



"THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TECHNICAL INSTITUTE FOR JUVENILE REHABILITATION"

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I will make reference to the creation of the Technical Institute for Juvenile Rehabilitation (INTERJ) as a professional space that is specialized in educational dialogue with the "underprivileged among the underprivileged" – young people who are basically poor and, within this sector, those who are underprivileged because they belong to family structures that are absolutely not containing, with significant disadvantages in referential terms with respect to the values of society's hegemonic culture. This enormous effort that I have undertaken is the effort of the INAME, for which it put a large group of its employees to work for two and a half years, in a very dedicated and committed manner. Unfortunately, I am the only representative of that group here today. These employees are the real builders of this serious attempt to respond to this change that Dr. Parga described as the disguise of impunity on a situation of punishment of the adolescent. For two and a half years, the INAME has been struggling to put a stop to the reality that Dr. Parga described.

The INAME's basic objective in creating the INTERJ is to generate opportunities for change in the vital situation that has made the young person into a victim in 100% of cases; we are responsible for this, because, in this victim situation, it has also taken up the role of perpetrator in this perverse double game that is so discussed here.

When we try to characterize young people who are about to enter the system – and based on a careful reading of the elements that we have – we see that 70% of cases analyzed in the Center for young people over the age of 15, called "the Doors Center" fit this description perfectly:

- numerous primary nuclear family that is de-structured and disordered;
- episodes of domestic violence and alcoholism in the family;
- significant difficulties in relationships with masculine figures who replace the father figure;
- use of various psychoactive substances from an early age (alcohol, inhalants, marijuana, cocaine) in diverse quantities without establishing patterns of dependency and without symptoms of withdrawal when they enter the Center;
- affective problems;
- an average of four years of schooling completed;
- frequent absenteeism and running away from home, with occasional stays on the streets;
- sequence of frequent dialogue with the Judiciary in this gray area of situations of abandonment and lack of protection-minor offenses;
- until they finally move up to the over-15 system, with deprivation of freedom at an average age of 17.

I would like to clearly qualify this as a situation of a social victim in the cases analyzed, but that could be extended to the 400 adolescents who make up the current population of the INTERJ – because they are in a situation of absolute social disadvantage.

Over these two years, the INTERJ has developed a strategy that intends to translate this issue into an effective state policy whose substance does not change over time. The enormous resources that the INAME has allotted to this sector would be self-consumed and would not have the desired impact. The INTERJ requires time to finish installing the definite planning and to be effectively evaluated in terms of at least one middle-term administration.

In the context of a proposal for the construction of a real, efficient educational format as a non-stigmatizing alternative for these adolescents, in a pre-electoral environment, so far this year, the INTERJ has undeservedly suffered precipitated, unscientific evaluations that have not respected time frames or the technical specialists who are building these options that I will now share with you.

When Dr. Torres stated that Dr. Bayce had opted to use the opposition between adult society and young people, he was appreciating this had a methodological purpose, but that it was not supported by reality, because reality is not black and white. I would say, though, that not only is society perceived as being in contradiction with the adolescent world, but also adolescents have clearly understood and incorporated this message: because they see themselves in terms of the axis of this contradiction that our society has

established. It is this family to which they belong, and it is this society that has imposed this vision.

And we have the obligation to provide an alternative. It is for this reason that I took up the responsibility of directing this Institute, after having worked for 25 with young people from all social classes; I was convinced that this was the way to generate real, objective change in this society-youth antonymy.

Thus, I think it is excellent that the INAME has convened this Consultation. It is a very valiant attitude for the entity that is responsible for driving child policy; above all, it is an intelligent attitude for the governing body to step aside and listen, in order to make decisions. In other words, to make real policy.

I believe that the effort of creating the INTERJ was part of this. It was an attempt to break the mold that established a special Division called "Special High Contention Division"; to create an institute within an institute and give it the power to create all of the possible responses to create alternatives to this path of marginality.

