

## Suggested as Model: Alcoholics Anonymous

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS could serve as a pattern to make group therapy in prisons more effective, Dr. Donald Cressy, University of California at Los Angeles criminologist, has suggested.

"Most so-called group therapy in prisons is largely individual psychotherapy simultaneously administered to a number of persons," he declared. "Criminality is 'treated' clinically as if it were a disease, like syphilis.

Much time is spent in allowing the participant to ventilate suppressed hostility. This supposedly enables him to get rid of individual emotional disorders responsible for his criminality.

"Any value gained from group participation is offset when fellow inmates not in the group ridicule

a participant's newly acquired 'Square John' attitude and guards show distrust of his reformed demeanour."

In Alcoholics Anonymous, the participant immediately acquires an intimate membership in a network of group relations explicitly utilized to reform him, Dr. Cressy pointed out. His belligerence is reduced quite incidentally. If the program is initially successful, he gains status in the group. His new attitudes are reinforced as the "reformee" becomes the "reformer."

"Prison group therapy should develop and sustain anticriminal values among inmates as Alcoholics Anonymous does with anti-alcoholism among its participants," Dr. Cressy concluded.

*Source: Science News Letter, June 19, 1954*