

CHAPTER V.

SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY.

1. Introduction.

Another activity with definite educational significance, concerned with adults, is Sheltered Employment and Occupational Therapy.

(a). Definition of Sheltered Employment.

A Sheltered Employment Project employs and trains physically and/or mentally handicapped persons under noncompetitive or sheltered conditions with the object of rehabilitating them.. The handicapped persons employed in the Sheltered Employment Project are those who through physical and/or mental disabilities cannot find employment in the open labour market.¹⁾

(b). Definition of Occupational Therapy.

Occupational Therapy is defined by Colson as "the scientific use of any form of occupation or work in the rehabilitation of the unfit."²⁾

Pattison³⁾ defines it as "any activity, mental or physical, definitely prescribed and guided for the distinct purpose of contributing to and hastening recovery from disease or injury." To this we may add "and it consists of occupations selected and prescribed for each individual patient with his or her particular needs in view."⁴⁾

Occupational Therapy is only one section of

- 1). Report of the Work Officer, S.W. Dept. to the Director S.W. Dept 18/2/1946; S.W. Dept. Files.
- 2). Colson; The Rehabilitation of the Injured. p. 1.
- 3). Quoted by Haas; Practical Occupational Therapy. p. 15.
- 4). Haworth and MacDonald; Theory of Occupational Therapy. p. 1.

rehabilitation, which in its widest sense, should cover the whole period of treatment from the time of the injury or onset of the illness to the time when the man is returned to industry. It includes treatment in the hospital rehabilitation department and/or special rehabilitation centre, reconditioning through graduated employment and vocational training where necessary.¹⁾

The difference between Sheltered Employment and Occupational Therapy is that the former puts the emphasis on the employment, while the latter puts it on the rehabilitation of the handicapped person. For Sheltered Employment the employment is largely an end in itself, whereas for Occupational Therapy it is only a means to an end. They are thus merely two different aspects of one and the same service. They are both educative, in so far as they both give training in certain occupations. They are both forms of adult education, catering particularly for the handicapped group.

2. Brief History of Sheltered Employment and Occupational Therapy.

The idea that occupation or diversion of some kind is beneficial to the sick is one which appears from the early days of the history of medicine. Even as far back as 2000 B.C. the Egyptians dedicated temples where melancholics resorted in great numbers in search of relief. In 1030 B.C. the Hebrews used diversional music therapy as instanced by David playing on the harp to refresh the troubled soul of Saul. In 172 a Greek physician wrote that employment is nature's physician and is essential to human happiness.

1). Haworth and MacDonald; Theory of Occupational Therapy. p. 7.

During the latter half of the 18th Century it was used as a form of treatment in Western Europe. In 1843 Dr. Conolly introduced it in the treatment of the insane.

It was, however, only since the First World War that the movement gained ground. The first school of Occupational Therapy was opened in Chicago in 1915. The Americans and the Canadians used it more than the English, with whom it did not develop to any great extent. In 1936 the Association of Occupational Therapy was founded in England. Then came the Second World War and interest in the subject was revived. It played and is still playing a considerable part in the rehabilitation of the disabled, both overseas and in South Africa.¹⁾.

3. Aims of Sheltered Employment and Occupational Therapy.

The modern trend is from social work as the simple provision of relief, to social work as provision of rehabilitative welfare services. It concerns itself not with the haphazard giving of charity to the chronically indigent, but with the science of developing the individual's latent capacities and resourcefulness, in other words, to help himself. Through providing facilities for vocational training and sheltered employment social work aims at the economic adjustment of the individual to the demands of social life and his instruction in the art of earning a living and enjoying it.

Those who through lack of training or through some physical or mental defect are unable to earn a

1). Haworth and MacDonald; Theory of Occupational Therapy. pp.2-4
 Colson; The Rehabilitation of the Injured. p. 2.
 Haas; Practical Occupational Therapy. p.5.

living are taught the occupation which is suited to their capabilities, and which will enable them to become either completely or partially independent.

Work Centres aim at replacing the sense of futility and helplessness which is likely to follow from continual unemployment and the receiving of public assistance, by confidence and self-reliance resulting from the possession of a skill from which it is possible to make a living.

4. Establishment and Development of Sheltered Employment and Occupational Therapy in Johannesburg.

Going out from the principle that the recipients of assistance should be encouraged to earn the help which is given to them instead of just receiving charity, the City Council, at its meeting on the 28th of July, 1942, adopted the resolution to establish a small work depot for men and women, subject to the Union Social Welfare Department meeting 50% of the establishment and running expenses. The women's Work Depot was opened in January, and the Men's Depot in February, 1943.

The Work Depots, as the Sheltered Employment and Occupational Therapy Centres are commonly known, were a success almost from the inception and by March, 1944, more than two hundred men and women had benefited and in some cases people who had been poor relief recipients, had been enabled through the training and support given to them to become independent of public assistance.

Since 1945 the National Readjustment Board paid a 100% subsidy for ex-service men and women employed at the depots.

The work expanded so rapidly that soon new premises had to be obtained for both the men's and the

women's sections, the former in Fordsburg and the latter in Braamfontein.¹⁾

5. Activities.

The activities in Work Depots are usually in those crafts that are called the "bread and butter" lines. This is done because it is not only unwise, but also because it leads to waste, to train a person in a craft which, after he is fit to leave the depot, is of no practical value to him afterwards. Therefore a large variety of useful occupations are being taught to the men and women according to their ability, so that their particular handicap is no great handicap in the particular occupation for which they are trained.

So far the greatest success has been achieved, in the men's section, in the carpentry, tailoring, leather work, and sheet metal shops, and in the women's section, with dressmaking, weaving and toymaking.

Besides being taught various occupations, lectures on a wide range of subjects are given to them. For the men there are lectures on educational subjects and for the women lectures on cookery, diet, and child guidance.

It was found that the expenditure on Work Depots is about the same as it would have been had charity been dispensed. It has, however, to its credit that it has raised the would be income from Poor Relief and Grants of about £10 per month to an average income per man of about £20 per month, while a woman's average earning is £3 plus about £2 in materials.

1). City Council Minutes, 28/7/1942, 28/3/1944, and 27/11/1945.

A new development is the Farm Sheltered Employment Scheme at the Council's farm Rietvlei for the purpose of growing vegetables.

6. Probable Future Development.

The provision of this service fulfils a great need in Johannesburg. There is, however, far greater need than can be met through the existing provisions. The greatest handicaps in the way of expansion of the service are lack of funds and limited accommodation.

The future of this service is uncertain. There is some doubt whether the present City Council will be prepared to undertake the added financial responsibility when the present contingent of ex-soldiers have passed out and only a 50% subsidy is paid by the Union Social Welfare Department.

When could it be said that the financial expenditure incurred is justified? It would appear that a reasonable criterion could be that it could be taken to have justified its existence if for every pound expended on the service it produces one pound or more through the sale of articles produced, etc.