

Shulie Lake shapes loggers

"As much as possible, we want to duplicate working conditions on the street," says Dave Chitty, director of the unique ten-trailer minimum security institution at Shulie Lake, Nova Scotia. "So we pile as much responsibility on inmates as they can handle over a period of time."

Chitty is referring to the group of between 20 and 30 inmates who have chosen to spend the last six months of their sentences learning to become skilled loggers.

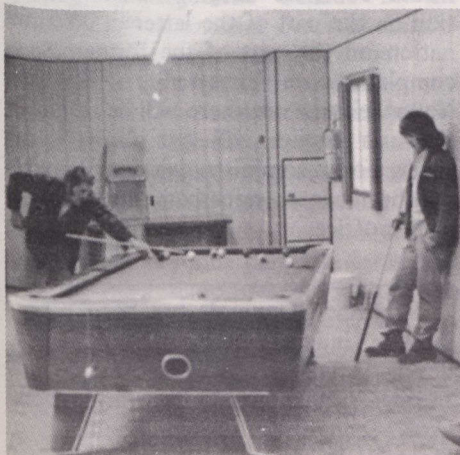
Shulie Lake, the only institution of its kind in Canada, is a complete forestry operation, providing both work and skills training for inmates, and filling a very real labour need for their employer, Scott Paper.

Warren Zwicker, Scott Paper's representative, admits that he goes on "a gut feeling" when considering inmates for the operation. He looks for someone with an affinity for the outdoors, someone who can stand being by himself in the woods for hours at a stretch. Dave Chitty and Rudy Street, the parole supervisor for Shulie Lake, are perhaps more concerned with stability and commitment when sizing up a candidate.

Obviously, the chance to build up a bank account while still technically in an institution is a great incentive for inmates to apply for the training. "But," says Rudy, "they also know their chances of making it on the street are much better after being here. They know they'll develop good working habits."

First job for some inmates

The institution insists that inmates develop good work habits and skills. Every-



Recent arrivals shoot pool in the trailer.



A "skidder" plows through heavy underbrush with a pile of eight-foot logs.

one must report to work at the same time and perform a certain function. Otherwise, the men know they can be fired and returned to Springhill Medium Security Institution. Many inmates have never held a steady job before and can't even comprehend what is involved. Recently, when Chitty announced that alarm clocks, rather than staff, would be waking residents in the morning, one young man protested, "My God, Mr. Chitty, there's no way I'm going to wake up with an alarm clock. I've only got up early twice in my life. That was to go to court and my old lady got me up for that."

"If we're not happy with a man's performance," notes Chitty, "Warren, Rudy and I sit down with him and discuss what he's doing wrong. We'll give him a month to bring up his production, his safety habits, his reporting to work or whatever, and at the end of that time, he's called in again and told whether or not he has improved in certain areas. Normally we keep him if he can perform. We've only had to fire two chaps in the year we've been here."

On arrival at camp, inmates are equipped by Scott with power saw, files and tongs, and with safety pants, boots, gloves and hard hats. These belong to the men when they leave, but for the first three months, while their debt to Scott is being worked off, Canadian Penitentiary Service pays their board and a small

weekly canteen allowance.

Meanwhile, every stick of wood they cut is recorded by Scott and credited to them at the same rate paid to anyone else in the industry. Once the equipment is paid off, they have one "free" cheque and then start both a bank account and paying for their own board.

Inmates make their own rules about staying up, as long as they're ready for work at 7.15 a.m. It's good that only two or three come in at any given time because, says Rudy Street, "The new freedom is something they really can't handle. They're up all night talking to everybody else. For the first few days they're really 'hyper' and it's hard on everyone. But the others understand since they've been through this period, and they're willing and ready to talk with them.

He adds, "It's a much better situation than landing on the street directly from an institution, because there might not be anyone to interact with outside. Actually, it's a great opportunity to do a lot of thinking about the future."

After two months, inmates are eligible for a weekend pass, an essential part of the program "...because it gives them a chance to visit the communities where they're going to live and see how people there are looking at them."

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