeed, even in this system, there are many officers who are resistive and suspicious of progressive penology;¹⁸ their cooperation must be enlisted for psychiatrically oriented understanding and treatment of the criminal.

The maintenance of discipline is indeed an imposing task. It is supported by the disciplinary court which, however, cannot investigate fully, personal problems which lead to offenses. The heavy case load as well as the "prison code," warning inmates against informing and thereby excluding witnesses, impairs its efficiency. Therefore, decisions rendered by the court necessarily consider the inmate's associates, mannerisms, and previous record and are subject to prejudice. The discip-

17. GLUECK, S., 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS, A. A. Knopf Co., New York, 1930.

18. PESCOR, M. J., *Interpersonal Relationships Among Inmates and Personnel*, HANDBOOK OF CORR. PSYCHOL., Philosoph. Library, New York, 1947, p. 440.

linary court is at one and the same time prosecutor, judge, and jury. The crime is punished and individual analysis is impossible. Theoretically, the inmate is inhibited in the future by fear of punishment, and his fellows deterred by example. The following case contrasts the effects of disciplinary action and analysis if the subject is reachable. Whenever a fellow-inmate called him m. f. (obscene reference to mother incest), the subject became seriously disturbed and fought his accuser. Disciplinary measures availed nothing. Fearful of more intense administration reprisals, he sought psychiatric help and upon examination, exhibited symptoms of reactive depression. Under pentothal sodium, he blurted forth actual incest with his mother. He found immense relief and finally assimilated enough adult insight to shake off the guilt feelings generated by verbal obscenities and socialized commendably. The value of disciplinary measures (which range from simple reprimand and warning to the extreme penalty—loss of good time) is obviously open to scientific question. Punishment seems, however, to possess some deterring influence in the penitentiary in contradistinction to the effect of this philosophy in the free world, since knowledge of each offense, trial, and sentence reaches the inmate body to make an impression. Moreover, it strengthens the position of the officer.

Among relative needs, striking indeed is the need for protection from threatening situations of inmate origin, particularly in connection with sex. Many inmates suffer strong sexual urges, creating a prodigious problem in institutions housing young people. In the penitentiary it is difficult to determine the incidence of sexual preoccupation because of inmate taciturnity, but that it exists is obvious even to the casual observer. In a group psychotherapy class, for example, members uniformly asked for sexual information and were roused to full attention during such discussions. Obscene drawings and poetry are frequently discovered among inmate possessions, and sexually emotional verbiage is common parlance. Endogenous and exogenous experiences stir masturbatory desires—the practice of which many dread. While generally not admitted, for fear that this medium will be removed, several inmates have volunteered the information that they and many of the inmate body are aroused sexually by the cinema to anxiety states and somatization. When aroused to homosexuality, major problems arise. The general danger of this practice is believed to be in releasing latent homosexuality or fixing homosexuality in one formerly bisexual. The special custodial problem concerns the effects of unrequited love. Intimate friendships, limited in number and to “effeminate” types, are grounds for suspected homosexuality. The effeminate, immature,

smoothfaced boy or one with a record of sodomy is open to aggressive courtship, and should he resist such attentions, the prison code expects him to show masculinity by fighting off his suitor. The ultimatum is "f.——— or fight." If he won't do either and instead seeks custodial protection, he encounters gang hostility. Many take refuge in the hospital ward, using somatic complaints to avoid any such risks, and a few reveal the truth of their difficulty with reservation and without mentioning the names of individuals for fear of reprisals. The penitentiary is not without its tragi-comedy of contentious triangles, jealousies, and quarrels. A "lover" may seek admission to the hospital with some fictive complaint to punish his tactless mate or both may arrange admissions in order to be together. Sexual cravings drive them to defy punishment and even to disregard the tragic effects of pursuit upon a love object. For example, Tom had yielded sexually to Frank on several occasions. Suddenly Tom developed anxiety, guilt and fear that if caught in homosexual practices, five years would be added to his sentence. He became cool to Frank, who, suspecting a rival, intensified his courtship, but without success. When Tom developed psychosomatic complaints and checked into the hospital, Frank sent word through the grape-vine that he would kill him. I was consulted by Tom. Psychiatric counsel was rejected by Frank when he was approached, but he did say, "I try to control myself; I realize Tom is a sick boy, but I just can't help it. I must have him." Frank's aggressive defiance and persistence necessitated placement in segregation, where he felt less tense. He was subsequently transferred to another institution. Tom became fearful of inmate revenge because he was held responsible by them for Frank's segregation and transfer, and requested a transfer.

