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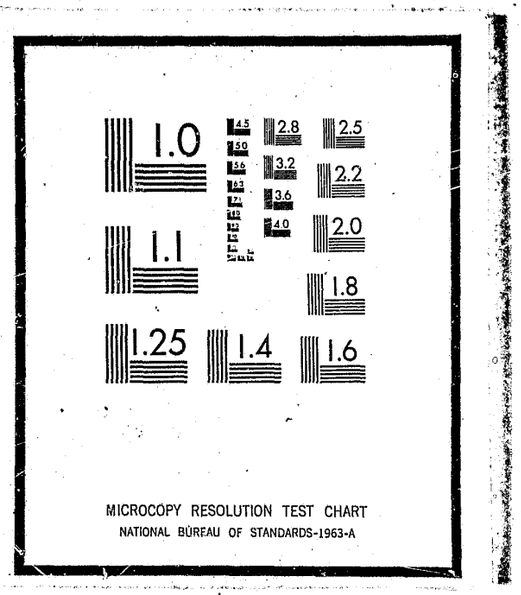

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THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER : A Reappraisal

by

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PREFACE

This Paper and Reprint brings together two papers written by Hugh Barr while he was on the NACRO staff. They complement his main report[1] on this theme and should ideally be read with it.

The first section[2] provides a brief introduction to the work of volunteers in prison after-care for the benefit of those readers who are new to the subject. The second[3] considers some of the long-term implications of established practices in many volunteer schemes. It seeks to widen the reader's horizons so that the potential of the volunteer in helping offenders and their families may be more fully realised.

April 1972

R L Morrison
Director.

1. Volunteers in Prison After-Care
George Allan & Unwin 1971

2. The Role of the Volunteer in Prison After-Care
Social Service Quarterly
June 1970
(Reprinted by kind permission of the National Council for Social Services)

3. Volunteers in Prison After-Care : A Postscript
Lecture to an invited audience at the National Institute for Social Work Training 25th January 1972

I. THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER

Whatever its justification, imprisonment is a tacit rejection of the offender by the community. Even after discharge members of the public often shun him. The main purpose of after-care has been described as "reintegration into the community". Thus, it is argued, ordinary members of the community have an essential part to play. Often help comes from relatives or friends. Indeed much after-care work by probation officers is an attempt to re-establish such relationships, but for some prisoners these ties have been strained, often to breaking point. A prison sentence can be the "last straw" for tenuous relationships with wife or parents; repeated or prolonged sentences can lead to a state of total alienation. It is for these lonely, isolated and depressed ex-prisoners that the volunteers may fulfil a vital role - somebody who is a contact in the outside world.

Throughout England and Wales there are now over 2,000 volunteers working alongside probation officers in prison after-care. Who are these volunteers? What do they do? How is their work organised? And what do they achieve?

The Volunteers

There is nothing new about involving volunteers in prisons and in after-care. On the contrary it is a field where voluntary action has an unbroken tradition reaching back to the beginning of the 19th Century or earlier. For over a hundred years Discharged Prisoners Aid Societies relied heavily on volunteers and still do, for example, in running after-care hostels. Since 1922 prison visitors have been appointed by governors to meet inmates in their cells. This work, too, goes on, although the visitors rarely maintain contact after the man's discharge. During the nineteen fifties schemes were started to recruit "voluntary associates" to work with Discharged Prisoners Aid Societies.

Many of these volunteers still play an active part, but it is since 1965, when the probation service extended its after-care duties (and become the probation and after-care service), that a "new generation" of volunteers has been involved. Unlike the earlier volunteers, women have been recruited in large numbers, frequently for work with male offenders. Younger volunteers are coming forward, some in their early twenties, whereas previously they would have to be at least 30 years of age. While the majority of them (as in other fields of voluntary work) are middle class, they are less exclusively so than in the past. Most either do after-care work as well as other voluntary work, or have done the latter at some stage. They are not a "peculiar breed", but part of the growing army of volunteers working throughout the health and social services.

The Roles of the Volunteer.

We have already touched upon one role for volunteers in prison after-care - that of the outside contact. In fact, there are many others. One of the strengths of the volunteers is their capacity to extend progressively their contribution and thus to re-enact the pioneering spirit of their forbearers.

