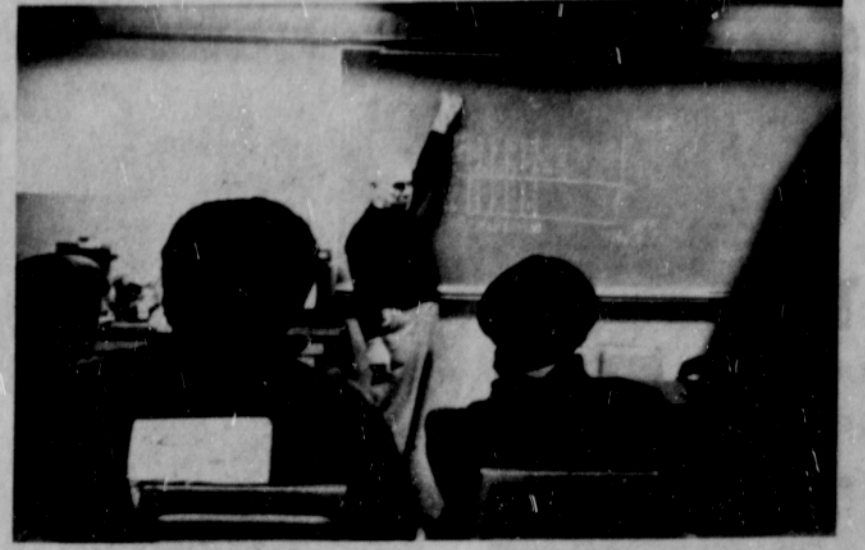




H.A. Sosnin, national president of the American Welding Society, gives pointers to O.S.P. welding class. [left]

Interested student-inmates listen as national president of welder's union speaks to them. [center]

Sosnin encourages a student-inmate. [right]



by Larry Baker,
O.S.P. Correspondent

Behind the wall

Phil Lane #39520
Asst. Correspondent

Julius D. Snowden #38013,
Poetry Editor

When you care enough to travel 3,000 miles to tell a group of inmate students enrolled in a vocational training program at O.S.P. in Salem, Oregon, "I care what happens to all of you upon your release from this institution," that's putting your money where your mouth is and really caring.

On the morning of February 13, 1978, three individuals, accompanied by Charles Keaton, O.S.P. Rehabilitation Program Manager, came through the doors and into a large shop with a sign reading "Welding Department." "These men are going back into the community some day," stated Keaton, "the community not too long ago was shouting at us to keep you convicts when it came to training and

decent job placement. The men in this V.T. program someday are going to be able to say that they have something to offer in the way of a skill, a trade, and the willingness to work, that same community, and we who live in that community, are going to find it very hard to deny them decent employment in order that they may regain their self-respect."

Although the three individuals accompanying Keaton were only visitors to O.S.P., their appearance meant a great deal to a great many people who work and live within the walls of this institution.

H.A. Sosnin, president of the National American Welding Society, headquarters in Miami, Florida, walked beside Dr. Bill

Rice, the director-at-large, chief welding engineer of ESCO Corporation and Bob Weisend, an instructor at Portland Community College. This was not Rice and Weisend's first visit to O.S.P., because these two men are board members of the O.S.P. Vocational Welding Training Program and Weisend is the chairman of the seventeen man community sponsored board. Sosnin was promptly introduced to Ray (Frenchie) Veilleux, O.S.P. Vocational Training Welding instructor and his eighteen inmate students.

Sosnin was made aware of the many months of hard work and dedication by these individuals, in a community and institutional effort, to make this program as successful as it had been through its

first years accomplishment in 1977. The V.T. Welding Program holds the excellent record of graduating its first nineteen students, with sixteen having already been paroled or discharged from O.S.P. The remaining three will be doing the same in the future. Eight of those sixteen former inmates have actually been placed on jobs throughout Oregon with a starting union wage of over \$8.00 per hour, with the help of the O.S.P. Vocational Training Welding Advisory Committee. To this day not one of the graduated ex-felons has returned or become involved with the criminal justice system in the State of Oregon.

This was a record so phenomenal that it attracted the attention of H.A. Sosnin, causing him to journey to Oregon from his national office to view such a welding program and see if the program could be implemented into other penal institutions throughout the United States.

As Sosnin stood before the class he explained the advantages the welding profession has to offer today. "Just like with a welding torch, keep working in the same direction because it's the only direction to go. A good welder will always be in demand for years to come." Sosnin brought with him reading material, diagrams, manuals and books about the modern welding trade to give to each inmate trainee. "I am very concerned about each and every student in this room, because we need you and

you need a job upon your release, so we are going to do our best to meet those needs," said Sosnin. At this Sosnin received a rousing applause from the inmates and guests.

Dr. Rice interjected with how important it is for all students to learn the safety measures of the welding profession as well as how to take different steps to protect ones health in such a trade as welding.

Ray Veilleux and John Belgarde should be praised for their efforts to upgrade the successful O.S.P. V.T. Welding Department. Both instructors have gone to the many Oregon communities in search of help for the men they trained, and help is what they are getting, but not only in the State of Oregon, but nationwide.