In addition to the need for protection arising out of sexual appetites, there are other situational difficulties of inmate origin which may be equally serious. Failure to pay off a debt with cigarettes (as a medium of exchange) or sexual activity for services rendered through a "connection" results in threats and beatings. Moreover, jealousies, particularly of those in administrative favor and with good work assignments, are common. An inmate ward attendant who refused to steal nembutal for an inmate patient was threatened and warned through the grape-vine that he be "careful." Thereafter, his suggestions to the sick towards whom he was kind, were regarded as orders and rejected with the common attitude, "He has no right—he is no better than we are and he's just another number." Then there are the informers and gossip-mongers. While occasionally helpful to the administration, this class of inmate is troublesome. They are constant threats to fellow-

inmates and while their "gifts" are welcomed in an atmosphere of troubled monotony, their victims suffer. Despite all precaution, confidential information from records reaches these miserable creatures and for a package or two of cigarettes, psychiatric diagnosis and authoritative comment are peddled. To illustrate: I had advised John that he would receive a favorable neuro-psychiatric report for army induction. He was rejected because of asthma. Naturally angry and disappointed, he found a target for his hostility in me when an informer told him there was no such report in his jacket. In the presence of other inmates, he accused me and all psychiatrists of lies and concluded we are not to be trusted. He apologized when confronted with the favorable report and the reason for rejection. Incidentally, all untruths must be traced to its source and corrected if rapport is to be maintained. In passing, it may be noted that when the psychopathic personality is informed of the recorded diagnosis, the psychiatrist becomes his object of hostility since he has learned that release may be deferred because of this classification. Naturally his lashing tongue and warnings to secrecy reach sympathetic ears and the number of inmates antagonistic to the psychiatrist increases. Why, should they tell him their "secrets"?

Incarceration imposes other group problems. Whatever the race, religion, social and cultural status, political concepts, differences in offenses and length of sentences, all inmates are cast into a huge melting pot with an unsuccessful attempt at individuation, and expected to live in harmony. Many inmates adjust creditably; others more individualistic, consider it a bitter pill and complaints are registered through many avenues. Intermingling affords the seasoned inmate opportunities to influence the newcomer. A veritable crime mythology is kept alive by rumor, misrepresentation, and exaggeration based upon a trace of truth. Going the rounds are tales about promised rewards by court authorities of minimal sentences for informing and pleading guilty, and the subsequent imposition of maximum penalties. They discuss differences of sentences for identical crimes; differences in attitudes of the law towards the rich and the poor; the smart and the dull; and other evidence of corruption and "white collar crimes"¹⁹ "on the outside" which the daily press brings to their attention. They learn about parole failures which are attributed to harsh parole officers or much too stringent parole rules. Efforts of the parole department are widely misinterpreted by some and passed on authoritatively. The inmate is taught by the more seasoned that the parole office communicates with

19. SUTHERLAND, E. H., *WHITE COLLAR CRIMES*, Dryden Press, Inc., New York, 1949.

employers not for re-employment possibilities, but rather to reveal his history and present him in an unfavorable light. It is also believed that wives are encouraged to divorce inmates and fiances to reject them. What fertile soil this is to dwarf the inmate's sense of responsibility and guilt, and provide splendid opportunity for displacement and projection.

One would expect then, that common grievances would make them companionable. But this is far from the truth; as was demonstrated above, inmates are a threat to one another. Differences in race, religion, prejudices, cravings and a host of other factors add to this interpersonal chaos. Custodial supervision is consequently needed for "protection from danger." While many inmates appreciate this need they consistently reject its degree arguing that major disasters in prison are rare, that supervision is not to be credited for this rarity and should be replaced by inmate self-government.

