

# A Family Case Work Program with the Institutionalized

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WITH the ever increasing numbers of commitments to correctional schools and penal institutions, it becomes obvious that our social case work program with those in and released from these institutions is lagging.

The ramifications of social case work with the institutionalized are legion. With a view to stimulate further thinking along these lines the following outline of a program of activities for a social case work agency with those in and released from public institutions is presented.

In the case of the offender, even the most vindictive opponent of assistance to the released prisoner will agree that something more than a ten-dollar-bill, a suit of prison-made clothes and perhaps transportation to some part of the state is all that is necessary to insure a satisfactory post-institutional adjustment. Our penal philosophy is based on the concept that all prisoners must be returned to society at some time and that society will not be protected unless they come into the community more efficient, more honest and less criminal than when they entered the institution.

An agency that has for its case work program those in and released from the penal institutions—state prisons, the county and city jails, has cases referred to it in much the same way as those in the state hospitals come to it. There are obviously no clinical histories available from institutions of this kind. Therefore, the staffs of these institutions should be made aware of the work of the particular agency so that cases may be referred directly by the staffs of the institutions. Another effective way is to post notices in the entry rooms or "tanks" of the jails or prisons informing those incarcerated that they may avail themselves of the service. Still another way is by checking at periodic intervals, say weekly, the records of the jail to secure the names of those not already referred. Frequently men already in the institutions will refer some of the newcomers.

Generally speaking, contact with the families of

those in penal institutions is made on practically the same basis as with those who have members in state hospitals. In this connection it is well to mention that the agency working with those in penal institutions and their families must always be on its guard and so interpret its work so as not to lead its clients to believe that it can prevent the arrest of or secure the release of anyone who so desires. Fundamentally, its concern shall be to secure the best possible and most advisable disposition of the case from a social work point of view. In other words, it will stress the social factors, the causes of crime rather than the crime itself. It will emphasize the non-legal factors rather than the provisions of the Penal Code which prescribes the sentences on the basis of the crime. In this connection the agency will prepare histories in the cases of those applying for probation so that the report of the social agency may become part of the Probation Officer's report and finally part of the court record. If probation is denied and the person is sentenced to a prison, this report will then become part of the "narrative" by which data the Board of Prison Terms and Paroles is guided in determining the definite sentence of the offender. One can infer that a program of this kind paves the way for a more socialized point of view on the part of our courts and other law enforcement bodies. To them is brought a larger picture of all the factors involved in the offense and how they influence the offender.

Another project of an agency working with the institutionalized is the collection of a mass of material on the mentally ill, the mentally deficient, the adult and juvenile delinquent and the drug addict, which if properly recorded should be exceedingly valuable for research purposes.

While it is a commonplace to say that the progress that a social work agency will make with its program is to a large extent dependent upon the degree of public support accorded it, this is particularly true of an agency working with the institutionalized.

# Recreation as Preventive Treatment

By IDA OPPENHEIMER

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UNDER the auspices of the Lower East Side Community Council, in New York, a group of interested agencies recently decided that a study of the whole question of social clubs would undoubtedly reveal some valuable facts. A recreational worker assigned on a C. W. S. project was put on the survey—an intelligent young Italian, a graduate of a Teachers' Training School with a Master's degree from Teachers College. With him was assigned a young Jewish law student.

The Lower East Side was divided into three areas and a census of unsupervised social clubs was taken in the first area extending from Houston to 14th Streets and from the Bowery to the East River, where about 50 clubs were found. Of these 23 were predominantly Jewish, 9 Italian, 2 Polish, 6 mixed with a sprinkling of Irish, the remaining 10 as yet undetermined. Most of these clubs were for boys only but here and there a co-ed club was found. The age range for boys was from 16 to 25, but most of the boys are 19 or over; the girls were much younger, ranging in age from 15 to 18. In all but the co-ed clubs, girls are welcome and since there are many less girls than boys, appearance at one of the club's functions is tantamount to an introduction. The average membership of the boys' clubs is 27, the co-ed clubs having a much smaller membership. It is estimated that the total membership of these clubs is over 2,000 and that they command a following of somewhere in the neighborhood of between 4,000 and 5,000.

