

Cops and Robbers

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THE POLICE SERVICE is often compared with the Prison Service and, like us, it is frequently the butt of public criticism. Two informative books on the police have recently appeared. BEN WHITAKER in *The Police*, Eyre and Spottiswood, (21s. 0d.) starts from the Sheffield Police Appeal Inquiry and the Royal Commission to examine relations between police and public. In a survey which could with advantage be paralleled in the Prison Service, he examines recruiting, training, manpower, efficiency and new developments such as the Juvenile Liaison Scheme. Are the Police a Force or a Service? (again echoes of Prisons!) And finally what sort of police will we have in future? He concludes that relations with the public have changed but not worsened, and that perhaps the public will always use its police—and presumably its prison staff—as a scapegoat for its neurotic attitude to crime.

MICHAEL BANTON in *The Policeman in the Community* (Tavistock, 30s. 0d.) looks at the police as a sociologist. In more depth than Whitaker, and comparing English and Scottish Police with several American forces, he examines

police roles. Policemen can only be effective if there is no conflict between their private and their public roles. (What would you do if, as you were taking your son on an outing you saw a crime committed, and your son pleaded, "But, Daddy, you promised"?) The Police Force is only one of the agencies of social control, and it will only gain the co-operation of the public if the latter are well informed about it. These two books could assist in this process.

Another mention for the police comes from MRS. ZOE PROGL who dedicates *Woman of the Underworld* (Arthur Barker, 21s. 0d.) to them, describing them as her very charming enemies for 20 years. Her book is worth reading on several scores. She spares nothing to substantiate her claim to be Queen of the Underworld. The procession of bank robbers, prostitutes, pimps and ponces, and her catalogue of sexual activities with all sorts and conditions of men and women will ensure she captures all the readers she aims at.

Then she has the apparently unique distinction of climbing the wall of Holloway. It is thoughtful of her to leave an account of how

she accomplished it, though I don't suppose she's the first prisoner who has used the official 'phone for nefarious purposes.

But, in spite of her wish to escape, Holloway gets full marks. The atmosphere of despair, she notes, has changed to one of hope, and, in particular, members of the staff are singled out for praise. Like all good fairy stories, this one ends with the promise of Happily Ever After.

And throughout the story is the conflict between these two Zoe Progl's. The would-be Queen of the Underworld who admits to being a coward, the lover of the Life of Luxury who looks enviously back to the "foster parents" on whom she was evacuated during the war. The "Longing to be Loved" which causes her to submit to Lesbians, and which defiantly, yet pathetically, captions the photograph of her recent wedding as "my first real move towards security and a new life."

Young and Sensitive (Hutchinson, 18s. 0d.) is an entirely different type of prison book. Written in Dartmoor by DON ROBSON, it won first prize in the 1963 Koestler Awards for original creative work produced in prisons.

This is styled as a novel, a story extraordinarily fragile and naive, of father, son and girl. It stands on its own merits. But the contrast between the delicacy of the writing and the sombre conditions in which it was written heightens the interest of the book. To the end, I won-

dered how far this was a novel, dreamed up in a cell; how far a thinly hidden autobiography. Certainly the girl seemed an unrealistic character—a compound of wishful thinking and the prisoner's stereotype of the College Girl. But the father is all too real; a widower affectionate towards his son, but whose only means of communication with him is through actions; and the son returns the affection but, stifled by it, resorts to violence. This ambivalent father-son relationship, culminating in the son waiting with a gun at the window for his father's return, this surely is autobiographical.

This novel raises two questions. How far is creative writing in itself of therapeutic value? And, if a work of such sensibility can emerge from a long-stay central prison, how far are we, as a staff, still failing to relate to the positive feelings of prisoners.

Penology, edited by CLAUDE VEDDER and BARBARA KAY (Charles C. Thomas, Illinois, 9.50 dollars) is a compendium of articles by an impressive list of authors, aimed at "the discerning public." Many questions are asked, few firm answers are offered, but the book is ideal for raising discussion points. Though the material is primarily American, the wide canvas of subjects, from inmate groups to parole and capital punishment, and ending with a blueprint for a progressive prison, would be of use to a study group of, for instance, staff preparing for vocational examinations.