The "classic" role has been described as that of the "ordinary friend" - someone who provides a warm and natural relationship for those who would otherwise be deprived of it. Many volunteers would describe themselves as just a friend. It is an attractive description which emphasises the non-professional quality of the relationship, but it can also be inaccurate, and perhaps misleading. Ordinary friendship comes about naturally and often by chance; the relationship between volunteer and "client" is contrived by a third party such as a probation officer and would be unlikely to have chosen each other as friends in different circumstances. Ordinary friendship is usually reciprocal; the client is rarely able to respond fully and equally to the volunteers "befriending". Ordinary friendship exists for its own sake without a defined purpose; the volunteer "befriends" the client with an objective in mind - to help to keep him out of trouble or to live a happier life. Perhaps it is "extraordinary friendship".

Ideally the relationship begins months, or even years, before the prisoner's discharge. The first meeting will probably be in the bare surroundings of a prison interviewing room, after a brief introduction by a welfare officer, or an exchange of letters. Normally the volunteer will enjoy no special visiting privileges and this helps him to be seen as different from probation officers and others visiting in an official capacity. Building a relationship in austere surroundings, with few external stimuli can be hard work for both parties, but slowly it can grow so that the prisoner begins to feel that he has at least one contact in the outside world. The volunteer comes to talk about the future, to rekindle hope, a sense of purpose and to re-establish a link with outside reality instead of the fantasies which the prisoner has created. By the time discharge comes he may feel that he can trust his volunteer; that he has found someone to whom he can turn at times of crisis once he is out.

Discharge itself is a crisis. In the midst of it, contact with the volunteer may be lost. But the volunteer who really puts himself out in these crucial first weeks may keep contact for many months or years. Meetings are informal at cafes or pubs, or sharing leisure interests. There is no office in which to meet and no desk to divide them. Many volunteers invite their clients home and introduce their families. A few have clients living at their homes.

The client probably needs practical help and the inexperienced volunteer sometimes wants to do too much for him - finding work or lodgings etc. With greater experience and professional guidance the volunteer can learn how to support the client and how to enable him to tackle his own practical problems. Perhaps support is the essence of the relationship, but it can also be protective. The volunteer may intercede with irate landladies or employers who have been "let down". Many volunteers introduce their clients to their friends, or help them to join in social activities, in the hope that they will begin to "re-integrate" into the community and, as a result, become less dependent upon the initial relationship.

In what way does the volunteer's role differ from that of the professional after-care worker (the probation officer)? Obviously there are similarities. It would be artificial to attempt a rigid demarcation, but there are significant and important differences of emphasis. The volunteer can often give more time - time for frequent contact before discharge, time just to be with someone without neglecting a caseload, time at weekends when loneliness is most acute. In this way the volunteer is able to be more involved, to express a degree of concern which has to be less demonstrable by the professional. The volunteer enjoys relative freedom from authority which may make him more acceptable to the client whose attitudes to "officialdom" has become jaundiced. On the other hand, the professional brings a degree of skill and insight which results from training and prolonged experience.

It will already be evident that this "classic" role for the volunteer is seen as relevant to the needs of clients who are lonely, socially isolated, depressed or inadequate. Some early projects concentrated on the older recidivists who frequently had all these characteristics, but increasingly volunteers are being introduced to clients with some existing links in the community, yet need someone to fall back on, or someone detached from their immediate situation.

Volunteers are also working with young offenders from borstal or detention centres. Of special importance is the growing amount of work with prisoners' families. This includes initial visits after the husbands' committal to prison, to check whether help is needed and, if so, what and from whom. Long term contact may result or practical but much appreciated help may be offered - babysitting, arranging transport for prison visits, help with budgetting on a reduced income, etc. Some volunteers help to run groups where prisoners' wives can share their problems. The knowledge that his family is being cared for may persuade the prisoner to seek after-care himself.

Organisation

Such work contains pitfalls for the inexperienced, but almost all volunteer

schemes are linked with the probation and after-care service. Usually new volunteers are expected to attend a preparation course, to submit to a selection procedure leading to "accreditation", and to work under the supervision of a probation officer. Some inexperienced volunteers at first resented this. There were fears of over-organising what ought, it was thought, to be spontaneous goodwill, but as the relationship between professional and volunteer has begun to settle down, so mutual respect has grown. Even so there are dangers of over identification with the statutory service so that the volunteer becomes an extension of the professional and disconnected from roots in the community or in voluntary agencies.

