

The "Able-Bodied" Rehabilitee

By N. L. GITTLESON

The purpose of this study was to investigate those entrants to a Ministry of Labour Industrial Rehabilitation Unit whose entry documents categorized them as "no disability" or "able-bodied".

During the period of this study, which ended in 1966, the definition of these entrants was such that they had been identified from their poor employment records as unable to keep a job. Since the study ended, the definition has been widened to include entrants with a previously good work record such as older workers who have become redundant. These people are, of course, not included in this study.

A previous study of psychiatric rehabilitees at such a Unit included 14 "able-bodied" rehabilitees all of whom proved to be psychiatrically disturbed (Gittleston, 1965). The sample, however, was too small for detailed analysis. To permit this, all "able-bodied" cases entering the Unit after the cessation of the first study period were examined, using similar methodology and categorization.

RESULTS

The overall Unit intake over the first nine months of the study was 461 of whom 14 (3 per cent.) were "able-bodied". Over the next fifteen months a further 39 (5 per cent.) "able-bodied" cases were found out of an overall intake of 823. These percentages are not significantly different ($\chi^2 = 1.75$; $0.2 > P > 0.1$) and the two periods of study can be combined.

Of a total two-year intake of 1,284 cases, 53 (4 per cent.) were "able-bodied". Only 4 of these were normal. 49 (92 per cent.) were found to be psychiatrically ill and comprise the "able-bodied" comparison group.

The psychiatric cases (183) of the first nine months period less the "able-bodied" cases of that period (14) comprise the "psychiatric control" comparison group.

A. The "Able-Bodied" Group

This comprised 7 patients with schizophrenias, 3 with depressive psychoses, 1 epileptic, 1 brain damaged, 14 clinically subnormal, 7 anancastic, 4 asthenic

and 12 with hysterical personality disorders. Four cases were found to be normal and are not noted further in this paper.

Within the "able-bodied" group, the personality disorders did not have a significantly higher premature termination rate (8 out of 23—35 per cent.) than those with other diagnoses (7 out of 26—27 per cent.) ($\chi^2 = 0.81$; $0.5 > P > 0.3$).

The group as a whole did not have a significantly higher premature termination rate (15 out of 49—31 per cent.) than the rest of the total intake (295 out of 1,235—24 per cent.) ($\chi^2 = 0.83$; $0.5 > P > 0.3$).

B. Comparison between "Able-Bodied" and "Psychiatric Control" Groups

The Table shows that the two groups are similar for the following factors: age, sex ratio, marital status, duration of psychiatric illness, history of previous admission to an I.R.U., and whether or not the I.R.U. course was terminated prematurely.

The "able-bodied" group, compared to the psychiatric control group, had fewer previous admissions to a psychiatric hospital, a shorter time lapse since they last worked, a marked predominance of non-medical agencies referring them to the I.R.U. and a moderate predominance of personality disorders in the diagnostic roll.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

92 per cent. of a two-year sample of 53 "able-bodied" rehabilitees entering a Ministry of Labour Industrial Rehabilitation Unit were found to be psychiatrically ill. Their previous failure to be thus recognized was due mainly to having had minimal contact with medical agencies and a shorter period of time off work.

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TABLE

| | | | | | Able-bodied Group N = 49 | | Psychiatric Control Group N = 169 | | Significance Test Used and Probability |
|--|----|----|----|--------------|--------------------------------|--------|---|---------|--|
| Age in years | .. | .. | .. | Mean S.D. | 28·7 11·4 | | 31·7 12·6 | | t n.s. |
| Female | .. | .. | .. | .. | 9 | 18% | 25 | 15% | χ^2 n.s. |
| Married and living with spouse | .. | .. | .. | .. | 12 | 24% | 55 | 33% | χ^2 n.s. |
| Previous admission to Psychiatric Hospital | .. | .. | .. | .. | 7 | 14% | 73 | 43% | χ^2 ·0005 |
| Duration of Psychiatric illness in years where known or applicable | .. | .. | .. | Mean S.D. | 6·0 5·9 | N = 14 | 6·5 6·8 | N = 101 | t n.s. |
| Previous admission to I.R.U. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 3 | 6% | 30 | 18% | χ^2 n.s. |
| Medical referral to I.R.U. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 2 | 4% | 96 | 57% | χ^2 ·0005 |
| Time since last worked in months where known or applicable | .. | .. | .. | Mean S.D. | 8·8 12·7 | N = 49 | 20·0 31·4 | N = 142 | t ·001 |
| Diagnosis of personality disorder | .. | .. | .. | .. | 23 | 47% | 50 | 30% | χ^2 ·05 |
| Premature termination of I.R.U. course | .. | .. | .. | .. | 15 | 31% | 43 | 25% | χ^2 n.s. |

"Able-bodied" and "Psychiatric Control" Groups Compared

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REFERENCE

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