It may be noted finally, that freedom of expression, spontaneity, initiative are all curbed. Monotony, regimentation, and supervision offer little opportunity for such expression. The general stagnancy hatches mischief and infantile behavior.²⁰ A strong attempt to combat monotony and to provide means for self-improvement is evident in the rehabilitative program of the modern penitentiary, but these provisions remain idle unless the inmate has "will" to reach for them. While work is provided, only those with special skills learned in the past or acquired under the auspices of the penitentiary, can be assigned absorbing tasks. Most are detailed to unskilled jobs. For practical purposes, assignments are made to satisfy institutional needs with secondary emphasis on those of the inmate. Many departments are overmanned with the result that inmates have little to do and too often jobs are inconsistent with the interest or the intellectual level of the individual inmate. Unfortunately only workers in certain details receive financial remuneration. Frequently the inmate objects to assignments of any job with total disregard of the distracting value of occupation. The usual protest is that he owes society a payment of time and not of productivity. In addition to work, the institution provides adequate recreational facilities. Many inmates are disinterested in outdoor sports, however, and some admit they are physically awkward and cannot bear the poignant criticisms of others. A few complain that a chance at the varsity team has a price upon it. Spiritual guidance and religious activities are also available. Attendance is voluntary and merely fair because many inmates are irritated by the sermon or are fearful of being called "sissy" by others. Educational opportunities are generously provided, but

20. WILSON, D. P., *MY SIX CONVICTS*, Rhinehart and Co., New York, 1951.

many inmates are not appreciative of their personal need for self improvement in this direction or perhaps afraid of showing their ignorance. Most classes are conducted at night and a common excuse for not participating is, "We need rest and recreation after a day's work." Of all these facilities, the library is probably the most attractive since attendance is voluntary, carries with it no supervision and the selected book provides an escape from the prison situation. Of course, the cinema, radio and newspaper are helpful in combating monotony by bringing in the world of reality. Finally, there is the parole department with its social workers who could be of service in dealing with family problems and preparation and plans for the future. But this group of hard-working individuals are also regarded with suspicion and hostility. The inmate endows them with fantastic powers of being able to reduce his sentence, lift detainers and direct the parole board and believes these powers are not exercised only because the inmate is held in contempt. Explanations to the contrary are disbelieved.

One should expect then, that as the time of release draws near, the inmate would be jubilant and concerned with planning for the future. "Short-time-itis," a typical anxiety state occurs frequently enough to show this is not the rule. Inmates fear the stigma ex-con. They fear a competitive world after a period of incarceration which inhibits initiative and dulls critical faculties. They fear their reception in the community. They fear parole rules which one would ordinarily consider simple ways of keeping out of trouble. They fear being suspected and taken into custody whenever a crime occurs in their community, and for evidence relate the story of an ex-convict who had acquitted himself of a sex offense after imprisonment by an unimpeachable adjustment to his community for many years. Rape was committed in this neighborhood by an unknown; all suspicious characters and those with sexual records were arrested, he among them. Despite his established innocence, blatant newspaper comments ruined his life. They fear threats of employers and wives to report them to the parole officer should they fall short of satisfying their demands which may be far removed from parole rules. One inmate observed that he is at the mercy of his wife; should he criticize her culinary efforts, she could easily cook up some infraction of parole rules. Actually many fear they cannot avoid recidivism.

Facing the parole board is, of course, a serious event. The candidate, confused and under considerable tension, is often a poor witness in his own behalf. Should he be denied parole, he is certain to cite another

inmate with a worse record who obtained parole and thus condemn the whole procedure as unfair and prejudiced.

The penitentiary situation is, therefore, an artificial community. In the most advanced institution, the rehabilitative program is burdened by the intrinsic nature of incarceration—punitive, regimentative, privative. The identity of the individual is sacrificed of necessity, to that of the needs of a group. As such, a social and emotional climate is established, strongly reproductive of that which nursed the criminal personality in the past. While even in the most advanced of penitentiaries, essential needs are satisfied with reservations, it fails utterly to gratify the inmate's need for love and its derivatives. Faced with this privative situation, many inmates fail of adaptation and go on to pathologic reactions.

3. *The Reaction to the Situation*

However absurd and unrealistic reactions to threatening situations may be, they demonstrate the individual's best choice at defense. "Fundamentally man is not a rational animal."²¹ Rather he is a rationalizing animal whose reactions are motivated by "feeling tone." This is determined by frustrations playing upon his constitutional make-up and habit patterns established and cultivated prior to the current situation. Viewed another way, the situation releases the subject's defense potentials and should his threshold of endurance be low, unhealthy reactions appear.

Such is the case with the inmate reacting to the penitentiary situation. An accurate statistical study of reactions is impossible. A large number of prisoners are treated for difficulties by the custodial department; many by fellow-inmates; others find distracting interests; some nurse their difficulty until release, while a fair proportion consult the medical department. The commonest medical complaints are psychosomatic and referable to the physician. Relatively few consult the psychiatrist on their own but this number increases sharply when suspicion of him is reduced by inmates who have profited by treatment and have not been declared "insane." Those who seek help spontaneously demonstrate some capacity for transference and selectively become subjects for psychoanalysis. Most inmates, however, merely seek advice or "medicine" for nervousness, and this, the writer is convinced, is often due to inadequate time and personnel available for concentrated efforts in their behalf.