Evaluation

How successful are these volunteers? Without elaborate controlled experiments objective evaluation is impossible. Nor can the results be measured solely in keeping ex-prisoners out of the courts. The relief of suffering or the restoration of personal dignity are worthy ends, even for the client who is incapable of change. Perhaps the most significant tribute to the volunteers has been the slow but sure movement of probation officers away from scepticism about volunteers towards effective partnership with them. In this the probation officers are rediscovering their own roots and, incidently, giving a lead to their follow professional social workers in other fields.

2. A REAPPRAISAL

It is now over two years since the manuscript for the report[1] on the Teamwork Associates project was completed. During that time the involvement of volunteers in the probation and after-care setting has continued to develop both in scale and in scope.

Figures[2] recently prepared by the Home Office show that in 1966 (the year when the Teamwork Associates project was launched) there were only 794 volunteers known to be working with the probation and after-care service. Less than half the probation and after-care committees for England and Wales claimed to be making use of volunteers. By 1969/70 the number of volunteers known to be working with the Service had risen to 2,176, an increase of 176% over four years. Also by 1969/70 only four out of 68 probation and after-care committees who completed the return stated that they made no use of volunteers. All of these four were predominantly rural areas where it may be argued that voluntary help is available on an ad hoc basis within stable small communities.

Within London expansion has been particularly fast. The amalgamation of the former Blackfriars Scheme and Teamwork Associates paved the way for further rationalisation and for expansion. Under the inspired and energetic leadership of Nick Rose almost 500 volunteers are now working with probation officers in Inner London. Meanwhile in the outer-London boroughs the pace of development has also accelerated.

The scope of work undertaken by the volunteers is also widening. It is now being recognised that it was little more than an accident that volunteers were reintroduced in the context of the Services' extended after-care duties. By stages volunteers have been encouraged to work not just with voluntary after-care, but also with statutory cases and with parolees. Gradually they are being involved with probationers and occasionally with those whose initial contact with the Service is in relation to matrimonial or other domestic matters. A recent development is the introduction of volunteers into the County Courts to provide advice and support for Civil debtors.

Services by volunteers for families have also been developed further. The example of the Prisoners' Wives Service and of the Wives Groups initially in London has been followed in other parts of the Country. Similarly Wives and Families Centres at prisons are growing in number.

A further encouraging development has been the willingness of projects to

write up their experience. In particular, I am thinking of Pauline Morris' report[3] on the Prisoners Wives Service and that in preparation on the work of the Youth Resettlement Project by Patrick Kidner.

In view of this attention being given to describing the work in detail, I intend here to take a more global view. Five years after the introduction of the first schemes by the Service it is time to start some critical stocktaking. That is what this paper is about. I hope that it will be seen as constructive, and as coming from someone who has been party to the policies and practices to be put under scrutiny.

Let us begin with the facts. Despite the rapid increase in the number of volunteers there is still only about four volunteers to every seven probation officers. As volunteers work in groups linked with senior probation officers, there are still many main grade officers who have no contact, or very infrequent contact, with a volunteer. While resistance to working with volunteers is on the wane, the degree of interest is still uneven. Unhappily there are still places where volunteers are underemployed or even unemployed.

But what about the work that is done by volunteers? Here the figures are sketchy. So far as after-care is concerned we know that in 1969 (the last year for which figures are available) the Service provided voluntary after-care for 22,642 ex-prisoners. Of these only 1,137 were in touch with volunteers. In other words volunteers assisted with only 5% of the voluntary after-care. Looked at another way volunteers are probably in touch with no more than 2% of all discharges from prison. Even if we could calculate the amount of work done by volunteers in independent voluntary societies it is doubtful whether this figure would rise appreciably.

We have, of course, already acknowledged that the volunteers are no longer involved exclusively in after-care. Thus the above figures are not a fair measure of their efforts. Nonetheless, their contribution in quantitative terms to the work of the Service is minimal. This situation must be seen against the veritable fervour of volunteer activity throughout the health and social services described in the Aves Report[4] and continuing to grow since its publication.

