

As prison services throughout the world debate the virtues and problems of In-Service Training, the Editorial Board commends this Canadian viewpoint as provocative and appropriate comment.

What are the Staff Training Problems for Canadian Prisons?

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STAFF TRAINING is not a new thing to Canadian penal institutions. Sometimes, in conferences such as this, people have talked about staff training as though it were a new discovery, whose properties were so valuable that any "have not" wardens were to be pitied—if not thoroughly distrusted.

And so, in recent years increasing numbers of penal administrators have announced their adoption of staff training, together with classification, group counselling and other assorted insignia of penal enlightenment. In the interests of historical accuracy however, let us acknowledge that there has always been staff training in our prisons,

It might consist simply of this: The new recruit is assigned to a tier housing an assortment of prison-wise inmates, given a set of keys and told "you're on your own, Mac." This is his orientation. From then on he learns the culture of the institution, including the unofficial rules for survival, from other officers and from well-institutionalised inmates. Ordinarily, the most knowledgeable authorities are the inmates. This might be described as a "sink-or-swim" approach, and for years it has constituted what many Canadian prison officers have relied upon as training for their daily work.

My purpose in recalling the venerable character of staff train-

ing in our penal institutions is to make as vivid as possible the fact that the personnel of every institution *is* involved in staff training whether the institution head wants it or not. This is simply not a matter of choice. Therefore the subject of this paper may be thought redundant for some prisons (i.e., the training of personnel may seem to involve no problems). The model of inexorable staff training, in which nature takes its course, may appear to suit the institutional requirements perfectly well. Limited expectations require limited effort, and although the results may be unimpressive the problems also are slight—or at least they may seem so.

But prison officials to-day are perhaps less able to settle for small, ad hoc expectations such as simply holding prisoners under secure and trouble-free conditions until they are officially released. The final product of our institutions has become too often a more serious menace to the wider community than when he was first sentenced. Periodically the institution itself suffers first-hand experience of the inmate's deterioration before he is released. Sometimes legislators have perceived a possible connection between their own institution creations and the degeneration of their inmates, whose subsequent careers are so costly in both economic and social terms. It is when there is uneasiness or downright dissatisfaction about what prisons accomplish

that authorities become faced with problems including those concerned with the training of personnel.

In my view the important questions involved in staff training are essentially administrative rather than simply technical or professional. Usually the problems calling for technical solutions may be resolved with relative simplicity once the critical administrative judgments have been made.

Amongst the several questions which may be posed, there is one which I believe requires the highest priority. It is this. What is the purpose of the activity in which these officers are engaged? What kind of result is required, and what means are consistent with its attainment?

There may be some who will regard these as academic problems—as aspects of questions whose answer has already been given and placed beyond debate. If this is true, what *is* that answer? In Canadian penal affairs there are palpable differences in the objectives not only of various jurisdictions and agencies: but even within single organizations there may exist quite conflicting goals. Until the institution's authorized objectives have been expressed in clear, unequivocal terms no one can decide with certainty what its staff training curriculum should include.

This is clearly a top level administrative task for the obvious

reason that it is here that the necessary authority resides. The choices which are made reflect policy judgments. Any institution head or director of a correctional system who develops goals for his organization, without official sanction of the responsible minister, puts himself in a most vulnerable, if not irresponsible, position. He may enjoy commendation for his stated intentions and perhaps for some early triumphs, only to have his efforts unsupported and even condemned at the first sign of crisis. It is a proper cabinet or ministerial duty to decide what the objectives are to be.

In case these observations may be misunderstood, I hasten to explain that I do not subscribe to the notion that every official below the cabinet minister level should regard his position as a sinecure whose tenure depends upon his freedom from ideas. On the contrary, it ought to be taken for granted that the executive officers of a penal system will be persons capable of creative thought as well as of action. Among other things they should be responsible for making the political head—i.e., the policy-making authority—aware of the critical issues to be weighed; for bringing to his attention the important concepts and ideas and developments which are pertinent to the work of the department. A director of corrections and his institution heads have no authority to decide the objectives of the department or of its institutions.

