

Keeping Crime Down ... Down Under

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CRIME AND THE COMMUNITY,* a Survey of Penal Policy in New Zealand, with foreword by the Hon. J. R. Hanan, Minister of Justice.

It is a great pity that the subtitle of this immensely readable little book will inevitably put some people off, because it is a non-parochial work, contains hardly any statistics (my four-star recommendation for any book) and for a government publication it is an object lesson to all bureaucrats.

"What we do today, Britain will do tomorrow," used to be one of the proud boasts of New Zealand politicians, and we all believed it. There may have been something in this assertion of the little man standing on tip-toe to make himself taller, for New Zealand then was a tiny, fiercely British community, flexing its sinews in a determination to preserve what was best in the British way of life whilst eradicating the injustices which still burned in the memory of its early settlers, and with a glorious new playground of a country in

which to do it. It held some truth, though, for we had comprehensive social security years before the ordinary Englishman had become familiar with the phrase "Welfare State." We were also proud of being a truly classless society, and of having no real poverty. We did have prisons, though, and I have no doubt we assumed (if we thought about it at all) that we were equally *avant-garde* in this field.

It seems we were mistaken. Official whitewash is conspicuous by its absence in this honest book, and there are no vain apologies for a penal past which is as inglorious as that of most civilized countries. Prisoners at Mt. Eden, New Zealand's hoariest old security "nick," are still locked up for 17 hours a day. And as recently as 1958 the country's top open prison for trusted inmates had two lavatories for 100 men, and was so cold that boiling water had to be thrown over the padlocks before inmates could be let out in the morning. (Why padlocks at all, one wonders, in an "open" prison?)

New Zealand's problem in

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numerical terms is tiny (less than 2,000 people altogether in penal institutions) but her resources are smaller too, and her geographical condition, with 2½ million inhabitants spread over a thousand miles of territory, awkward. There is also the Maori question; for though this friendly, unambitious minority is in many directions quite successfully integrated (I myself attended a village school with one teacher where half the pupils were Maoris) there are still serious ethnic and social difficulties. Anyone who believes racial integration to be simply a matter of legislation and goodwill ought to study this. Finally, I suspect that the puritanical philosophy of "rough justice" for wrongdoers dies hard in a land with a strong and comparatively recent pioneer tradition, and this attitude is by no means incompatible with socialist prosperity.

The anonymous authors of *Crime and the Community* analyze public attitudes to crime, past and present, with humane but non-sentimental logic. They spare none of the well-known fallacies and prejudices, and offer no crumbs of comfort to those who still believe in the virtues of punishment *per se*. Present efforts and future intentions are expressed as unequivocally based on treatment and training—with as little of this to be done in institutions as possible. It is especially notable that the whole emphasis is on preven-

tion throughout, with the crime problem firmly fixed where it belongs—in the community, not on the perimeter. Offenders have failed society because society has failed them; for the vast majority, prison, borstal, detention, all the other panaceas involving removal, merely rub the spot and make it sorer. Young offenders under 17 are already the responsibility of a department which is closely linked, not with the Department of Justice, but that for Education. Ultimately, the authors say (and they obviously mean within the foreseeable future), every primary school will have its psychiatric team whose job will be to pick out the maladjusted and thus where possible, nip delinquency in the bud. Along with this realistic, if not entirely original aim, goes an ambitious government-sponsored programme of Marriage Guidance.

It is not that New Zealand has discovered any revolutionary new idea—about the best on offer is that of Periodic Detention, whereby young tearaways spend their evenings and weekends at special hostels. There is also pre-release employment for some categories of prisoner (as distinct from pre-release hostel) and compulsory probation for all prisoners serving 12 months sentences and over. Again, it is interesting that not only are women social workers employed in prisons, but it is stated quite categorically that they *should* be women. Otherwise, the

mixture is familiar to any worker in the British field of penology, as too are the problems. What is really remarkable here (and not a little enviable) is the clear, authoritative manner in which this government has declined to compromise with outworn ideas, and hence the invaluable lead—one might almost say inspiration—which it is able to give to all progressive forces at work in the social field. One has to turn up the introductory blurb now and then to remind oneself that this is in-

deed an official statement of policy and not another ivory-tower product doomed to gather departmental dust.

To sum up, I would recommend this book to any fellow-struggler in the penal field who may be suffering from occupational frustration, myopia or indigestion. It makes an ideal short refresher course in aims and principles for the general reader, and contains very little that is of such purely local interest as to bore him.

Holland

A New Look at Crime

The second pamphlet in the I.S.T.D *New Look at Crime* series is now available. As in the case of Denmark, there is scarcely any literature in English on the Dutch penal system and child welfare services; this report gives for the first time a concise and comprehensive assessment of preventive, punitive and therapeutic measures in the Netherlands. The pamphlet includes sections on criminal law and procedure; child welfare services; probation and after-care; with a detailed account of the wide range of institutions visited.

Dr. Keith Wardrop has considerable experience of comparative penal systems both in Europe and America, and is particularly well qualified to sum up the impressions of the I.S.T.D. Summer School. It is fitting, too, that a forensic psychiatrist should write this report on a country which is doing so much pioneer work in the treatment of abnormal offenders.

K. WARDROP, I.S.T.D 32pp. 3s.0d.