The significance of the Services' experience of the past five years is not the impact of volunteers on the workload of the Service, nor even the effectiveness of the work with individual clients (however we judge it), but the extent to which we have been building up a hard core of dependable volunteers, and a body of experience, which will enable volunteers to play a bigger and more active part within, and alongside, the Service as it expands to take on new duties. I refer, of course, to the exciting new developments which will follow the implementation of the Criminal Justice Bill now before Parliament.

The burden of my concern is this : despite the achievement of the past five years, and despite the steadily improving climate of opinion within the Service about working with volunteers, I fear that the way in which existing volunteer schemes are operating may serve, unwittingly, to inhibit the full potential of the volunteers. What I shall argue is that three well established practices have been widely adopted, each of which offers short-term advantages for the smooth management and effectiveness of the volunteer schemes at present, but each of which also has built-in long-term disadvantages which have not yet been fully recognised.

For those of you whose primary interest has been in the field of the local Authority Social Services, the discussion has a special relevance. Volunteer schemes are now being initiated there which could easily follow the methods now established in probation and after-care. If so, I would suggest, that the same long-term dangers may result.

Each of those practices has in fact developed piecemeal from grass roots experience, although they are to some extent reflected in the second report[5] of the late Lady Readings' Working Party. For purposes of discussion I would suggest that we give them the following names : "Individualisation", "Formalisation", and "Integration".

"Individualisation"

Perhaps I can best describe what I mean by the term "individualisation" by referring back to the Teamwork Associates' experience[6]. A feature of the project in its early stages was an attempt to recruit volunteers within established groups in the community - churches, voluntary societies, rotary clubs, women's groups, trade union branches etc. The intention was that, through the commitment of a few of their members as volunteers, the groups from whence they came would feel involved and, indeed, from time to time be involved, e.g. giving practical help to offenders or their families. Thus pockets of informed citizens would be established helping to extend a network of contacts and goodwill beyond that of the much smaller number of persons who actually became volunteers in the formal sense. To the extent that these groups were opinion leaders and influential in the local communities it was hoped that they would have a general influence upon public opinion. The intention, I still believe, was good although perhaps unrealistic. Few organisations or groups contained more than one or two would-be volunteers and few of them saw their subsequent voluntary work as undertaken on behalf of, or in conjunction with, the organisation from whence they came. Most, in any case, were recruited strictly on an individual basis. Experience in other projects appears to have been similar.

This being so, it is not surprising that volunteers often feel misunderstood, or not understood, by those whom they meet in their everyday life. Whatever the attraction in theory of the notion of the volunteer as a representative of the community, it has little practical significance. Nor does it seem appropriate to describe current volunteer schemes as "community involvement" in any far reaching sense.

But it is not only the process of recruitment which leads to "individualisation"; it is also the way in which the volunteer is invited to participate. The Service, for historical as much as functional reasons, is wedded to a pattern of one-to-one work. Thus it is hardly surprising that in planning to introduce volunteers, the Service should have defined their role in terms of individual personal relationships. It is, of course, true that volunteers are involved in group settings - wives groups, wives and families centres at prisons, canteens and so on, but significantly these schemes have either been run by, or at least initiated by, voluntary organisations. For the most part a pattern of individual volunteers working with individual ex-offenders prevails.

Let me stress that I do not wish to question the importance, nor indeed (so far as we can measure it) the value of the individual work. Nor do I wish to question the predominance of casework in methods used by the Service. I do, however, believe that this process of "individualisation" can gravely weaken the effectiveness of the volunteers and certainly restricts the scope for developing their full potential.

There can be no doubt that volunteers gain satisfaction and sustain their morale by their fellowship together. To the extent that local ad hoc groups of volunteers have been successfully established, it has been possible to cater for these needs. But it must be admitted that the buoyancy and enthusiasm of such groups varies. Perhaps the difficulties have sometimes lain in the tendency of the probation officer to see the group as a vehicle for individual supervision or support rather than recognising the dynamic of the group to sustain the volunteer. Where the group method has "worked", the volunteers have gone from strength to strength.

In a few areas, probation officers have begun to recognise the importance of not just the small group but also of a wider "association" for the volunteers. But experience in one area has revealed reluctance among volunteers to take up the idea. It seems that once the pattern of individualisation is established it may be difficult to reverse the process.

