

THE SELF-EXPRESSED AIMS OF THE MENTAL DEFECTIVE
A POTENTIAL FACTOR IN THEIR REHABILITATION

Every child examined by the survey staff was asked what he or she wanted to do or become when they were grown-up, or were released from the institution to which they had been committed. This report, however, gives only the aims expressed by those who were classified as "Borderline or Mental Defective", among the total in the four representative communities (special class included) and both institutions surveyed.

The following facts are based on the replies of all (411) the Borderline and Mental Defect cases examined. Their replies are specific and definite and two noteworthy facts stand out. First, almost universally their choice of work is that which is known as menial or hard routine labor, which demands good physical health and strength. Second, they tend to choose a type of work similar to that of their parents or of those with whom they are closely associated and whom they like. Thus, a quarter of all the boys want to be farmers, and more than a quarter of all the girls want to do housework. Next a fifth (approximately) of the boys want to be mechanics (garage, Machine shop or car barn), while practically one eighth of the boys want to be carpenters. Of the girls, one fifth each want to be teachers or nurses; like persons in other words, who were the first to influence them in early years outside the home. Not one of the boys wants to teach, but several in the institution want to do guard or police duty. From this it is not unfair to conclude that early impressions in the home and school are important factors in the subsequent attitudes of the feebleminded in regard to vocation. It is noteworthy that they want to be like ordinary normal people.

Among the self-expressed aims of the mental defective are many indicative of desires for physical outlets, desires that are voiced with greater insight than heretofore generally credited to subnormal intellects, and that take into account the influence of those same limited intellects. Many of these boys and girls make appropriate qualifications in stating their aims. Not all simply state they want to be farmers, or carpenters, or housekeepers or teachers. Not all say they want to be parents. They put it thus, "I'd like to be like father, (farmer, fisherman and itinerant carpenter), but he changes so much", or "I want to carry booze like father." A definitely feeble-minded girl "wants to sell Rawleigh's Products, like mother does." Or, "If I could finish the VIII grade, I want to teach the Catechism." A boy wants to be a "Parish priest" after having been an altar boy. He adds he wants to be a Parish priest because he likes people and he likes the country. One girl wants "to be a waitress and take big orders". Already she has been an institutional waitress for 6 years. Another girl wants "to work in a garment factory". Still another boy "wants to be a teamster. "Why I've broken in 20 pairs of oxen for the State."

It is surprising how well these individuals accept their limited intellectual equipment and mask their physical handicaps in order to qualify for jobs. A few vague aches and pains in explanation of their limitation. One girl wants "to be a nurse but I lack the education. I can look after babies though." Another girl confides "I want to be a nurse but I can't bear a cut." She adds, however, that she can "sing and draw a chicken". One wants to be a musician "if I get the time to study." One boy wants to run a livery stable and have horses, cows and dogs because "I like them and animals always know me."

In the 14th Census of the United States (1920) Vol. iv, pages 53 to 55, there is given for the State of Vermont the following statistics in regard to male and female employment in the major pursuits:

<u>Males</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. Agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry	33.6
2. Manufacturing & mechanical industries	34.3
3. Trade	8.4
4. Transportation	7.8

<u>Females</u>	
1. Domestic and personal service	33.5
2. Manufacturing and mechanical industries	23.8
3. Professional service	16.7
4. Clerical	12.6

For males, the two major pursuits are agriculture and manufacturing and their allied branches. For females, the two major pursuits are domestic and personal service, and manufacturing and their kindred branches. Some form of manufacturing thus is common to both.

In the same census report for employed Vermont children between the ages of 10 and 17 in Table 17 (pages 587 and 588) the following statistics, for those pursuits in which over a hundred are employed, are given:

<u>Boys</u>	<u>Number</u>
1. Agriculture, etc.	1947
2. Manufacturing, etc.	1360
3. Trade	352
4. Transportation	164
5. Clerical	145
6. Domestic, etc.	132
7. Extraction of minerals	101

<u>Girls</u>	
1. Manufacturing, etc.	748
2. Domestic, etc.	731
3. Trade	180
4. Clerical	96
5. Agriculture, etc.	81
6. Transportation	47

Again, as with the adults, manufacturing and allied pursuits is common to both boys and girls. It was noted above that a majority of the self-expressed aims of the mental defective fall within these three major pursuits, i.e., agriculture, manufacturing and domestic service. Assuming the demand for workers in these pursuits justifies and approves the employment of children, it seems

desirable that a considerable number of mental defectives should receive training in these vocations. Present institutional facilities in Vermont already supply training in part for agriculture and domestic service. Each of the institutions herein reported (Brandon State School for Feeble-minded with its Colony at Rutland, and State Industrial school at Vergennes) are less hampered by lack of facilities in these two particular pursuits than in the others. Re-organized so that more personal attention could be given to the individual, based on intellect, physical condition and personality, these institutions could do much in assisting the delinquent and mental defective to a satisfactory economic adjustment in the community. As it is now, they meet only a part of this need. Training in manufacturing is practically omitted from their vocational programs. Manufacturing, as given in the census report previously referred to, gives the majority of vocations as: apprentices - cabinet maker, boiler maker, carpenter, cooper, blacksmith, electrical machinists, masons, painters (glaziers and varnishers included), paper hangers, plasterers, plumbers, roofers, slaters, tin and copper smiths, dressmakers, milliners, bakers and factory. Also, fireman, furnacemen, mill workers, (food, lumber, paper, cotton, worsted and textile (clothing)). At the present time, fundamental training in printing, plumbing and tinsmith is good at the Industrial School at Vergennes, while both this institution, and the one at Brandon, give training in cooking and dressmaking. Among other vocations there appears to be in demand in transportation for chauffeurs, garage, road and street laborers, baggage, freight, express and post handlers, as well as messengers. Some training in most of these pursuits is available to certain of the "detail group" at both institutions, but not to the others who are not "on detail". In trade there is demand for clerks, porters, deliverymen and time keepers. Many mental defectives could receive training in the fundamentals of these pursuits, having adequate intellect, physique and personality to discharge such duties satisfactorily. In professional

