

BOOK REVIEWS...

CJM
CRIMINAL JUSTICE MATTERS

Report of the Working Group on the Fear of Crime.

Published December 1989, available from the Home Office.

The Report compiled by a working group, chaired by Channel Four Chief Executive Michael Grade, says in its main recommendation that fear reduction should have a higher priority in action by Government and other agencies. It also damned television programmes such as 'Crimewatch' and 'Crimestoppers' for contributing to a rising fear of crime which has a debilitating affect on the quality of life.

The report called for programmes such as 'Crimewatch UK' to be 'radically changed or else abandoned', and that newspapers should balance their distorted 'shockhorror' reporting by providing the public with better information on crime, and publish easily understandable crime statistics.

The Working Group, comprised of academics, police officers and media representatives, make 40 recommendations to reduce the growing fear of crime. The Report calls for cuts in London Underground

staffing levels to be reversed and for an increase in the special constabulary 'The highly publicised but controversial Guardian Angels filled a real gap' it suggests.

The core argument of the report is that the risk of crime is not as great as people believe, and that fear is the major problem; some people, particularly women, live in a self-imposed curfew situation and some ethnic minorities have a siege mentality, unable to leave their homes. The Report is concerned that 'fear' has unwittingly been fanned as an unintended side-effect of the hyping of crime prevention'. The Report is currently with the Home Secretary, David Waddington.

Crime Prevention and Community Safety

- a Practical Guide for Local Authorities. National Safe Neighbourhoods (01-735 0744) 1989 £5

Most people's idea of 'crime' ranges from major robbery or murder to 'petty' crime such as vandalism or theft from cars. It is the latter category that makes up the vast majority of crime as it affects the lives of most of us and this 42 page Guide is

aimed at local authorities and other community organisations who wish to try to prevent or alleviate 'community' crime. It is divided into nine sections covering both theoretical and practical areas, with the emphasis on the latter. At the end of each short section is a list of key reference material relating to the content of the section. Approximately 92 further articles, books, etc., are given in the bibliography.

Perhaps the major benefit of a publication such as this is to emphasise the complexity of the problem but also to point to the numerous small, practical measures that a local authority or other community organisation can undertake to improve the quality of people's lives. In my experience (as a 'grass roots' Housing Officer with a large London based Housing Association), crime tends, to be seen in very limited and specific ways and the solutions are also seen in a similar light - usually by way of individual security precautions. This Guide emphasises that although individual precautions can help, they need to be put in the wider context of the community. It also emphasises the essential need to follow up an

NEWS ROUNDUP

Neighbourhood Watch has grown from its first scheme in Cheshire, to 74,000 local schemes throughout the country - despite uncertainty as to their actual effectiveness in reducing crime. Such schemes do create a sense of neighbourhood, as do victim support schemes, rape crisis centres, and so on.

The **Church of England** has played a valuable and active part in crime prevention through its Urban Fund, a result of the publication 'Faith in the City', which points to the urgent need for the regeneration of our inner cities.

The Prince of Wales, through **The Prince's Trust**, has appealed to the nation's young and unemployed to volunteer for an army of workers to spend their time in active citizenship. Unsurprisingly, in the private sector,

companies are being encouraged to contribute financially, or to offer skills, and participate more actively in crime prevention efforts. *'Only the crudest of critics would argue that by encouraging active citizenship we are shuffling off responsibilities which ought to belong to the state.'*

'A combined attack on crime is beginning to show results.' said John Patten, Chairman of the **Ministerial Group on Crime Prevention** at the launch of the Group's second progress report, published in June 1989. Thirteen government Departments are involved in the fight against crime - including the Departments of Transport, Education and Trade and Industry. These efforts may have played some part in the reduction in the total number of recorded crimes by five per cent this year. Initiatives

included the formation of **Crime Concern**, the establishment of a working group under Michael Grade to look at the **fear of crime** (see p11 of this issue) and the **role of the media**. Other initiatives include police and schools working together to combat vandalism, and a Ministerial Group study of Alcohol Misuse.

16 cities have joined the **Safer Cities Programme**. Its aim is *'to harness the energy and commitment of local people to reduce crime and the fear of it, making the inner cities safer places in which to live and work.'* Each city appoints a local steering group comprising representatives of voluntary and statutory agencies with an interest in crime prevention. Local residents and school children are involved in projects, as are the local unemployed.