The value of both the small group, or the larger local association, is not simply in providing support and morale. It can also create a sense of identity and

enable constructive dialogue between the corporate body of volunteers and the Service with which they are working. There must also be the opportunity to initiate new projects, but that is something to which I shall return later.

"Formalisation"

The second of the three practices I have the label "formalisation". A feature of the volunteer schemes started in the 1950's was their informality. Stress was put on the non-official relationship between volunteer and ex-offender. Preparation or training for volunteers was deemed to be at best inappropriate and at worst positively harmful. Natural spontenaity would be impaired, it was said. Selection of volunteers took the form of self-selection and the organisational structure was kept to a minimum.

Some fifteen years after the first of these schemes started, the newly expanded probation and after-care service embarked upon the first of its own volunteers schemes. There are several possible reasons why it adopted a more formalised mode of operation. In common with other professional social workers at that time, probation officers were sceptical about volunteers. Initial contact with some of these established groups of volunteers tended to reinforce that scepticism. If the Service was to respond to mounting pressure from above to involve volunteers in its new after-care duties, then it was anxious to avoid what seemed to have been the mistakes of the past. The adoption of formalised methods of preparation, selection, accreditation and supervision was an attempt to avoid undue risk in embarking reluctantly upon an innovation which was seen to be frought with hazards. Reports on the first volunteer schemes started by probation officiers reinforced this tendency. Pendleton reporting on the Rugby Scheme and (let me be honest) my own Teamwork Associates Report revealed an ultra-cautious approach. Without wishing to be cynical, it can be said that such schemes were more concerned with producing volunteers who were acceptable to probation officers than, necessarily, acceptable to clients!

But it is possible to defend such closely regulated practice at that point in time. Without such formalised projects it is doubtful whether the Service, as a whole, could have moved towards working with volunteers. It was necessary to take cognisence of the Service's own increasingly formalised structure and the predisposition of probation officers to work in a structure where accountability and authority are clearly defined.

Morrison[8] has described this process as follows:

"One can see a tendency to contain the stresses and anxieties of the unfamiliar (i.e. working with volunteers) by restructuring the situation in terms of more familiar working practices and procedures. Where volunteers are concerned, many officers have shown a preoccupation with such concepts as authority, accountability, accreditation (licensing, if you like) as a means of keeping these new partners under control and preventing things getting out of hand. It is almost as if in the absence of any precedents to guide the professionals in relating to volunteers as volunteers, they then came to be dealt with either as junior colleagues or as clients."

It is my contention that the formalisation of schemes can, unless it is done with great skill, induce in the volunteers an excessive state of dependence upon the professionals for leadership. This, however willingly it is entered into, can serve to inhibit the development of leadership within the volunteer group and can discourage volunteers from taking initiatives and acting imaginatively. Within the context of the immediate casework situation this induced dependency may be regarded as good and necessary stressing the delegation of responsibility and his accountability to the Service for his work. If, however, it pervades the volunteer scheme as a whole then much of the pioneering quality, traditionally seen as part of the voluntary contribution, is put in jeopardy.

There is another reason why I fear the long-term effects of "formalisation". Much has been said about the need to broaden the range of social background from which volunteers are drawn. Progress towards increasing working class recruitment has

been painfully slow. Perhaps this is inevitable, but it is certainly not helped by formalised methods of training and selection currently in use. These require a degree of sophistication on the part of applicants which is readily accepted by those who have succeeded in the competitive, selective and formal methods of our educational system - in other words, by birth or adoption, the middle classes. If, on the other hand, we wish to recruit from those sections of the community where such methods are unfamiliar and indeed frightening, we must be prepared to adopt less formal methods.

In this connection, invitations to new volunteers to take sherry with the Chairman of the Bench are less than helpful. Similarly, general meetings for volunteers held in the dignified surroundings of a Court room, with a judge in the chair, are more likely to induce a sense of awe than active participation by the volunteers.

There are, I believe, signs of some "loosening up" in the way volunteer schemes are being run, and this is to be welcomed, if we hope to give volunteers "their head" and if we hope to recruit an increasingly diverse range of volunteers. It would in my judgement, have been impossible to adopt more informal methods sooner. They had to wait for the gradual growth of professional self confidence on the part of probation officers which would enable them to cope with rather more anxiety in allowing their volunteer schemes to involve greater risks. But without those risks the full potential will not be unleashed.

