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A NEW APPROACH TO GRADUATE TRAINING IN CRIMINOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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In October of 1952, at Vancouver, Canada, the Senate of the University of British Columbia approved a graduate curriculum leading to a Diploma of Criminology. Professor of Sociology, C. W. Topping, long-time leader in penal reforms and major advocate of the new course, was made directly responsible for the program.

The Diploma curriculum is a specialized unit of graduate study designed for students who anticipate a career within the field of corrections. Typical applicants for candidacy for the Diploma will have completed five years of college work, including one graduate year in social work, sociology or psychology. The LL.B. degree, also representing five or more years of college credit, would satisfy the educational prerequisite for the Diploma course, and it is conceivable that other backgrounds would be judged acceptable in individual cases.

The curriculum is planned around a nucleus of classroom, seminar and field-work instruction in applied criminology and correctional programs. This core of work in the Diploma specialty will be supplemented by courses selected from the curricula of psychology, law and social work on the basis of each student's educational background and professional goal. The Diploma represents fifteen units of University credit and the minimum time in which it may be earned is one academic year.

Diploma students will participate in a sequence of field training assignments which parallel the flow of academic material in the course. It is through innovated concepts of field training that the program makes its most fundamental departure from orthodox approaches to instruction in criminology. The majority of Diploma students will not receive prolonged or intensively supervised experience within any single correctional setting during the course. Instead, the objective is to provide each individual with an intimate orientation to a wide variety of working situations.

In this undertaking, the correctional process is viewed as a continuum along which the resources of various agencies are mobilized at spaced intervals. Given the dimension of depth, this continuum illustrates also the flow of new workers into these several agencies from appropriate training facilities. This conception underscores the relative divorcement of each correctional program from all of the others, as well as the social and occupational distance which structures

the attitudes of workers into forms of distrust toward members of other agencies.

The analogy of a continuum sharpens our awareness of the present dearth of meaningful communication between representatives of different correctional organizations. The offender is passed along the continuum from one stage to the next, together with the papers which concern his case, but the genuine feelings of workers concerning him tend to be given a distorted expression or "kept within the family." Thus, a law officer, recently questioned by University students about police attitudes toward the criminal, replied with candor that this was a subject which he could explain to another policeman but not to "the uninitiated."

Seen in vertical cross-sections, our continuum figuratively portrays the distinct and contrasting disciplines which respectively train employees to man the machinery of law enforcement, public prosecution, the judiciary, probation and institutional care. As before, the focus of our attention is upon the separation of each training ground from all of the others and the profound divergence from one to the other in attitudes toward crime and the criminal. Understanding these differences in preparation, we are not amazed by the gulf of feeling between the lawyer and the case worker, and in more subtle ways, between such allied workers as the psychologist and the sociologist.

Thus, a primary goal of the Diploma course is to promote understanding of the relationships between diverse programs in the correctional field, and of the continuity which ideally should bind them into a meaningful whole.

The student will receive practical guidance from the agency employees with whom he shares a day's work; the constable in a prowler car, the probation officer on a case investigation, the public prosecutor during a day in court, the group supervisor in a correctional institution.

Through the medium of consultation hours and seminar discussions, faculty members will assist the student in making valid interpretations of these experiences, and will guard against the dangers of unwarranted generalizations arising from relatively shallow contact with a given field.

Diploma candidates will move through the stages in the administration of criminal justice as do individuals who travel this same path in the role of offenders. Such a realistic approach has been made possible by the ready cooperation of a number of municipal and provincial agencies in the Vancouver area.

The Chief Constable and the City Prosecutor of Vancouver respectively have opened the facilities of their departments to students on

field training assignments. Similarly, the program has been endorsed by the officials responsible for both adult and juvenile probation, with the specialized functions of the Juvenile Court, Family Court and Detention Home included within this sphere. Provincial authorities have approved field work for the Diploma within such varied institutional settings as a large prison for adults of both sexes, a close custody unit for young offenders and an open borstal used for selected cases.

Further indication of liaison between the University and community agencies is an arrangement through which Warden Hugh G. Christie, of Oakalla Prison Farm, serves on the faculty as an Honorary Lecturer in Criminology, currently instructing a seminar in correctional administration. In this same trend, officials of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police recently have agreed to bring lecturers from their organization into University classes to present such technical subjects as methods of criminal investigation, police administration and contemporary problems of law enforcement. Conversely, the writer moves outside of his faculty role to perform part-time duties with the Provincial Department of the Attorney General, conducting in-service training sessions for staff at the three correctional institutions in which Diploma students will secure field training experience.

