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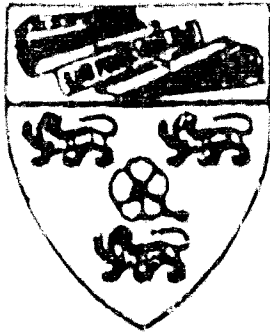
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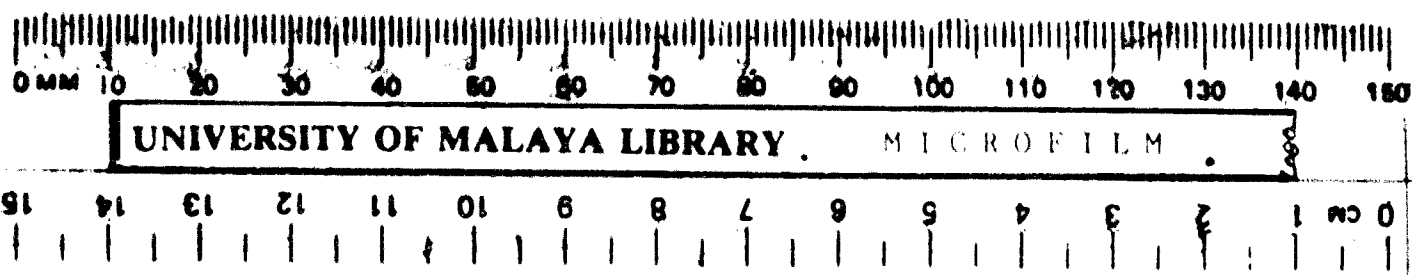


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STENOGRAPHERS

The Malayan Association of the Blind (MAB) in 1953 established the Gurney Training Centre in Kuala Lumpur with the objective of training suitable blind people in certain fields which they can use as a mean of earning their livelihood. One of the courses is in cane work, and since its establishment the centre has already trained more than 100 blind people. As time passed, it was soon realised that the real problem was not in the training but rather in finding employment after training.

As part of an answer to this problem, the MAB in 1959 built the Kinta Valley workshop in Ipoh. Part of this workshop aims at providing employment and further training to the caneworkers to prepare them in finding employment later outside the workshop. When these workers have gained enough experience and confidence in their work, employment will be found for them by the workshop officials and the vacancies thus created would allow taking in fresh workers who have just finished training in Gurney Training Centre.

Somehow, it did not work out the way it was planned. Employment for the blind workers was hard to find and only some were employed, outside. Further some workers preferred to stick to their work in the workshop. Anyway, the workshop continued to take in fresh workers with the result that the number of caneworkers in the workshop increased to 20 at the end of last year. But this cannot continue for long if sales do not increase also. Last year, the total sales dropped to the level 5 years ago. Thus at present, the workshop is not taking as many new workers as before and consequently most of the caneworkers have to find employment somewhere else.

Due to difficulty of finding employment, all of them have to work on their own. The condition of these home-workers deserves sympathy. A homemaker is able to sell monthly at the most \$60.00 worth of rattan products. The difficulty lies in the finding of market for their products. As most caneworkers who have been trained by the Gurney Training Centre have to turn to this way of life, this problem deserves special attention. In fact this problem was recognized as early as 1958 when a recommendation was made to form a sales organisation. This organisation will be of great help towards improving the standard of living of the homeworkers and its success should not be doubted in view of the presence of market for rattan products.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The object of this exercise is to study, by way of discussing the marketing of rattan products, the problems that are faced by blind cane-workers in their attempt to earn their livelihood and by the Kinta Valley workshop in providing employment to some of them.

The discussion is divided into three parts:

i) Gurney Training Centre:

Here the blind people are given training in cane-work which is aimed at providing them skill to earn their living. However training alone is not enough. What is more important is the application of this training in their every day life when they leave the Centre.

ii) Kinta Valley Workshop:

This provides employment to some of the cane-workers. However, due to decrease in sales it has reached a point where it could not be much of a source of employment to cane-workers after their training in the Gurney Training Centre and therefore nearly all of them have to turn to working and earning their living on their own.

iii) Homeworkers:

Increasing number of cane-workers have to turn to this field for lack of alternative employment. Difficulty of finding market for their products has been the root of the problem in this group. To eliminate it, the Malayan Association of the Blind has planned to set up a sales organisation and the prospect is good as market for the homeworkers' products can now be increased and their standard of living likewise improved.

In Section (ii) and (iii) above, marketing is being discussed by breaking it into various parts such as the types of products and raw materials and distribution. Detail analysis in some cases is not possible due to lack of data.