One development which is particularly welcome, is the increasing readiness of a few local Services to consider ex-offenders as volunteers. In the United States the use of "turned round offenders" as aides to probation officers has gone much further. Here the participation of the ex-offenders has been restricted largely to the self-help groups such as Recidivists Anonymous, which, up till now, have tended to isolate themselves from the mainstream of after-care services. If more ex-offenders become volunteers much may be achieved to breakdown the intense suspicion with which many prisoners still regard any form of help after discharge.

It is ironic that just at the time when formalised methods for volunteer schemes have gained general acceptance, a new movement has gathered momentum stressing the spontaneous/informal participation of the citizen at neighbourhood level. The emergence of community work as a force to be reckoned with has so far made little impact in the probation and after-care service. Elsewhere, however, community workers have begun to question the value of the formal volunteer scheme. In my view it is phoney and unhelpful to argue the merits of one or the other; volunteers with a capital V or spontaneous combustion! What is more important is for the innovaters in both fields to get together and to develop a rationale that is broad enough to embrace the formal volunteer schemes, the grassroots community work activity, and everything in between. Probation and after-care has a part to play in that process.

Let me stress that I am not rejecting all formality. There is a place for preparation courses, for selective panels and for letters of accreditation. The point of my argument is that they must not be applied insensitively and indiscriminately. Sometimes they will need to be modified; sometimes they will even need to be abandoned.

"Integration"

The third practice that I want to discuss is that which I call "integration". This is closely linked with the practice of "formalisation" which we have just been considering. By "integration" I mean the means by which the Service has encouraged its volunteers to identify closely with it. Methods of preparation, selection and accreditation have been designed to help the new volunteer to feel that he belongs to, and is accepted by, the probation officers.

Many volunteers welcome this. For some it provides a sense of status, especially for those who would have wished, or still hope, to be probation officers. Nor do I want to undervalue the practical advantages of this policy of integration. It has certainly avoided the difficulties encountered when the Services attempted to work with some of the voluntary organisations in the immediate period after the re-

organisation of after-care. It is also a practice which has helped to overcome the mistrust and misunderstanding between professionals and volunteers which had so sadly marred co-operation in after-care, and indeed in other fields, in the past. By bringing professionals and volunteers face to face, both have been compelled to abandon their prejudices and fantasies about the other.

The risk of conflict has also been minimised because the role of the volunteer has been defined within the agency function of the Service. Last but not least, it has provided a supportive framework within which the volunteer has come to feel reasonably secure, despite the inherent insecurity of the work for which he has volunteered.

Given that there are so many practical advantages, what can be wrong? It is only when one takes the long-term view that one begins to see the dangers. In essence, my worry is this. While the definition of the volunteers' contribution within the agency function of the Service has short-term advantages, it serves to discourage an increasingly large number of volunteers from doing things of the utmost importance, but which happen not to be the responsibility of the Service.

Of particular concern is the effect upon the voluntary organisations. Such is the appeal of the Services' volunteer schemes that they have tended to attract the large majority of the would-be volunteers prepared to work with offenders or their families,, to the detriment of recruitment for the voluntary organisations. This trend is particularly marked in the Provinces, although less evident in London. One of the advantages of the formalised/integrated scheme is that it appeals to many would be volunteers of high personal and educational calibre, who recognise the need for preparation and support from professionals. Most voluntary organisations cannot provide this. One might say that the statutory services are creaming off the elite of the volunteers with most potential, and with the motivation to learn, leaving the voluntary organisation with the residue.

How far this matters is largely a matter of opinion. There are those who point to the progressive extension of the statutory services and put little value on the future of the voluntary sector. The Criminal Justice Bill may well portend a further shift in the balance between statutory and voluntary provision for the treatment of offenders, particularly in the hostel field. Does it then matter if the voluntary organisations loose out when it comes to the recruitment of volunteers?