It remains for us to examine briefly the philosophical foundations of the Diploma course as they touch upon its relationship to other graduate curricula, and the implicit question of what job opportunities will be available to those who complete the program successfully.

Our major premise in this matter is that criminology should not be considered merely an aspect or an application of other disciplines, however much it may look to those disciplines for techniques and insights. The growing complexity of contemporary corrections may partially be accounted for in terms of the myriad professional influences which exist elbow to elbow in the field. The individual worker often seeks some common denominator by which to render active the similarities between these disciplines in goal and purpose, rather than the sometimes artificial differences which prevent a concerted effort.

Much lip service has been given to the virtues of united effort in a common cause. The policeman is told that he should view the probation officer as a colleague. Institutional workers are informed that they are co-partners with enforcement and prosecuting officials in the administration of criminal justice. Unhappily, the mutual understanding which characterizes the relationship of colleagues is gained only through the familiarity of shared experience.

We see a growing recognition of this principle in the conferences,

workshops and institutes which bring together workers from each stage on the correctional continuum for a consideration of problems which concern them all. But we know that those workers who most need practice in collaboration tend to stay at home, or to insulate themselves against an understanding of the "foreign jargon" spoken by members of other disciplines.

In our point of view, the community of experience which makes one type of worker colleague to another may well be initiated at the level of graduate training; after the creation of a sense of professional identity in a particular role, and before the development of rigidly provincial conceptions of those who occupy different roles in dealing with the offender. Through the perspective gained by collaborative experience in a variety of correctional settings, the methods of all included disciplines may better be coordinated and adapted to the common purpose of serving community needs. In such a context, workers may be helped to avoid the over-concern with vested occupational interests which sometimes leads us to seek a monopoly of knowledge and method for a particular discipline.

This viewpoint is not aimed at leveling the correctional worker's feeling of occupational identity, whether as a policeman, lawyer or institutional employee. Indeed, it is our belief that no worker can be sufficiently secure to collaborate effectively with members of other disciplines unless he is strong in the skills and convictions which characterize his own working group. The goal instead is to help each student to clarify the corners of provincialism in his attitudes toward various programs, and to do so by encountering the reality of another worker's world under conditions which permit a supervised interpretation of what is seen and felt within that setting.

Neither should this more eclectic approach be understood as a threat to the standards set by various disciplines for employment within a given field. No one would suppose that the graduate in law becomes qualified as a case worker by virtue of specialized training in applied criminology. But such training ultimately might make him more effective in work as a public prosecutor, and partially so because of his awareness of the case worker's role, as accomplished through the medium of experiences shared with such workers. The graduate curriculum in criminology is not seen as a substitute for thorough training in any particular field, but rather as an additional experience in education for those who have formed a mature interest in some phase of the broad range of correctional functions. The most healthy determinant of who shall work in a given domain, in the long run, is the

relative ability of individuals with various backgrounds to produce worth while results on the job.

Many workers have entered the correctional field with adequate knowledge of a specific profession but with only academic understanding of the authoritative setting in which their professional techniques are to be employed. Many of these individuals work through their initial involvements and reach a compatible adjustment to the reality situation. Others fail to find themselves within the working structure of legal authority and seek in vain for a means of compromising obligations to the community with responsibilities to the offender.

Other types of correctional workers frequently are not oriented to a "treatment" approach to the offender. Handicapped by judgmental attitudes and punitive feelings, they are unable to enter upon a day's work in corrections with sufficient optimism to be truly effective.

The Diploma curriculum, through its emphasis on the correctional field rather than any specific discipline within that field, serves to shed light on these emotionally charged issues, and assists the student in defining his own position in regard to them.

The question of what job opportunities will be available to Diploma graduates has been dealt with to an extent within the preceding paragraphs. The case worker, the group worker, the clinician, the lawyer, the research expert—all of these and other specialists have clearly defined roles in correctional programs. Participation in the criminology curriculum would enhance the employability of such individuals largely through a process of relating their special contributions to the field as a whole, and making them conversant with the diverse movements existent therein.

Other students hope to function directly within some correctional program as administrative or supervisory workers. The Diploma course holds direct and obvious values for such individuals, but it should not be considered a short-cut to positions of power or a substitute for thorough experience on the job. The worker who is willing to begin near the bottom should have a reasonable opportunity for advancement, especially if he is well grounded in some organized approach to human behavior which emphasizes its treatability. The complex correctional organizations of today provide growing numbers of intermediate positions, rich with opportunities for personal growth.

The number of doors which will be opened to the new worker because of such training as that provided in the Diploma course is problematical. We believe that many hiring officials will welcome these qualifications. As with any new undertaking, however, there will be an element of adventure in the process of obtaining a definitive answer to the question.