This division is a program within the INTERJ. In a parallel manner, two new programs are created. The first is called the Probation Program, and it is intended to be the most important program with the highest amount of coverage. (This program was initiated as a pilot experiment with 20 young people, and today it has five cooperation agreements and 128 adolescents residing in their own homes, assisted by this pedagogical program). The second is called the Open Homes Department, and it congregates those who live there without security measures. Its two main challenges have been to increase coverage in order to give a real response to the demand of the Judiciary, and (most relevantly) to ensure that the time spent there would be determined technically when the process was harmonized, and that it would constitute a true option for these adolescents to get out, thus cutting back the number of unauthorized exits and re-institutionalizations.

The "Closed Center" program, which has been the mecca of all criticism, is perhaps the program that has undergone the most substantial changes. Its coverage was increased, its design was made technical, its facilities were renovated (which meant a significant investment by this administration). For example, the efforts of the INAME and the INTERJ in terms of transportation is impressive: all family members are brought there free of charge on Saturdays and Sundays to interact with the adolescents living there, in a regime that is very much open to visitors. But this corresponds to these young peoples' inalienable

rights; what is most newsworthy and substantial is that, one year ago, the INTERJ created a Parenting School Department.

Bayce includes this in his proposals: one year ago, this institute had a specialized department with three groups of parents, two at headquarters and one at the Tablada working at a weekly basis each. In this environment, women meet with other women, not in the routine of prison, but rather in an environment with technical specialists who give them daily support. The intention is to answer questions such as "Why did this happen to me? What did I do to put Juan or Pedro where they are today? And what can I do to prevent this from happening to their younger siblings?" And these answers are being found within the INAME.

However, we are not satisfied. We believe that the very tool we should have is a true program of reference adults. A program that would review all questions related to young people in the adult world from the parental perspective, such as how an inspection is done, how a visit should develop, how the technical specialist dialogues with parents. We believe that there should also be an Information and Consultation Center for the adults involved. We have the pedagogical responsibility of making these young peoples' families understand the mechanisms of the Judiciary, what it means when their file is in process, what it means in terms of time, etc. For this reason, we have created a Judicial Coordination Unit, with a lawyer and ten attorneys.

With the support of international organizations, we have also created an Exit Support Fund. This has emerged from the initiative of the INAME President, who obtained the necessary resources to put the idea into practice. The project seeks to facilitate the exit from the program by finding self-employment and housing solutions for the young person.

I believe that INTERJ should never leave the orbit of the INAME, because the situation of juvenile offenses is circumstantial; there are no offenders, only adolescents who have conflicts with this process of building citizenship and who sometimes have conflicts with the Law. The important thing is that the conflict points to problems in the construction of identity and placement in a social space. For this reason, the Youth Club Program and educational spaces located in the young person's area are an integral part of our system. What should also be integral is linkage with the community, with resources in society. Therefore, the program of Neighborhood Reference Centers is also an essential instrument.

I was saying that transgression of the law is a circumstance; these are young people who, because of circumstance, are with us in a process in a more comprehensive process of transition, which should be a field of work for the INAME as a whole. In synthesis, in the summer of 1963, Eduardo Galeano published a report about a person named Cacho. He published it in the newspaper *Marcha* and titled it "The Uruguayan Symbol of Evil: Colonia Suárez." And Cacho, who had experienced this himself, said: "they do not teach us trades; although the guys manage to work things out so that they can learn something, like handling picklocks. There is only one workshop, and there are no materials. Nobody is being prepared for any kind of future other than a criminal future. It is a prison of silence, a prison of incommunication."

I sincerely hope that today we are able to offer a little more than we did 35 years ago. If Cacho were here today in Berro, there would surely be an opportunity for him. Because here we have workshops with materials; we have first-rate elementary and secondary school teachers; we have professionals in speech therapy; we have fine arts and music workshops; we have effective work opportunities where young people receive a wage; we have groups of parents; we have a support fund for the students when they leave the program. And these are some of the tools that would have given dignity back to Cacho and so many others – dignity that society took away from them.

Institutionalization is a violent act; this solution, which interrupts the enjoyment of freedom, must be changed to re-acquire its exceptional character, as framed by the Convention. Institutionalization must be the exception measure, because the rule is an ambulatory educational program in freedom and in a natural environment. Today, one-third of young people in the INTERJ are in programs of probationary freedom, supported freedom, strengthened freedom. We are sure that tomorrow, there will be many more of them.