

kept busy. When necessary physical corrections are made, underweight boys start to muscle up. Both their physical and mental tone improves. But that is only part of the rehabilitation story. These boys are behind in their school work too. Twenty-one year olds tell you they went through the 11th or 12th grades but one finds them enrolled in the equivalent of third-grade classes reading books with pictures of Peter Rabbit on the cover. One third of the boys can neither read nor write when they arrive. That's not all, either. Many of these boys lack moral discipline and home training. Some have been in scrapes before they arrive and a few get in scrapes after they arrive. Mostly, these are boys that never had much of a chance and some never had any chance at all.

I welcomed a recent invitation to visit the North Carolina camps. One of my hosts was Vern Hamre, Director, Division of Job Corps Administration, U.S. Forest Service. A career professional, he doesn't preach or theorize about his current assignment. "These kids need help," he told me. "We intend to help them as well as we know how." He and some of the other rangers and instructors helped me to obtain at least some of the answers readers of American Forests have been asking. These include "How can rangers be expected to do what the home has failed to do in the first place?" "Will society be the gainer or the loser in this program?" How many of the boys actually find jobs or go on to school?" and "I'm told it costs in excess of \$5,000 a year to send one of these boys to camp; is it worth it?"

"At the Center, it cost a total of \$6,576 per boy per year in 1966," Hamre said, "but we expect to reduce that to \$5,700 this year." Subsistence and medical-dental expenses are the biggest single items with the exception of staff salaries which average out to \$2,170 per boy. School materials is a hefty item too.

At the end of April, 1967, there were 75,410 young men and women who had left all Job Corps Centers. The Job Corps' best estimate, based on both verified reports and sample surveys, is that 40,269 found jobs, 7,418 returned to school, 5,298 entered the military and 22,415 were either unemployed or not in the labor force through marriage or other causes. The arrest rate in 1966 was 3.18 per 100 youths whereas the FBI Uniform Crime Report for 1967 shows the national average for the same age youth to be 6.5.

I welcomed the complete freedom to talk to camp personnel including the boys. I sought out Joe Medford, an instructor at Schenck Center, from Heywood county, and who has taught in both elementary and high schools. At Schenck, he is teaching a course on "Life and Work." The day I was there the boys were talking about the responsibilities of marriage. What qualities should the right Wife and Mother have, was the question. Some of the answers as recorded on the blackboard included, "She should be clean," "a good sport," "respectable" and "have a nice personality." One boy had noted that she should be "religious."

"Don't think these boys are stupid," Medford told me. "For the most part they have intelligence ratings that are average and even above in a few cases. Sure, there have been some discipline problems but the older boys often settle them for you. Sometimes new boys think they have to sound off and disrupt the class and the older boys shut them up in a hurry. Most of them want to learn."

Almost too good to be true, one thinks to himself. And yet, these boys ring true when you talk to them individually. "Sure, I've been in scrapes" a boy from Alabama told me. "Then I got this girl in trouble. It caused a lot of discussion, you know what I mean. But if I can keep my mind on this (with a motion toward the lathe he was working) I'll be all right." He said he planned to be a long-distance trucker.

One quickly senses that the backgrounds of these boys are different from the youngsters one sees across his own dinner table every night. But if their background is different from your own children their response to good stimuli is not. They watch the rangers. Some ape their walks. They like to fight forest fires, I learned, in eating lunch one day with Venton Honeycup, of Washington; Fred Murphy of Baltimore; and Clinton Wills, of Mosspoint, Mississippi. All three boys are negroes and all three are in the fire crew. In a drought year, the rangers admit they did "well." Murphy was more enthusiastic. "The last time, they asked for us, man" he told me. Willis was consigned to "mop-up" the last time and he didn't like it. "Important? I guess so," he said. "But a fireman wants to be where the action is."

The fact that some of the boys have stepped into permanent Forest Service jobs has not been lost on the others. The day I was at Arrowood the Franklin Press front-paged a story: "Nathan Dean Lands Forest Service Job" and gave Nathan a two-column picture on the front page. The story mentioned that when