Most of the clubs are situated in basements; some occupy the first or second floors of remodeled private houses and occasionally a store is used. Their quarters usually consist of one large and two smaller rooms decorated to give the club atmosphere. The lighting is as a rule extremely poor, lights often being dimmed almost to the point of keeping the place in darkness but the recent attention of the Crime Prevention Bureau has, to a great extent, improved this situation. A lighted sign with the club's name often adorns the front of the building. A piano, a radio, and victrola, a table, settee and a few chairs usually comprise the furniture. Nearly every club owns a ping-pong table and some have pool tables. The average rental in this area is \$40 a month.

The clubs were found concentrated largely along

the main traffic arteries or in streets just off them. There seems to be a keen desire for clubs to be near each other and vie with one another in their limited activities.

Contrary to common belief, most unsupervised social clubs are not vicious; they are a normal expression on the part of young people in a congested neighborhood of a desire for a meeting place of their own. They want more dances and longer ones than most settlements offer; they want the use of a room whenever they want it, which is impossible in most agencies where there are many more groups than rooms; they object to the set program under adult guidance which most organizations present. The result is cramped undesirable quarters, the only thing they can afford and with which they are by no means satisfied. Many of the young people have had settlement contact and they appreciate and want its physical advantages, but on their own terms.

One group of the clubs is made up of settlement boys for whom the program does not offer wide enough scope. They leave the settlement as a unit, set up as a club and develop a program whose motivation is a desire to do something for the community. They often have excellent programs such as forums and discussion groups and many times do what they feel lies in their power to help others, often to the despair of regularly organized agencies. Many clubs in this group are helpful in rehabilitating those of their members or other boys in the neighborhood who have been in trouble and many a worker has found them an invaluable aid in solving the problems of boys on parole or probation.

There is, however, a group of clubs which is definitely anti-social. Not only are their quarters meeting places for undesirable characters but their activities take on the nature of a racket. The quarters in which dances take place two or three nights a week are, to all intents and purposes, public dance halls. As many as 300 have been found packed in what was once the parlor and back-parlor of an old-fashioned private house. Because they cannot charge admission without a license, they have a hat-check fee which ranges from 10 to 35 cents or whatever the traffic will bear. There is no accounting of their funds and a small group often corners the proceeds which provide a good livelihood. We have even had word of a club which had

to give up its quarters because of the demands of some of these petty racketeers for protection money.

It is in the last mentioned groups that the politicians find their closest friends. The intellectual group usually boasts some aspiring young lawyers or others seeking public notice who come to the eye of the local boss through club activities. In the last group are often found the muscle-men and other handy strong-arm individuals who play their part on Election Day and whenever occasion warrants. In return for these activities, the rent of the club-rooms is often paid and minor jobs found for members, as well as influence exerted when difficulties arise.

Clubs in the more intellectual group have a few dances a year often for some philanthropic enterprise. They are usually held in an uptown hotel or a licensed hall in the neighborhood. The better managed of these halls know the nature of the clubs in the community, the owners or their representatives even being members in some of them. They never turn a club down when approached by the Arrangements Committee, but since a permit from the License Department is necessary for any such undertaking, a word from the Hall proprietor to the Department is often sufficient.

This group then, rejected by the License Department, holds unsupervised dances in inadequate quarters with all of the concomitant results.

That there is some form of cooperation, some tacit clearing arrangement, among the clubs is indicated by the fact that important social events in a given locality rarely happen on the same night.

Many of the boys and girls interviewed have expressed a desire for a wider program. Even all the dancing and petting they want becomes boresome. The boys have pool and ping-pong, sometimes even quiet games such as checkers, but there is practically nothing for the girls except dancing. The settlement's program partly fills the bill, but it does not go far enough. The girls often go to the settlement in the early part of the evening and wind up in the social

club where they find excitement; from there automobile parties often consume the rest of the night.

If the settlement's program could be prolonged and speeded up, the social club would not be nearly so attractive. The Henry Street Settlement is running its activities for young men and women through to one o'clock in the morning. The attendance has been amazing and the interest of the young people in the settlement has increased tremendously.