They do have the proper task of assisting the political head to be intelligently aware of the best possible choices and of their probable outcome.

I do hope that, in defining goals for Canadian penal organizations, the policy makers and their advisers will soon replace the vague platitudes about rehabilitation with firm statements of social policy. An older policy position had the virtue of clarity—"make the offender suffer." It seems apparent that one can no longer openly champion a penal system whose main object is the humiliation and the brutalizing of convicted persons. But it is not so clear just what objectives and methods *are, in fact, prescribed*. Under the so-called new dispensations in penal practice, much of what has been considered futile and irrational in the past has been continued under a change of name and rationale. Under the circumstances it is not surprising that prison officers are confused about their roles.

Scarcely any system seems willing to commit itself to a distinct position, even experimentally. Instead we adopt a nebulous "middle of the road" position which seems to say, in effect, "we can't condone obvious neglect or brutality and we can't take the chance of fostering self-direction in inmates".

Whether this situation flows from the absence of a philosophical frame of reference, from the reluctance of cabinet ministers to

enlarge the opportunities or to take chances on behalf of politically unimportant people, or whether non-elected officials are equally unwilling to advocate such a choice—or a combination of them—the result is an unclear formulation of organizational purpose.

One corollary is that the members of the organization are given no clear perception of their functions. If this is the case it becomes futile for anyone to propose the content or method of a system of staff training. The most admirable content communicated with the greatest competence will almost assuredly add to staff frustration rather than efficiency, until the goals are established with authority, and training and goals are conspicuously consistent. That is to say, more harm than good can result from "training" in a vacuum—from content not clearly related to purpose.

The introduction of a purposeful programme of staff training gives rise to a number of problematic implications. There are implications for personnel practices, for example.

Consider some possible recruitment issues. There are some penal administrations whose minimum qualifications for personnel are not specified. This deficiency, in turn, proceeds from an absence of job definition. In other words, there is no statement of what the job consists of nor what qualities make

for a good officer. No wonder recruitment may become a casual affair which makes a continuous contribution to the poor morale and the high turnover it is expected to remedy.

If every officer is expected to participate in an education for his work, he must have the capacity and background to come to grips with the factual and the conceptual material of his courses. Otherwise everyone involved is wasting time, effort and money. This consideration affects not only the minimum qualifications for admission to the service, but it may well require changes in recruitment procedures. What needs to be done in order to screen out doubtful candidates and, positively, to secure an adequate supply of persons with better than just minimum equipment? Ministerial recommendations and membership in approved organizations may have to be dropped as criteria and methods of selection.

Promotion is a function of recruitment; it involves the filling of key or senior positions. Some services observe rather stereotyped lines of advancement. The merit of these patterns will need to be reviewed in the light of administrative expectations of staff training. What, if any, loss results if you abandon the idea that senior positions serve as proper rewards—and incentives—for loyal and long service?

Or think of those positions which have come into existence within recent years. They include

titles such as a variety of counsellors and classification personnel. The functions generally assigned to these positions are essentially professional in character. In fact, it is such a rationale which is put forward to secure better than minimum salaries for these positions. For a variety of reasons these positions are frequently filled by persons without specific professional qualifications of any sort. I am not expressing an evaluation nor a judgment here; I simply draw attention to the fact.

What effect should staff training have upon this situation? It is expected to make up the difference between the prevailing levels of competence and those expected of graduates of professional education? (i.e., is it to be a bootleg source of professional education?) If this is not the purpose what is to happen to these functions; will they be performed *only* by professionally equipped practitioners, or will an in-service trained officer be regarded as a satisfactory alternative? I admit to being concerned about this question since I believe that the opportunity to explore more than one promising method has been scuttled by the discredit of substitutes bearing the same name but not the substance of the real thing. In this connection it is worth repeating that the most critical decision to be made has to do with organization objectives. If the goal is simply to keep up appearances, while at the same

time keeping the system pretty well the same as before, it would be a mistake to depart from what exists already. This way one at least keeps the system safe for mediocrity.