First let us remember that voluntary societies, unlike statutory services, are almost wholly dependent upon the support of volunteers for survival. It may not matter if some older voluntary societies die. Indeed it happens all the time, and there is a persuasive argument to the effect that the active life of any voluntary society is limited. I am much more concerned about support for those progressive voluntary bodies with the energy and inspiration to pioneer. Why? Because there are certain jobs which can be done better and sometimes can only be done, by a voluntary organisation. In particular I am thinking of the classic role for the voluntary organisation as pioneer and innovater. If we look, for example, at innovations in after-care almost without exception they have come from voluntary organisations. It was the Discharged Prisoners Aid Societies that first provided any kind of service for ex-prisoners. It was voluntary societies such as W.R.V.S., the New Bridge, and the Blackfriars Settlement that introduced the first of the volunteer schemes. It was Norman House that blazed the trail which led to a network of half-way houses. It was the Circle Trust which first set up a non-residential club for ex-prisoners. It was the same body which introduced the first Wives Groups. It was the W.R.V.S., again, which first did something to humanise visiting conditions for families at prisons. It was the Apex Trust which showed how a systematic employment scheme could be set up. It was the Bristol A.C.R.O. which demonstrated how lodgings schemes could be put on a formal basis. One could go on.

There are those who resent the inference that the voluntary sector has all the bright ideas! They draw attention to the evoluntionary processes within the statutory services and they are right to do so. They point out that Government is occasionally prepared to share in experiments such as the Community Development Projects.

But what they sometimes overlook is the constraints which normally inhibit experimentation within the statutory framework. Central policy must be geared to the provision of a nationwide service. Legislation does not provide for local experimentation, nor is it considered to be proper to risk public funds on pilot projects whose feasibility, let alone worth, is unproven.

It is these limitations which have given progressive voluntary organisations their opportunity to develop those classic pilot projects which have, in due course, been adopted and developed by the statutory services. Without the consistant support of the major charitable foundations as financers, and their willingness to take risks, this could not have happened.

But my concern is that neither the generosity of the foundations, nor increasing statutory funds, are adequate to sustain the voluntary sector. The voluntary societies must also have more able, energetic and younger volunteers. They must have a share of the best volunteers available. The day when courage and dedication were the sole qualities required of the pioneers are gone. Today some, at least, must be highly informed and expert. Many of the volunteers working with the Service are just that. A recent check through 500 volunteers in Inner London unearthed much hidden talent - business executives, accountants, lawyers, public relations officers, television producers, teachers, researchers, etc. etc. Few were being invited to use their professional skills as volunteers, yet given the opportunity they could man a whole range of pilot projects. Some such projects could be run within the existing framework; others might be better developed within existing voluntary organisations, or in new ones set up for specific purposes. Let me give a few examples of what could be done : a legal advice scheme for offenders and their families, a programme of public education with panels of speakers and specially prepared visual aids, fund raising groups in support of projects in their areas, delinquency prevention programmes in schools, and so on.

If the new generation of volunteers are to play their part in such pilot projects, they must be accorded the freedom to work both with the Service and with independent voluntary organisations. Of course this already happens, but on a limited scale. I hope that my former colleagues in the Service will actively encourage it. There need be no conflict between a volunteer, on the one hand, undertaking work directly from the Service and, on the other, taking part in the life of a voluntary organisation. On the contrary, there could be advantages, for the volunteer becomes a human bond linking the statutory service and the voluntary organisation and thus facilitating co-operation. One new development which may provide the climate for this kind of co-operation is the Norfolk ACRO. This is a local association, within the umbrella of NACRO, which enables all those concerned with the treatment of offenders to meet together and to plan their work together. Magistrates, probation officers,volunteers, and staff and committee members of voluntary organisations meet on an equal footing on neutral territory. Already within six months, the tempo of voluntary activity has begun to accelerate.

Bodies such as NACRO have worked hard to stimulate the flow of volunteers to work directly with the Service, if my reasoning is correct, to the detriment of recruitment for the voluntary organisations. Unless greater sharing and interchange of volunteers is encouraged, perhaps on the Norfolk model, the unhappy situation may develop where statutory and voluntary societies set up competitive schemes to attract the would-be volunteers. One need hardly dwell on the damage that would result.

The Wootton Report[9], and now the Criminal Justice Bill, have helped to stimulate a healthy climate in which, from the grassroots to the Central Departments, there is a genuine concern to devise and test innovations. Can anyone pretend that the need for the classic pilot project is any less than in the past? The Bill lists some of the new concepts - Bail Projects, Day Treatment Centres, and Community Service Schemes. All are untested; all are fraught with hazards. All should be pilotted before being floated on a general basis.