At the beginning of this study, the Stryker's Lane Community Center and its setup were considered by the Committee as a possible basis for a similar undertaking on the East Side, with such changes as the situation would warrant. That such a setup would be possible if the right impetus for cooperation were given is evidenced by the fact that if these 50 clubs expend only \$40 a month for all of their activities, there is a turnover of about \$25,000 a year with which a very fine coordinated piece of work could be done. With such an annual sum, one could contemplate the operation of a building with proper facilities and with many rooms, each set aside for a given group, with a large dance floor, gymnasium, pool, showers and all the other equipment which the young people want and which they could have without the close supervision they so much resent.

The summer is at hand and with it a change in the social club picture. Some clubs are giving up their quarters. Others are moving to smaller and cheaper places because any funds they have are used to acquire a summer place, sometimes a bungalow, more often just a room, at one of the crowded nearby beaches. Coney Island, the Rockaways and parts of Staten Island teem with them. The bungalow situation is one of the most trying which the Crime Prevention Bureau and the uniformed police have to deal with in the summer. It is our hope to make some study of clubs which transfer their activities to the beach, particularly through the contacts which our workers have made in the city during the past few months.

## A Program for the Future

By DAVID MARCUS

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**A** LARGE number of people who commit crime are no doubt anti-social. All of us are by nature anti-institutional, and there is always danger that the impressionable young offender may become anti-social

if placed in an institution. Every effort should be made to treat a delinquent by devices other than commitment to an institution. This means the continued expansion of parole and probation on a sound basis. It is neces-

sary to have adequate probation and parole staffs of a high grade and that the boards be free from any type of improper dominion.

One of the most important steps in advance in recent years is the increased emphasis on diversification of institutions, especially in the larger jurisdictions and cities which have prisoners enough to require several institutions. It is not enough to classify institutions according to age; the common factor of youth is not a sound reason for operating juvenile institutions which are practically alike in their program.

Men with courage and vision have suggested a form of juvenile institution organized on a village basis with children living in real homes with real families; a delinquent being sent to a home of a grocer, carpenter, or artisan, living in a real home of such grocer, or carpenter, working in the grocery store or in the carpentry shop and living as if he were a child of that particular grocer or carpenter. Of course, stricter supervision and discipline must be maintained than is usual between parent and child.

Coupled with that thought is the individualization of treatment within an institution. Classification is a device for bringing together groups that are homogeneous. After they are classified in groups, however, each person should be treated according to his individual needs, faculties, interests, temperament, mentality, emotional status, probable future, etc. Case studies by well trained psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, etc., are very essential.

With particular reference to juvenile offenders, aged 15 to 25, it is my belief that the disciplinary measures are not sufficiently individualized and are in fact archaic in many instances. Proper treatment is incon-

sistent with the "wholesale" methods used in institutions at the present time. Within an institution the program should be individualized in accordance with the highest standards of social diagnosis, prescription and treatment.

Finally, we must place increased stress on the necessity for preventive work. Much of the preventive work is undertaken too late. If we had more clinics for both parents and children, more adequate recreational facilities, more club work for the underprivileged groups, there would be less work for those agencies that take charge of boys and girls when they have actually become delinquent. The plotting of so-called delinquency areas in our largest cities in recent years is one of the most useful pieces of social diagnosis ever done.

A program of the future, should have for its aim

1. To prevent crime and delinquency by starting as far back in the social process as possible.
2. When delinquency has actually occurred, it is necessary to treat the offender by other devices than commitment to an institution.
3. To provide a diversified system of institutions caring for the various types of offenders.
4. Within the institution, to individualize the program in accordance with the highest standards of social diagnosis and treatment.

Everything we do would be futile unless we have adequate placement, follow-up and after care; post institutional work is a most important consideration.

What is needed, along with ideas, is money, especially for personnel and administrators who have the vision and the courage to put into practice ideas that stand the test of reason.

## RESOLUTION

Adopted by Adult Welfare Committee

Since 5,500,000 younger adults (16 to 24) are unemployed in the United States, and

Since their welfare and well-being is dependent upon social service agencies, and

Since many problems of maladjustment and delinquency have appeared in this group, and

Since the National Conference of Jewish Social

Service has recognized this problem by permitting group to meet and discuss the same,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that a committee be formed with the object of formulating a program for the coming conference so that this subject have a place in future conferences.