What is at issue here, briefly, are the requisites for a professionalised service. Does it enhance the professional status of prison officers if, in their institutions, educational, social work, psychological and related services do not need as high a standard of professional proficiency as any other organization would expect? Can the staff training activity so equip the officer with a body of knowledge, mastery of methods and an ethical frame of reference so uniquely and appropriately suited to his tasks that he can feel secure in his own distinctive professional competence?

A further question begs to be asked at this point; namely, can penal or correctional objectives be framed with sufficient objectivity and consensus that they may be reflected in professional officer education approaching universal application?

Aside from these aspects of personnel administration there is the inescapable question about salary levels and the effect of staff training upon them. This is, perhaps, a self-answering question, but it must be anticipated from the outset. If the educational experience is believed to have any merit in making the personnel more knowledgeable and effective in its

performance, will this necessitate a major upgrading of salary scales?

Aside from its possible implications for personnel management, a programme of staff training will arouse other questions directly bearing upon matters of internal management and administration. Some of the problems may be neutralized or mitigated in anticipation, but they will force a decision sooner or later. A prison system which claims to have been immune to these problems has almost certainly been free from the contagion of staff training.

Education engages people with ideas, and ideas have the power to affect behaviour in turn. It is precisely because ideas are contagious and dynamic in quality that they make persistent inroads upon previously existing institutional values and arrangements. The training content may stimulate ways of perceiving the offender which causes the officer to question both his private behaviour and the corporate institutional behaviour, in view of the declared purposes of the institution. It may be a short step from this position to a lack of sympathy with some of the things he and his colleagues are expected to do. On the other hand, there may be considerable resistance to change and to the idea underlying institutional changes. At either extreme one is faced with the prospect of poor morale, at the least, and with sabotage, at the worst.

Prisons, on the whole, have adhered to rather rigid hierarchical models and have tended to require unquestioning compliance rather than an exchange of opinions between senior and junior ranks. Is it possible to engage people in a genuinely educational enterprise—especially in matters relating to human relationships—if they are not free to explore and question the ideas to which they are exposed? Surely in this field we cannot claim to possess such well-established answers that the training content should be considered indisputable. How safe is it to engage in an activity which, by its very nature, must undermine the traditions of unquestioning compliance? What limits to dialogue and debate ought to be imposed? Should classes be comprised of members of the same rank in order to minimise this problem; if so, are problems of communication and interpretation between ranks simply exaggerated and made less soluble? And by no means least of these dilemmas, what effects are these reactions among staff likely to have upon the inmate population? And how capable will the officers be in keeping inmates under reasonable control, while they themselves are undergoing a degree of conflict about their work?

The key administrative officers, it will be noted, must cope with problems of implementation. That is, they have the job of making the theoretical and conceptual content

of training come to life in the behaviour of the organization. But although senior officers will have to make decisions about regulations, procedures and methods governing the work of the institution, it is the front line officer who, in the final analysis, decides what is technologically correct behaviour for him. There is nothing new about this, of course, but the effectiveness of the training programme will rest in considerable measure upon the wisdom with which these questions, bearing upon the application of learning to practice, are answered.

Another array of questions are possible around the consideration of priorities. Choices will have to be made in this respect whether the administrator adopts a haphazard "play it by ear" approach or one arising out of methodical planning.

Any worthwhile educational programme for personnel will cost money and other resources. It will compete with other demands for these resources. Where do the requirements for staff education rank in relation to other requirements? This question is far from academic and the answer may well determine just how far training can succeed.

Assuming that all personnel are required to take part in training, there is bound to be some drain on the man hours available for the supervision of inmates. The argument may arise that officers can't

be spared from the cell block or the farm; the hobby or recreational activities will be short staffed if any staff are withdrawn. What are the feasible answers?

Here are considerations of security which cannot be dismissed lightly. There are other matters at issue also. If you reduce or cut out some of the inmate programmes; if you increase lock-up time so as to free some staff time it may leave inmates with less than they now have in the way of constructive occupation. Should inmate services and morale be sacrificed for staff training? In the face of possible deterioration in inmate behaviour and welfare it may seem both humane and expedient to postpone staff training. I wonder how many hopeful training plans are put off indefinitely, from year to year, under the illusion that typical prison conditions and demands will somehow go away by themselves eventually.

