

Don's aggressive spells and his masochistic behaviour. His class teacher was concerned about his immaturity and his liking for childish pranks. Active psychiatric help was not available at the school since the consultant psychiatrist visited only once a week.

The consultant psychiatrist at the approved school agreed with the original recommendation that Don needed close psychiatric supervision which could not be provided in the school. She found him to be a compulsive thief and, in the absence of complete personal supervision, unable to settle to anything. She considered him to be emotionally shallow, lacking in any sense of guilt, very disruptive in any group and too frequently aggressive to others—using anything that came to hand as an implement. She wrote to the senior medical officer in Don's hospital area asking for his transfer to an adolescent unit but was told that there was no suitable unit in the area and that pos-

sible units in other areas had long waiting lists.

Don's behaviour deteriorated while at the approved school. After his release in late 1968 he repeated his usual pattern of offences—larceny and taking and driving away—and was returned to approved school early in 1969. He showed a proneness to epilepsy and, because of this and his disturbing effect on the other children in the school, he was released and, with no alternative care available, sent back home.

Since he has been back at home Don has tried three jobs and is getting on a little better with his mother. The psychiatrist who saw Don after his offences to prepare a report for the juvenile court still thinks that he needs more formal psychiatric/neurological assessment as well as help. He is still convinced that every effort should be made to place Don in an adolescent unit. Don himself would be quite willing to go into such a unit—if one were available.

Tolerating stress

A certain amount of stress is an essential stimulation towards achieving success and harmony in our work and social lives. Dr. Terry Coates, senior medical officer for the Reed Group, looks at the consequences of too much stress in an industrial setting.

HUMAN BEINGS are unhappy and may become ill when working in extremes of temperature, humidity, sound, light, etc. In other words, the physical factors of our environment must be within a given range for the individual to survive and within a more limited range (which may vary from one person to another and with time) for the individual to live and work in comfort. Scales of comfortable air temperature, air movement, lighting and sound levels have been published which enable the factory architect and machine designer to create optimum working conditions in factories and offices.

Studies of human anatomy, physiology and psychology equip the designer to plan a machine built to encompass the functional, structural and behavioural capabilities of the machine operator. Hitherto, the important criteria in machine design have been the basic cost of the machine and the characteristics of raw material and end product. All too often this has resulted in cumbersome machines, uncomfortable—if not dangerous—to control and tiring to operate. The scientific

approach to man at work (called ergonomics in this country and human engineering in the U.S.A.) is slowly improving the working environment and hence increasing productivity throughout industry and commerce.

But just as the physical atmosphere can be pleasant or unpleasant to work in, so the psychological atmosphere has its optimal level for satisfying work. It is unfortunate that there is no objective way of recording the intensity of stress to which a person is exposed nor can we prescribe a maximal level to which an individual should be subjected.

Although it is generally accepted that peptic ulcers, high blood pressure, coronary thrombosis, asthma, thyroid gland over-activity and some skin diseases may be aggravated, if not caused, by stressful situations, the effects of prolonged severe mental stress in industry is not clearly understood. For example, it is widely believed that senior executives suffer a higher incidence of coronary thrombosis than the general population. Recent work in the United States has shown that this is

not so, although there is a higher incidence of coronary disease in managers who have worked their way up from the shop floor compared with men of a similar age group in similar jobs who are college graduates. Industrial Medical Officers are sometimes asked to investigate environments which show little evidence of physical discomfort. On looking at the situation more closely, the real cause of the complaint is some psychological stress within the department. The sufferer either cannot formulate his complaints or feels embarrassed in so doing, and prefers to blame his 'disease' on marginally unsatisfactory physical factors which would be disregarded in a happy department.

What are the factors which produce these stressful situations? Automation has isolated many workers who were hitherto part of a small group. Conversely, some jobs require more supervision than in the past and this is resented. Modern society tends to work in large industrial complexes which are more anonymous than the older smaller paternalistic companies. Younger age groups are often valued more highly than the older workers both inside and outside the factory and the older employee finds it difficult to accept new ideas and to settle down in new (albeit better) working conditions. The middle-aged executive may find himself redundant, possessing skills and experience which cannot readily be transferred to another job in the same company, or even in another firm. If he is fortunate enough to find another job at a similar rate of pay, the stresses of moving house and commuting to a new workplace may adversely affect both the man and his family.

Finally, the use of increased leisure time can be a new stress in people who have devoted most of their working hours to their job and who consequently have few other interests. This may provoke a serious crisis in newly-retired employees who are unprepared for a new way of life.

In his presidential address to the 1969 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Sir Peter Medawar refers to a 'sense of decay and deterioration' which existed in the first half of the seventeenth century and which is evident today. Ascribing this feeling to technological advances and their potential for good or ill, he holds that the deterioration in environment produced by technology is a 'technological problem for which technology has found, is finding and will continue to find solutions'. And yet there is a school of thought which yearns for the supposed psychological calm of the pre-industrial revolution era and envies today's under-developed countries. Certainly these areas have a lower incidence of road accidents, less noise, alcoholism and other stress diseases, but malnutrition and folk-lore, lack

of clinical medicine and poor farming techniques mean a miserable existence for multitudes of people. The sparse opportunities for personality development make a pretty poor comparison with the scope for a satisfying life which the vast majority of our own community enjoys.

Just as the military commander has full responsibility for the health of his troops, so the good manager cares for the well being of his staff. In today's economic climate, each job cannot be tailored to the precise abilities of each incumbent personality, but the Menninger foundation in the United States has produced the following guide lines for enhancing mental health at work: (1) treat people as individuals, not stereotypes; (2) be flexible under stress, rather than rigid; (3) provide for gratification of needs from a number of sources; people, tasks, ideas, etc; (4) accept the capacities and limitations inherent in a programme; try to provide the resources needed but not to strain those available; and (5) be active and productive; but avoid the temptation to do more than is needed.

'Humanity living under harmonious conditions' was the objective of Frank Lloyd Wright, the great architect. The right dose of stress is an essential ingredient for the achievement of such harmony. Too little stress means boredom; too much means Hell on earth—be it in a jungle of mud huts or managers!

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