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Case Work with the Adult Offender, by David Dressier

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REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

CASE WORK WITH THE ADULT OFFENDER, By David Dressler, Executive Director, New York State Division of Parole. 1942. 10 p.

The first function of a modern parole agency is to make its purposes known to the parolee or probational; to let him know that conditional freedom is offered to him if he will confine himself to certain limits of lawful living; that there is more than a mere "must" prescribed for him by the agency as a means of making his peace with society. It must be made clear to him that beyond the "musts" there are certain services which he may voluntarily accept or reject.

A second and probably more important function of the parole agency is to discover the needs of the offender and to remedy them by some suitable means. In determining these needs, those recognized and revealed by the subject himself should be considered, but should not be conclusive since his self-defined "needs" are often nothing more than his personal "wants," inconsistent with society's demands. Or, he may in good faith describe a legitimate need, but the satisfaction of that need may be interrelated to other needs which he himself does not recognize. Therefore, in addition to considering the self-revealed needs of the subject, the agency should explore into his background, gathering diagnostic data to determine not only his needs, but the measures best suited to remedy those needs.

Having made its purposes clear to the offender and diagnostically investigated his background, the agency is prepared for the treatment of the case. The offender, hardened in anti-social conduct, finds it convenient to revert to the easy road to security unless some escape is afforded him. This the agency should provide in the form of employment service, medical aid, housing service, child placement, etc.

If there is to be any middle course between the two extremes of "machine-gun penology" and sheer sentimentalism, it obviously must be achieved through such scientific investigation and upbuilding treatment to the end of voluntary rather than compulsory observance of society's mores.