News is compiled by Alison Liebling

initiative or improvement to avoid a 'nine days' wonder' syndrome. Often, suggested improvements entail a labour intensive input and as most of the 'problem' areas tend to be in those local authority boroughs that are the most strapped for cash anyway, we do have a bit of a 'Catch 22' situation. Anyone wishing to consider the overall problem of crime in the community will find this Guide a valuable point of reference point. *NSN also publish 'Safe Communities 1989 which gives an interesting overview of crime prevention initiatives'*

We're All Doing Time:

A Guide for Getting Free. Bo Lozoff (1985) Prison Ashram Project, SA. New Revised Edition, 1987. 318pp

(Provided free of charge to prisoners and other 'shut-ins' who can't afford to pay for it; otherwise £7.50 from The Inner Bookshop, 34 Cowley Road, Oxford.)

.. it wasn't a drinking problem, or a dope problem, it's more a thinking problem really, you know? I mean, I reached a point in prison where I just knew that I didn't belong anymore, but at that point you can't say, 'You can let me out now, it was all a big misunderstanding.'

This manual is 'a spiritual journey..' - it tackles the 'thinking problem' that makes life pretty difficult, but life in prison even harder. Written with 'love, madness and humour', it is full of comforting insights, stories and cartoons, practical advice, experiences, and extracts from prisoners' correspondence. It is lighthearted and profound, intended as 'an enduring companion for the long haul'; teaching and sharing, encouraging and participating in 'the struggle to be free'. Bo Lozoff is the founder of the American Prison Ashram Project - a charity based on correspondence, videos, cassettes and books which encourage links between prisoners trying to 'become a little more enlightened and actively compassionate'.

The book brings together strands of yoga, meditation, prayer and common-sense ('hope' without unshakeable 'faith'), answering some of the bigger questions a prisoner might ask: how to progress in a 6 x 9

cell, for example. Bo's realistic and intimate messages are an inspiration - as is his basic, bold argument: that change comes from within, from assuming responsibility for oneself. He speaks to all those who are 'searching', but speaks primarily to prisoners, who need encouragement more than most.

This book found its way to me by accident, in the punishment block of a women's prison. I found myself recommending it to others - particularly to inmates in distress. It offers peace, hope, and comfort - and tries very hard to be 'the enduring companion' most prisoners are without. Well worth reading - and particularly worth lending.

Alison Liebling

Crime Prevention News

Published quarterly by and available from The Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT

Crime Prevention News is a glossy, well produced journal containing articles primarily on crime prevention from a domestic and an international perspective, news items, features, profiles and reviews. It is well balanced, informative and as such, is a useful resource for both practitioners and academics. It should be more widely available.

Good Neighbour

Published by Security Publications Ltd., Argosy House, High Street, Orpington, Kent, BR6 0LW

Good Neighbour is published quarterly and co-produced with Crime Concern. It is available widely and is little more than a trade journal for the security hardware industry and insurance companies. The erroneous premise of Good Neighbour is that crime is opportunistic and that to reduce crime, the public has to remove opportunities for people to perpetrate a criminal act, and do so in a practical way.

The British Crime Surveys have dispelled the rhetoric of the tabloid press about victims of crime, and shown that the chances of being victimised are surprisingly low. Publications like Good Neighbour can contribute to the disabling effect of the fear of crime which can be greater than crime itself and can

contribute to a siege mentality where people become imprisoned in their own homes by fear.

Inside Out

Published quarterly by Apex Trust, Crime Concern and SOVA; available from SOVA, Brixton Hill Place, London SW2 1HJ

The first issue of Inside Out appears to be another vehicle to promote Crime Concern's media profile but without actually doing anything except to justify its existence. This is a well produced magazine but lacks direction and a coherent policy.

Practical Ways to Crack Crime

The Handbook and The Family Guide. Available from The Home Office, PO Box 7000, Cirencester GL7 1RX

This is the third edition of the Home Office publication Practical Ways to Crack Crime and as a manual describing ways to reduce opportunities of being victimised, it is excellent, but still, albeit less obviously, a publicity tool for the domestic security industry. Here too, the publication feeds the fear of crime by using the rhetoric of 'criminals', 'thieves' and 'burglars'. The pragmatic approach to crime prevention as envisaged by this handbook omits an understanding of crime and avoids discussion of social factors, which reflects present government thinking and presents a media view of crime.

Trade press reviews by Francis Charlton

Books received include:

BUSFIELD, J (1988) *Managing Madness*
DE SOLA, Ralph - *Crime Dictionary (Expanded and updated)* (Faction File: New York (1988) £18.50) Fontana Publications.
ROSENFELD, David (1988) *Psychoanalysis and Groups*
SAMUELS, A (Ed) *1989 Dimensions of Psychoanalysis*
STANKO, E.A. (1985) *Intimate Intrusions: Womens' Experience of Male Violence*
WARD, T and RYAN, M (1989) *Privatisation and the Penal System*