Similarly in development facilities for the drunken offender, would anyone

suggest that there will not be further demands upon the voluntary sector if and when the remainder of the Working Party Report[10] is implemented? That report drew heavily on the experience of a few pilot projects, noticeably Rathcoole and the Alcoholics Recovery Project, but no one would pretend that the time for experimentation was past.

The freedom to experiment is by no means the only agrument for voluntary enterprise. There are others based on giving the consumer choice, on grounds of economy, in maintaining flexibility, and, at a more fundamental level, on how we perceive freedom within a democratic society. It is for all of these reasons that I believe that the voluntary sector should be encouraged.

I have laboured this point quite deliberately, because I believe it to be crucial. The statutory services can do much to help or hinder the voluntary sector, not least in the way in which they encourage or discourage experienced volunteers to extend their activities beyond the boundaries of the Service. A healthy statutory service depends upon the support of a healthy voluntary sector and vice versa. It is the volunteer who can make this a reality.

Polarisation

Before concluding I want briefly to mention a recent phenomenon which can be seen as an inevitable reaction to the practices just discussed. For the sake of giving it a label, let us call it "polarisation".

There are growing signs that the practices adopted by the Service have a self selecting effect upon the volunteers coming forward. Increasingly it is those whose motivation is pro-establishment and pro-authority who will choose to work with the probation and after-care service. The trend is not clear cut and perhaps least pronounced in some of the Inner London groups. Some volunteers of more radical outlook are attracted by the Service's positive image as a progressive and humane way of dealing with offenders.

But others, who seem to find increasing difficulty in aligning themselves with authority, adopt a markedly independent stance. For some, those of the established voluntary organisation which have jealously guarded their independence may provide an acceptable base. But many of the new generation are equally ill at ease in the established voluntary bodies as in the statutory establishment.

Thus the emergence of such a body as R.A.P. - Radical Alternatives to Prison - is wholly unsurprising. It is a comment, not only upon the growing radical mood of many socially aware young people, but also upon the conservatism of the established statutory and voluntary agencies.

I am not concerned, at this moment, with the justification for, or the efficacy of, such radical groups. I simply mention R.A.P. because it seems to me to be an inevitable reaction and counter balance to a volunteer movement integrated with the Service.

There are those who will argue that this polarisation is fortunate. It ensures that the Service has volunteers with whom it can work smoothly, while a safetly valve is provided for the radicals to let off steam. But that attitude is too defensive and too complacent for its denies that one of the key roles of the volunteer, as much as in giving individual service or making innovations, has been to act as a critic and advocate. In every field of social policy volunteers are today in the forefront of pressure to effect reform. Dare anyone argue that our penal system is any less in need of reform than others of our social institutions?

But for the volunteer integrated within the framework of the statutory service there is little freedom to advocate reform. He is part of the process of social control. To press for social change invites conflict with his employing agency (which is only partially prevented by working with probation officers who also recognise the need for reforms). Again it is only by according volunteers

freedom to act separately from the Service that otherwise inevitable conflict can give way to a legitimate expression, in different settings, of a volunteers' concern both to work with the establishment in the field of social control and to contribute towards the process of social change.

A penal reform movement, be it the Howard League or R.A.P., needs the support of those committed to practical service if its pressure is to be realistic and relevant.

Summary

To summarise - In this paper I have sought to draw your attention to three practices underpinning the development so far of volunteer schemes within the probation and after-care service. These practices I have called "individualisation", "formalisation" and "integration". In reality they are less easily distinguished. They are practices which have served a vital function, in the short-term, in winning the co-operation of probation officers and building up a nucleus of trusted, responsible and able volunteers. It is they who can form the leaders of an expanded army of volunteers ready to work with the professionals in the challenging new opportunities now being planned.

My anxiety, however, is that the long-term effects of these practices may be disadvantageous unless they are used with more discrimination. They tend to institutionalise the volunteer; they encourage him to channel his engeries into vitally important work, but to the detriment of other tasks where the volunteer is desperately needed; they have also tended to inhibit the growth of a strong and balanced partnership between statutory and voluntary organisations; finally they have helped to evoke a reaction in which pressure for reform may be split off from direct service to the offender.

The point of this paper has not been to attack the practices described, still less to criticise their architects (myself included) but to provoke thought as to when and how these practices will need to be modified with an eye to the long-term objectives which are now becoming clearer. I believe that that time is now.

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