A further matter for priority decisions will be that of the utilization of supervisory and professional personnel. I am not aware of any Canadian prison with enough qualified educators, social workers, medical practitioners and psychologists to accomplish what they believe is professionally possible. Yet I am reasonably sure that these are among the people who would be expected to devote substantial time and effort to any staff training activity. The automatic result would be a further dilution of professional services to

inmates. What kinds of service reductions would be most feasible? Is it possible, in good conscience, to neglect deliberately what appear to be the most clamouring and apparent inmate needs? On the other hand, how far can one segment of the staff hope to succeed in its work, if its best efforts are not understood and sustained by all other colleagues . . . if employees group themselves into competing forces whose lack of intelligent mutual understanding cancels out everyone's efforts?

The priority questions raised so far are facets of one problem; that is, what sacrifices in inmate supervision and services ought to be made in favour of training personnel? There may be other kinds of competing demands.

One of the most troublesome chronic complaints in our prisons has to do with overcrowding. A closely related difficulty is the scant opportunity to segregate grossly different types of offenders among facilities having different functions and resources. Consequently legislatures across the country have need under pressure to enlarge existing institutions and to establish new ones. In spite of all that has been said on the subject in the past, the idea still appears to prevail in some quarters that Canada is short of maximum security institutions. Capital projects of this kind are tremendously expensive, but they are only the down payment on new acquisitions

for which governments will continue to pay additional substantial operating costs yearly. Then, with the inflexibility of Parkinson's Law, the new prisons soon become filled to capacity leaving the old ones just as full as before. And we know very well that the majority of those who are committed once become committed again. Should new facilities be established, with the designs of the past and the kind of staff which find comfort in such designs, or should expansion receive a lower priority than the training of present personnel. Or can we afford to sacrifice either at the expense of the other?

Competitive interests may exist at other than institutional levels. One argument that can almost certainly be guaranteed is the one which pleads for "more emphasis on prevention." Its rationale is that if child welfare services were "beefed up" fewer people would become offenders; if more probation officers were appointed fewer people would go to prison; if educational and employment opportunities were enlarged prisons could be contracted. These arguments have a certain obvious appeal to logic which may be more apparent than real.

Do we, in fact, know whether there is any correlation between these community resources and the problems associated with institutionalised men and women? Is the additional investment in

community personnel able to neutralize the effect of the father who returns home after a typical prison experience? Moreover, must we always view these enterprises as mutually exclusive? Why should it be a question of either . . . or? I am inclined to think that the seduction of the "prevention is better" argument has clouded more than one issue and has prevented nothing quite so much as action.

The resolution of these questions of priority calls for a high degree of administrative perspective. To visualize the potential result of training prison staff requires a capacity for long-range planning, and for perceiving the relationship between means and ends.

Let us assume that most of the foregoing questions have been examined and that there remains no doubt about necessity for a thorough programme of staff training.

What are the most appropriate sources of instruction? This might easily be treated as a simple technical or methodological question to be resolved by arranging for the most accessible and convenient educational sources.

It seems to me, however, that within this question are a number of closely related problems which have crucial significance for the outcome of the training activity. Perhaps the crux of the problem is made more precise by putting the question in another form; how can we deal with content bias?

The question calls for decisions at several important points. An outline of curriculum has to be determined. By whom? Who should expand the outline with the detailed meat of separate courses? Who should communicate this material to the officer trainees? And who will evaluate how satisfactorily each officer has been equipped by his education? At each of these levels some degree of bias is virtually inevitable; it is just as well to recognise this at the outset. In other words, whatever judgments are made will reflect valuable judgments and not simply technical ones. One possible conscious judgment may be to promote a definite bias; or it may be to subject biases to as critical an examination as possible.

Since the latter sounds more liberal and respectable the appropriate course of action may seem to be the securing of educational services from sources outside the organization. This might involve arranging for people like psychiatrists, lawyers, university professors and others to prepare and deliver lectures on subjects which they consider important or which have been suggested to them. Or university departments of extension may be asked to arrange for one or more series of evening courses in which several professional schools and academic departments may participate.