SUNSHINE TRAINING CENTRE

The Sunshine Training Centre was founded in 1953 with the objective of giving training to blind people in certain suitable fields which can be used later as means to earn their livelihood. There are many courses which are open to them such as Stenography, Telephony, Factory Work and Handwork. Here we are concerned only with the last course - canework. Since its existence, the Centre has trained over 100 blind people in this field. The training which this Centre gives is very important. This is because it is from this training that the blind will acquire skill in canework which can be used either to make and sell rattan goods by themselves or to find employment in any establishment which would take them. It is this training that will be partly responsible for the extent of the success that they will find when they leave the Centre and use it to find their livelihood. Therefore the training in this establishment plays an important role in the life of blind people who are engaged in canework and who come under our discussion.

The course for canework covers a period of 2 years. Only suitable trainees are put into this course. This selection is made during the first 3 months when the fresh trainees are assessed for their interest, aptitudes and capabilities. One way of doing this is from the application forms which if properly filled up, provide a good deal of information about the applicants. As a mean of assessment and a basis for vocational guidance, a range of activities which include light crafts, woodwork, chain link fence making, steel furniture and light assembly exercises are provided. The Centre has introduced these activities into the evaluation programme for various reasons such as to test the trainees' finger dexterity and hand co-ordination. A record of each trainee's performance in these activities is kept and at the end of assessment period, a fairly clear picture of each trainee's potentialities emerges. During this period of assessment, the trainee is also given help to regain self confidence with a programme of instruction in mobility, in the performance of the common tasks of daily life and where necessary, in braille and type writing. At the end of this assessment period, those found unsuited for training and employment are discharged.

The suitable trainees are then put into the canework course covering a period of two years. During this period the trainees are trained to make various types of rattan products¹ which also involve a number different types of weaving, border.

¹Refer to Appendix for Diagrams

The syllabus that these trainees have to follow is as follows:-

First Term: Round Earth Basket
Waste paper basket
Skin cane work
Seat caning

Second Term: Bungkis
Refuse basket
Waste paper basket
Desk Tray

Third Term: Book basket
Shopping Basket
Flower basket
Square picnic basket

Fourth Term: Sewing basket
Linen basket
Lapped-over picnic basket

Fifth Term: Picnic basket with flask container
Cradle
Toy cradle
Cane Ball

Sixth Term: Decorative articles
Revision.

Each of the term covers approximately 14 weeks. The syllabus covers the following methods of weaving and the working of the different types of borders and handles.

Weave: Handing, pairing, chain pairing, three rod plain weaving, four rod upsetting.

Border: Scallop border, Trac border, three rod plain border, four rod plain border, plaited border.

Handles: Plaited handles, wrapped handle, twisted handle, and wire handle.

The aim of the course is to provide the trainees with basic skill in canework. Even though the syllabus does not cover the making of every product that can be made with rattan, the blind who have finished the course are capable of making other products outside the syllabus. This they can do by feeling the product concerned for the type of weaving, border, handles, cane size and overall size and shape of the product. Thus the presence of products which they have not learnt in the training would not hamper the blind caneworkers in any way to make and market them. This skill helps them much in making products which could be sold in market but which are not taught during their training days. This skill is important because of the impossible

task of the training centre to train them to make every product that exists with the rattan material. As can be noticed from the syllabus, we find that the products are mainly made up of those that require Centre cane¹ such as wastepaper basket, desk tray, and book basket, and less of products requiring round cane², such as labour round baskets, pungkis etc. However this would not lessen their skill in making other round cane products like plucking basket etc. The basic weave, border and handles which they learn and which they practise on the products in the syllabus, prepare them to make any product with the rattan material. To further equip them, there is an additional course for another year during which selected trainees are made to undergo training in making complicated items like miniature animals such as cat, elephant and monkeys.

To keep up with the trend of the market, changes are made with regard to the products in the syllabus. Thus besides being self-sufficient, the syllabus is also up to date in its content. At the end of the course, the trainees have to sit for an examination. When they have been successful, each will be issued with a certificate of proficiency which is evidence of their training and skill in canework. The training of these blind people presents no greater problem than those found in ordinary schools.

For the trainees, their problem begins when they have finished their training. This is in connection with their ability to use their newly acquired skill in earning their living. As the discussion on the marketing of products of these caneworkers in both the Kinta Valley Workshop and among homeworkers is made in the next chapters, we shall also keep in touch with this post-training problem.

¹It is a type of cane derived from the centre of rattan like those used in making waste paper basket.

²This is the type which does not undergo any change from its original shape and size.