service a large number could meet the requirements of practical nurses, attendants to libraries, dental assistants and hospital orderlies. In domestic service, both institutions possess ample facilities, although at present unused, to train for positions of barbers, hairdressers or manicurists. Even boot-blackening would not be looked on unfavorably by some incumbents, while yet others would make "bellhops" or conscientious camp and hotel guides.

This list of vocations is incomplete and indicates only some of the possibilities in the extension of training that could be furnished to the individual by a well-equipped institution. It suggests the need of a complete study of each delinquent and each mental defective and their individual needs before training in any given vocation is attempted. It suggests further the need for an adequate social service department at each institution to assist trainees to utilize their training to best advantage to themselves and to others. In this it is encouraging to observe that the average mentally defective individual seen in the course of this survey has a sincere desire to follow one of the vocations mentioned, is keenly sensitive to his own intellectual limitations, and will accept prolonged vocation guidance even to his own detriment -- so impressionable and inherently passive is he.

To summarize; we note that a majority of mental defectives declare definite vocational aims in life. These aims are fairly uniform, in that they state a desire for hard work or for a type of work done by some one for whom they have affection or respect. These aims tend to become modified by the feeble-minded themselves in unique ways to include their limitations in intellect, in physique and in personality. Each aim is an individual one and any plan therefore to promote it must be specific in each case. This means personal study. Thus, as in the specific case of a "tall" boy of 12 years who asks respectfully: "What should a boy like me do?", one must give him due attention for he is mentally defective and knows it. But the study is not made

easier thereby. The psychologist reports in detail: He is technically in the margin group of intelligence. By the National Intelligence Test (Group) he is "below scale". By the Simon-Binet (Stanford Revision) he has a mental age of less than 7 years, while a composite Stanford-Binet, and a Pitner-Patterson Performance Test gives him a mental age of 6 years and 10 months, or an Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) of 55 4. His physical examination discloses history of headaches; he is underweight 5 lbs., has two carious molars, and a scar with a depression in the left mastoid region. In personality, he is found to be restless, indolent in school, easily influenced, ready to make friends, hypersuggestible, excitable, impulsive, given to temper outbursts, is hypersensitive and easily discouraged. He states that other boys, both large and small pick on him because they know he can't fight good- even when he minds his own business they come and hit him because "I'm easy to get mad."

Even with all these facts at hand they are insufficient to enable the boy's advisor to make for him an intelligent vocational choice. So something must be known about his school history and ability. The teacher reports him as "poor in work, not equivalent to First Grade, though he began at 6 years of age". She states he is not necessarily disobedient but "fails to obey". Reluctantly the Principal has suggested that he be taken out of school. He has been tried in many rooms. He never refuses to attempt to do the things requested of him but leaves an assignment incomplete unless closely watched. The assistant principal states he is pleasant, polite and has an excellent memory for past events, but doesn't seem able to remember his lessons. From a recreation standpoint, however, he likes comedies and attends a movie which is five cents less in admission price than the other movies accessible to him. He reads scarcely at all, but in school is quieted by pictures and by music.

The social service report states that his home and parents are above the average, although it is not the best, nor is the environment of the best. His parents give a history of an accident he suffered at 5 years of age. He

had been alert and bright until that time. Now his physical resistance is low and illnesses "cling to him". His parents shield him and have explained to him that his poor school record is due to his inability to read. They encourage him to believe that he can eventually go to High School like his sisters. His sisters think he is "dumb" and "won't study", although on numerous occasions they have tried to help him in his studies until finally they declared they were ashamed to have him accompany them to basketball games which he likes, or to go to other places with them. They plead with their parents "to keep him in" for their sake. The social worker also says that his parents feel he has good business sense, and economizes with his movie allowance. He does work outside the home in which he makes in tips as much as \$2.50 per day. At this work he is obliging and dependable - more dependable than at school.

This case is one in which the boy's mental defect is apparent to the immediate relatives, to the school and to the community. It is apparent even to the boy himself. Yet to give constructive assistance in so simple a case, is not easy. Unless an institution can give him on an individual basis more than his home gives him, or can give him as much as the school has contributed, or can assure him of training in a trade with a better income than he now receives sporadically, it would seem that his guidance must be provided for elsewhere. Moreover, such study, to be successful, calls for skilled and specially trained men and women.

Consequently for vocational guidance it is believed that a clinic, in which an individual may be studied in regard to his home, school and community contacts; in regard to his work and play, and in regard to his intellectual, physical and personality make-up; a special clinic made up of a psychiatrist, psychologist and sufficient psychiatrically trained workers, should be made available even to the most obvious mental defective.

The case of this boy presents many problems for solution. Some are not inordinately difficult while others are exceedingly complicated. The important

paper, however, in connection with this or any other boy's adjustment problem
is that each problem is an individual one, requiring individual study. Exper-
ience has shown the impossibility of solving such problems en masse.