21. KRAINES, S. H., *THE THERAPY OF THE NEUROSIS AND PSYCHOSIS*, Lea and Febiger, Philadelphia, Pa., 1941.

A complete discussion of reactions would be superfluous and beyond the scope of this paper. My purpose here is to emphasize the usual patterns observed. The nucleus of these reactions is tension symptoms, focalized or diffuse and varying in intensity from mild to severe forms. The syndrome includes anxiety, irritability, sensitivity, sleeplessness, anorexia, inability to concentrate, fears, impulsive defiance of authority, self-consciousness, mistrust grading on to paranoia, claustrophobia, panic, depression, homicidal or suicidal thoughts with occasional attempts at such behavior, and psychosis. When to anxiety symptoms is added focal libidinization of any organ, none of which is immune, problems in internal medicine and surgery arise (psychosomatic medicine). These focal anxiety symptoms are examined fruitlessly by the physician or surgeon and then referred to the psychiatrist. The experience of Eddie is illustrative. He was a 24 year old garden variety psychopathic personality with marked compensatory strivings and emotional instability, who was sentenced for impersonating an officer. His past has been chaotic and anti-social. Occasionally he entertained thoughts of suicide "because I can't control myself and always get into trouble." "Devoted" to an adolescent wife, he was provoked into intense anxiety awaiting her letters. In doubt about her faithfulness, he insisted that she reside with his mother while he served his sentence. On one occasion, not having received mail from her for a week, he developed in addition to anxiety, symptoms and signs strongly suspicious of acute appendicitis. While under surgical observation, he received word from his mother that his wife had left her home to board with a female friend just across the street; he became distraught and lacerated his wrists. He was admitted to the Neuro-Psychiatric Ward. Here his abdominal complaints subsided, but tension remained. He insisted that his wife be informed immediately that he was seriously ill and would commit suicide if she did not visit him promptly. With the reception of a letter from her pouring forth sweet assurances of fidelity, he recovered.

Harry, too, exhibited psychosomatic symptoms. Prior to therapy, whenever he left the mess hall, he felt tense, vomited, and experienced unbearable headaches. These symptoms subsided with hospitalization and suggestive therapy. While he denied any known reason for his complaint, we learned through the grapevine that his difficulty was the result of a lover's quarrel. Focal complaints include precordial pain, epigastric distress, headache, dizziness, and cold, perspiring, tremulous hands.

Symbolic symptoms are also noted. Emotional tension is released

into the ideational sphere and hysterical conversion or obsessive-compulsive signs are observed. The case of Rudy, the sexual psychopath referred to above is an example. When denied the dormitory, his thoughts became dominated by the obsession that he must obtain this assignment. This ruminating thought spilled into compulsive denunciation of medical officers, the clergy who he insisted could, but would not help him, and finally hysteric excitement. In remission, the subject suggested that the obsessional desire for a transfer to the honor dormitory which he felt was his due, was motivated by the obvious wish to erase homosexuality from his record. The destructive tendency indicated his wish to punish the administration (father) for denying him his earned reward. Another example is that of Ed who was plagued by obsessive ruminations and somatic difficulties. He had spoken to a female civilian typist and thereafter her image persisted in his mind. Assuredly this was not objectionable but it provoked excessive masturbation which he claimed resulted in severe headaches. Suggestive treatment helped him and his subsequent visits to the hospital were filled with moments of guiltless joy.

Malingering should be classified with symbolic phenomena. Like symbolism, it is motivated by unconscious conflict, but in contradistinction, symptoms are consciously created. Joe, for example, had to escape from a situational threat. He selected the fad-illness of the week, backache; but unskillful at simulation, he finally admitted that he was tired of working and wished quarters. His complaints, while conscious, were "symbolic" of an undisclosed trying situation with which, he was unable to cope and unwilling to admit and which promoted anxiety. Desiring to avoid psychiatric attention, he simulated a physical disorder. But apparently things became worse; he simulated a convulsive seizure. Accused of "faking" he became confidential and admitted he had to check into the hospital to avoid creditors for several days, when he would be able to pay off his debts.

