

It also came to my attention that our State park system was desperately in need of attention. Our parks were being beaten to death by overuse and what they needed was work done on them.

So, I conceived the idea of taking juvenile first offenders out from behind the institution walls and putting them in youth camps, our work camps, in our State parks and forests. We have been doing this now for 3 years. We have three such camps operating on a large scale and another one will be open very soon.

The experience we had with these camps was extremely encouraging. The return rate in our penal institutions is one out of every two. In Indiana, the experience has been that one out of every two will return as a convicted felon. But our experience with the boys who have gone through this work camp program, doing this useful work in outdoor surroundings, giving them a feeling of making a contribution to society while they paid their debt, has been that 9 out of 10 of the boys that go through this process have been rehabilitated. The contrast in the two systems was quite startling. I became quite interested then in expanding this concept.

The boys, in addition to the statistics showing that return rate, were startlingly different. We know that the boys who went through this work camp program were materially improved physically as well as mentally. We had one boy who gained 40 pounds in 4 months, to give you an example. They returned to society in very much better condition.

So we arrived at the idea of camps for boys that are not yet in trouble but are raw material certainly for our penal institutions; namely, the out-of-school and out-of-work youngster.

Last year at our Harrison State Forest in Indiana, we brought 100 boys, roughly 10 from each of our congressional districts, to our Harrison State Forest. The raw material was obtained from boys 16 to 21, I believe, who were interviewed by our employment security officers and were taken down to the Harrison State Forest where they were given the opportunity of, for 60 days, working in an outdoor camp of this type, building camping areas, camping facilities, improving the forest, cutting slash timber, painting and repairing the buildings.

The boys responded beautifully, although for a while we thought we did have a bear by the tail because we had no means of disciplining them. This was a matter of real concern for a while.

You must bear in mind that these boys were out of school and out of work. They were not from a normal home environment. Most of them were from broken homes or were slow learners, or for some reason or another had not had a normal upbringing as we understand it.

When they got down there, some of them thought they were on a lark. One or two were found to be mental cases, disturbed children, and so on.

Seventy finished the program of 60 days of extremely hard work. You must bear in mind we had no incentive or discipline. The only incentive we had to offer these boys is that if they stayed there 60 days, the employment service would find them a job. Seventy of them did finish and jobs were found for all of the 70 who wanted employment. We had no difficulty. Physically they were a much more presentable specimen. The fact they had the stamina and the determination to do this hard physical work for 60 days was proof