The impact of the President of the Welding Society's visit to the O.S.P. Vocational Welding Program is demonstrated by the statements of the inmate welding trainees themselves, because that is where the "rubber-hits-the-road."

Robert Anderson #38565... "When Mr. Sosnin came here to the welding shop he told us the advantages of welding. By his doing this it showed me that he was very interested in our program. This to me shows that there are people who really care."

Bruce Huss #36974... "When Mr. Sosnin came into this penitentiary to talk to us

on welding and metalurgy, he not only offered some good practical instructions, but I received the impression he was offering something more than instruction on welding. He gave me a lot of incentive."

Alan Vanarsdell #37884... "It gave me a great pleasure to know that the president of the A.N.W.S. is concerned with inmate trainee welders at O.S.P., and took the time to spend with us and to let us know that he and others on the 'streets' want to help with our trade."

Sam Brown #36033... "It made me feel good to know that a man in his position is interested enough in our welding program to come and share what we are learning here in prison."

Ernest Watson #38917... "I find it gratifying that a man of his standing found the time to try and help us find a better way for ourselves."

"Finding a better way to help ourselves," is why these inmates are training to become welders upon their release from behind these prison walls.

Isn't that what the Oregon State Penitentiary Vocational Programs are all about?

Isn't that what the O.S.P. Vocational Welding Program is all about?

At least eighteen prisoners with their instructors believe it is.

And so does a president of the American Welding Society.

You load 16 tons and what do you get?

(Continued from Page 1 Column 6) but it has also meant there is little land available for housing. Two-thirds of West Virginia's privately held land is owned or controlled by out-of-state corporations, including Continental Oil, which owns more than one-half million acres through its subsidiary, Consolidation Coal. In the state's major southern coalfield counties, ten corporations own ninety percent of the land.

Most of these absentee landlords prefer to hold their property for coal development rather than release it for housing. As a result, a coalfield housing shortage is worsening as the coal industry expands. The workforce doubled from 1964 to 1974, and a similar increase would be necessary to meet President Carter's goal of a 65 percent production increase by 1985. In addition to population pressures, experts say one-half of Appalachia's existing homes - many of them old company-built houses - will

have to be replaced within the next fifteen years.

The housing shortage has been made worse by repeated flooding aggravated by erosion from strip mining. Thousands of people were left homeless by floods last April, August, and October 1977 in the Appalachian mountains. State officials in both West Virginia and Kentucky have admitted strip mining was a major contributing factor.

Another problem area for miners is health care, which is especially important because of the work-related injuries and diseases they suffer.

Between 1970 and 1976, 225,000 coal miners - four times the number of U.S. soldiers killed in the Vietnam War - were judged by the federal government to have "black lung," an incurable, fatal disease. Some 335,000 other miners and widows applied for black lung compensation. A recent government study showed that coal miners also suffer stomach

diseases at rates above the national average

Because of increased noise levels resulting from mechanization, retired miners are five times as likely as their wives to need hearing aids, although among the general population men do not need hearing aids more often than women.

Each year, the coal companies report about 15,000 accidents to the government. An Interior Department study in 1975 indicated that up to sixty percent of mine injuries are not reported, so the real injury figures may be close to 35,000 per year. That means that, on the average, a miner who starts his career at age twenty will suffer at least eight injuries before he retires.

Since 1969, when Congress passed a law designed to control coal mine accidents, nearly 1,500 miners have been killed on the job.

Until last year, more than 800,000 miners, spouses and children were provided free medical care through the company-financed UMWA Health and Retirement Funds. The Funds paid retainer fees to support clinics and hospitals in remote regions of Appalachia where no other medical care is available.

Those benefits have been cut off during the coal strike, and the companies and union have agreed that from now on mining families will have to pay hundreds of dollars per year in medical costs. The retainer fees for the clinics and hospitals will be cut off permanently.

The new deductibles will hit pensioners especially hard. Pensions for 80,000 retirees are only \$225-250 per month, and the small increases under the new proposed contract would provide only \$1 per month added buying power after inflation.

"Every three years, when our contract expires, the companies and the politicians start telling us how important it is to our country that we stay on the job," says one high-ranking union official, who asked not to be identified. "I guess we don't respond very well because it sounds like a one-way street to us. I mean, when have they ever shown any concern for us before?"

[Matt Witt, former editor of the "United Mine Workers Journal," now writes on job safety issues from Washington, D.C.]

Jobs available

Oregon youth, ages fifteen to eighteen have until March 15th to apply for conservation-related summer employment in the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). Enrollees in YCC will clear streambanks, build trails, construct fish hatcheries, plant trees, and engage in hundreds of other similar conservation projects on state and federal lands in Oregon.

Jobs are open for both men and women. Enrollees are selected from applicant pool by means of a random lottery. Application forms may be obtained from school counselors and principals, from any office of the State Employment Division, from local offices of the U.S. Department of the Interior or the U.S. Forest Service, or from other youth oriented agencies.

To be considered in the lottery, applications must be postmarked no later than March 15, 1978.

"We make our fortunes,
and we call them fate."
Benjamin Disraeli

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