Of the situationally induced psychosis, the following examples may be noted. Jerry has always feared losing his beautiful wife. Suspecting a Don Juan fellow-inmate who knew her well, and who was shortly to be released, would communicate with her upon release, Jerry turned informer to subject him to another prison sentence. Shortly, Jerry became acutely disturbed, suspicious, hallucinated, suicidal, and homicidal, a typical schizophrenic paranoid syndrome. Another inmate, Bill, developed an acute catatonic-like reaction to a sexual approach, shortly after arriving in the institution. He retreated into muteness

and apathy, recovering fully and spontaneously in several weeks with hospitalization.

Prominent among defense mechanisms are behavioral, projection and escape patterns. Of particular significance to the custodial officer, is the intractable, unstable, explosive, aggressive reactions to frustrations of the psychopathic personality. Although few in number, they demoralize the penitentiary, and are responsible for a plethora of prison rules and close supervision. They are the prisoners who must prove "rough and tough and hard to bluff." In passing it is interesting to note the excellent adjustment of some of this group during the baseball season when they achieve importance, only to resume their usual obstreperous behavior in the winter when confined indoors.

Projection is clearly in evidence, now that psychiatric and sociologic bases for crime are publicly discussed. The informed inmate cites modern texts to support his innocence and blames every conceivable environmental factor, but himself, for crime. Conduct violations in the institution, parole deferments, as well as recidivism, prompt them to project their difficulties upon a cruel system and they express contempt of rehabilitation. The object of projection, is not exclusively the administration and society; other inmates are included. "Escape", too, is a familiar pattern utilized to avoid distress in the prison situation. This is accomplished by frequent, unnecessary hospital visits or requests (even demands) for quarters, convalescence, or hospitalization, special diets, and physical therapy. Occasionally inmates appear with "accidentally" incurred minor lacerations, and it is not uncommon for them to plead for major operations. Over the week-ends, however, such complaints or requests do not arise since they may be for valid medical reasons, deprived of attending the cinema. Further, the wish to remain ill or protract an illness is often evident, for well-being spells a return to population and its impositions. In contradistinction to the therapeutic situation of patients on a general psychiatric service, there is no premium for getting well, since the prison sentence is fixed and there is no reward of social redemption, for the stamp "ex-con" remains. Moreover, there is the pseudoadaptation of the conformist who is regarded as the model prisoner and for whom rehabilitation is merely an imprint on ice. Finally to conclude the common reactions, one meets with the inmate who, if studied carefully, evinces unmistakable evidence of progressive loss of interest and deterioration.

III. *Summary and Conclusions*

The penitentiary climate has been described with emphasis on inter-

personal forces militating against rapport with the inmate, which is imperative for the dynamic study of the criminal mind. On commitment, the prisoner is already suspicious and resistive to professional examination and study as a result of a punitive—privative—restrictive childhood. The penitentiary is seen as an artificial community, reproducing in effect, the environment which nursed the criminal mind in the past. Custodial officers are also resistive to psychiatric concepts. This situation, it is concluded, is not conducive to the development of rapport. Hence vital “secrets” both conscious and unconscious, are not generally elicitable and motivation remains obscure. A realistic program for the penitentiary is as yet unavailable and since criminal behavior remains unpredictable, the public cannot be adequately reassured, let alone protected.

IV. *Recommendations*

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that intensive, criminologic research is a fundamental need. A program in this area can be formulated by a body of psychiatric experts. But in keeping with the tone of this paper, I wish to mention some attributes of the type of personnel suitable to staff the research penitentiary, in all positions of authority. The basis of selection should be the development and continued maintenance of rapport with the inmate body. Desirable traits, while recognized, are generally taken for granted or subordinated to intellect. Hence this need for emphasis.

The acceptable individual should be what is commonly known to convicts as “a regular guy.” He has the talent of being permissive, expressing love and consideration, of encouraging dependency, and yet exercising authority effectively. The inmate knows him to be sincere and fair. He is courageous, and possessed of physical, moral, emotional strength to protect his wards in moments when things get out of hand. He enjoys a sense of humor along with a good frustration endurance index. While he has the capacity for empathy, he is quite capable of objective evaluation of his position. Moreover, he is intelligent and recognizes the need for research and is oriented to psychiatric dynamics as demonstrated by his interest and participation in a clinical program aimed at assisting him in understanding his charges. Indeed, he is one who is admired by the inmate as an object for identification.