Several features of this arrangement seem attractive. It solves, in one stroke, those troublesome

questions about the disposition of institutional personnel performing key technical or professional functions. It places the burden of course preparation and instruction on someone else. The organization may enhance its public image by being associated with persons of such prestige, whose statements will be presumed to be as advanced and as scientifically correct as possible. Best of all, if the staff are going to take issue and argue with anyone's point of view, it is comforting to think that they will be in dispute with people outside the hierarchy. From the instructor's point of view there is the satisfaction of being able to give full expression to his ideas without having to take responsibility for putting them into practical effect within the prison.

But this points to a dilemma. If the training programme is goal-oriented; if it is conceived as the necessary means of equipping officers to produce results specified in policy, can the administrative authority be free of responsibility for the content of instruction from beginning to end? If the instruction is intended to reflect itself in practice how can it be the product of people who are in no way accountable for policy fulfilment? How are officers to cope with the possible conflict between course implications and the working instructions of their superior officers?

Consider this issue from another perspective. A profession carries within it an ethical obligation

concerning the use to which it is put. Many eminent physicists have expressed remorse that their findings have become a potential source of human annihilation. Is there a professional obligation to avoid the communication of technical, "how to do it" information unless there is significant participation in determining the use to which it is to be put? Lest this be considered extreme it is well to recall that the brain washing techniques of totalitarian authorities are instances of applied behavioural sciences.

On the other hand, there is the distinct probability that institutional authorities, if they provide for their own staff training, will make it the formal means of rationalizing and confirming prevailing institutional standards. It is likely to become a mechanism for making organization men, they "adjust" comfortably to existing conditions, learn to use acceptable clichés, and become less rather than more capable of questioning current assumptions and of examining problems with appropriate perspective. This is possibly the kind of bias which is most prevalent at present. How can it be corrected? The problem seems to bring us again to the matter of organization purposes and objectives. No matter what you and I may think about the particular bias of certain courses of instruction presumably it reflects administrative intentions and policy.

I began by referring to the crucial policy questions whose

answers will determine the character and effect of any staff education. It may now be more apparent that almost all of the succeeding problems can be undertaken properly only when the primary policy questions are answered. There are some dangers in attempting to work out ways and means without first making sure that the policy makers have a policy about objectives. The empire builders, inside and outside the public service, should beware lest they find that their prefabricated castles have no legitimate foundation on which they can rest.

It seems highly appropriate to me that this conference should be concerned simultaneously with

staff training and research in the field of Canadian penal administration. It may be pertinent to suggest that some of the steps essential to promotion of a high quality career service in our prisons might become more evident if an examination of salient administrative processes were made the subject of research. I almost hesitate to suggest this for fear of pointing out a further alternative to direct action. But research needs to be employed to facilitate—not to avert—decision making.

There is no intrinsic reason why public penal administration should not engage in solving its organizational problems with as much efficiency as other administrative enterprises do.

Criminal on the Road

A STUDY OF SERIOUS MOTORING OFFENCES AND THOSE WHO COMMIT THEM

In British criminal courts the majority of all offenders appearing are charged with having committed a motoring offence. This, however is the first study to deal with them in specifically criminological terms. The approach from sociology is adopted and maintained throughout the work, and the author makes an examination of motoring offences in terms of the theory of differential association, first enunciated by Sutherland. The study demonstrates that the popular image of the serious motoring offender does not accord with fact, and in particular demolishes the assumption that these offenders exhibit no criminal characteristics. Indeed, the evidence supports the opposite view: that these people are in no way different from many other classes of offender, and that their driving reflects their personalities—they drive as they live.

The facts are derived from the police records of 653 people who committed serious motoring offences in an English Police District, and from interviews with a further 43 convicted offenders. The findings may, perhaps, make it more difficult in future for the public to condone the commission of motoring offences, many of which are shown to proceed from behaviour as starkly antisocial as more direct forms of violence.

This book is of the utmost concern not only to those who make or enforce the law but also to every person who uses the roads in this motor age.

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