

## **“We are not working for a charity bazaar”**

The question concerning work and profession is the central problem of young people. Unemployment and the lack of places for apprenticeships or training have become sensitive themes which weigh on young people – more than the question of finding one’s identity or the choice of partner. Not only does the high rate of unemployment make the situation on the job market appear threatening to many young people but also the increasing requirements of their work performance. So out of the trade ‘turner’ has come the job outline, ‘Machining mechanic specialised in automatic lathe technology’. The theoretical requirements in the course of the apprenticeship have risen, the number of two-year – which are simpler – training courses has been clearly reduced, and chances of access to the first job market without training appear so low as to be almost non-existent.

For delinquent and addicted young men and women, the state of affairs appears to be even more hopeless. Studies suggest that every third person released from jail does not possess a school-leaving certificate. 80% of the inmates in approved schools in the *Land* North Rhine-Westphalia were unemployed immediately prior to their arrest. Being out of work increases the probability that someone who has been released from an institution will relapse.

Those who with neither work nor training spend the day on the streets drift more quickly into “bad company”. The feeling of not being useful makes the climb out of addiction more difficult. And those who do not earn money in order to obtain “legally” the luxury goods and status symbols which are so important in our society, are more quickly ready to use “illegal methods”.

Those to whom society offers no prospects will seek them rather in marginalized groups and marginalized areas: without a school-leaving certificate no apprenticeship, without apprenticeship no work, without work no money – the path to social scrap heaps appears to be pre-programmed for a growing number of teenagers.

The failure to enter the achievement-oriented society begins for many already at primary school. For Helmut, for example, who at night doesn’t get to bed on time because his drunken parents aren’t able to switch the TV off anymore. Or for Nadine who shares her flat not only with parents and siblings but also with two dogs and eleven cats, and who doesn’t find any space and quiet to do her homework. Or for Oliver who meanwhile lives with his mother and his fourth “daddy”, at home knows only drugs and chaos, and nobody motivates him to achievement.

When the first young people, just released from institutions or addicted, moved to Scheideweg in the ‘70s, it was clear: apart from a home they also needed work. A young man who for some years had already been as a volunteer into the prisons, took over the leadership of a small group of building workers. The clearing out of flats, painting, the clearing of nurseries for trees, lawn-mowing and small masonry jobs belonged to the tasks of ARGE (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft* = work community). Newlings to Scheideweg who had often never worked in their lives or not for years, found here a possibility to be trained. To hold out for eight hours, to perform simple and monotonous tasks, to be told to do something by the boss or customers – all of that had to be learned. At the same time the work in our own troop created a space safe from encounters with the old drug scene or the criminal milieu. And then the transition to the first employment market worked out relatively free of problems: members of the association took on the young people in their companies, and also other firms not far away offered work or training places.

Then, however, the situation in the job market got worse, the jobs in the companies of association members were mostly filled. Concurrently an increasing number of young adults were entering the household communities of the Rehabilitation Ministry – and were looking for work.

With this background the contemporary special purpose company of the Crossroads Prison and Rehabilitation Ministry Scheideweg was born: the ‘Pflanzenpark Scheideweg’ (Plant Park Scheideweg), the ‘GFH Scheideweg Metallbau gem. GmbH’ (GFH Scheideweg Metal work private [limited] company with charitable status) and the training and meeting centre ‘Schloss Wendorf’ (Wendorf Castle). At these places, under realistic conditions services were performed or products manufactured. The firms were – apart from a few grants topping up investment costs – not subsidised from the public purse, and as a result needed to survive financially in the market place. Fifteen young people are trained there – as parts finishers, industrial mechanics, gardeners or garden operatives, in domestic science or as trained retail salesmen and –women. Many others obtain a temporary occupation which is liable to social insurance payments, or a job training. And the customers learn at first hand what creativity is contained in these young folk, and that some prejudices or judgements about both those liable to punishment and addicts are false.

### **Plant Park Scheideweg**

Since 1990 the ‘Plant Park Scheideweg’ has existed at the exit from the village of Scheideweg. In the middle of the area of approximately 14,000 square metres exhibition and tree school space lies a pavilion with six corners. Everything is appealingly decorated in an ever-varying style – “social work flair” does not rule here. Since the official opening by the Permanent Secretary from the German Innenministerium (Ministry of Home Affairs), Dr Horst Waffenschmidt many thousands of clients have visited the Plant Park – and indeed discovered a highly interesting display. Some have had erected in their garden what they had seen in Scheideweg,

### **Metal workshop**

The metal workshop is situated in the immediate vicinity of the Plant Park. In 1989 the president of the Bundestag (German parliament) Prof. Rita Süßmuth laid the foundation stone for a plant that was actually intended for the maintenance of automobiles and machines. Then however, it turned out that there were opportunities to obtain orders from the sector metal construction and metal processing sectors, and as a result a metal workshop came into being. That building is today bursting at the seams, and so the opening up of a new property is being tackled in the new industrial park that borders on Scheideweg. The ‘GFH Scheideweg Metallbau gem.GmbH’ is active in a variety of ways.

In cooperation with the Plant Park, jobs fitting on a building site are carried out. According to the wishes of the customer, trellises, garden doors, canopies, pump casings and controls as well as many other items are put together. In doing so high-quality steel is often processed.

Out of high-quality steel, distillation plants are also manufactured which are built here e.g. for scientific laboratories or the pharmaceutical industry. Successful work on these machines depends on total precision. Every welding joint must be exactly right, the overall picture of the large plants which are some metres long must comply with the clients’ ideas. In this sphere of construction of machinery, coating plants (vacuum plants) too are produced; the elaboration of the appropriate, electronic controls are amongst the tasks of the employees. The training of

industrial mechanics matches the requirements of top quality in plant manufacture; at the same time welding exams can also be taken here.

A major part of the work with metal consists of the processing of parts for the roller and automobile industries. Simple turning, milling and stripping commissions are completed here and e.g. adhesive and piece joining turned out. Young people who have been living in a household community for only a few days can be rapidly trained here. And so these activities are particularly suitable for the first weeks in the workshop. Along with conventional turning and milling automatic machines, computer controlled machines are also made use of which lets the toil in this area of the workshop become more effective and interesting.

Those who have been through a training or temporary employment in the metal domain have afterwards good chances of getting a job in the free employment market. This is because the machine construction and metal processing industries play a major role in the surrounding area Bergischen Land.

New areas are electric fitting and the construction of switch cupboards. Here too all-round orders can be won which provide the young staff with insights into other types of work.