

# Towards One Service

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THE GOVERNMENT'S White Paper, "The Child, the Family and the Young Offender", published on 24th August, made a number of radical proposals for changing the law relating to young offenders. Press comment centred on the Family and Young Offender Courts; little or no mention was made of the changes proposed in the current forms of residential training. This article is an attempt to assess the implications of the White Paper for male prison department establishments.

The proposals are outlined in paragraph 37 of the White Paper:

"It is proposed that in future there should be three types of custodial sentences for the 16 to 21 age group. The first would be short term detention of three or six months, in what is now known as a detention centre. The second would be training for a minimum period of nine months and a maximum of two years—the actual time to be determined by reference to the young person's progress—in a youth training centre. The third would be a long term training—in such cases as the court now deal with by imposing a sentence of imprisonment—for such period as is now competent."

In the next three paragraphs, the White Paper proceeds to explain the three forms of custodial training in greater detail and how they are to be developed from existing institutions. First, in paragraph 38, it deals with detention centres:

"No change is proposed at present in the organisation and methods of the detention centres. The court would order training for a period of either three or six months. The boy would be eligible for discharge on licence after completing five-sixths of his sentence.

No radical changes, therefore, are proposed for detention centres. However, the implications of the proposals are that the present diversification of the centres will continue. Different training programmes for six-month cases, on the lines of that at Swinfen Hall, will probably be required in other centres. Furthermore, as the only short term sentences available to the courts would be training at detention centres, some of the present short term Y.P.s would probably be sent to detention. This tougher element would stretch the range of boys entering detention still further and there would be

pressure to develop different regimes in different centres and allocate boys to regimes running training programmes thought suitable for them.

In paragraph 39, the proposed youth training centres are described in more detail:

"It is proposed to merge and reorganise the present borstals and senior approved schools into a comprehensive system of residential training catering for the wide variety of types coming before the courts. The Home Office would take over responsibility for the senior approved schools and for the organisation of the comprehensive range of training establishments. It is proposed that the minimum period of training should be nine months and the maximum two years. Experience with borstal training has shown that the present minimum period of six months is too short to enable good results to be achieved. The actual date of discharge on licence would depend on the response to training of the young person concerned."

In paragraph 40 of the White Paper, the long term training is described:

"For offenders sentenced by the courts to training for a period longer than two years, separate establishments would be provided by the Home Office. So far as the numbers make it possible, they would offer a variety of regimes catering for the varied needs of different types of offender."

So the major change proposed by the White Paper is to reduce from three to two the different kinds of residential training available for young offenders other than detention centres. The 5,000-odd borstal boys, the 900-odd Y.P.s and about 950 over sixteen-year-olds in senior approved school would go to either youth training centres (Y.T.C.s) or young offenders institutions (Y.O.I.). To be precise, some of the 900 Y.P.s would go to detention centres so that this would probably reduce the figure of Y.P.s to at least 700. It is difficult to assess with any sort of accuracy how the courts would treat the present Y.P. population. However, allowing for a toughening of sentencing policy, it is unlikely that more than 300 of the present population of Y.P.s would be given over two years sentences. Thus the present Y.P. centres at Aylesbury and Northallerton could be converted to Y.O.C.s and contain the likely population of long term young offenders.

The Y.T.C.s would, therefore, have to accommodate a population of about 6,250. To examine how this would be possible, it is necessary to consider the details of the proposed merging of the borstals and senior approved schools into "a comprehensive system of residential training".

To accommodate the population of 6,250 about 14\* senior schools would be needed in addition to the

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\*The average number of places in a senior approved school is 88.

5,000 borstal places already available. However, all these schools are open establishments and the addition of 1,250 places in open establishments would worsen the lack of balance at present experienced between closed and open borstals. Some senior schools experience considerable absconding problems and a proportion of their present population warrant being in secure or semi-secure conditions. That proportion of the present Y.P. population who would be likely to qualify for Y.T.C. places would also require mainly secure conditions. If the White Paper is given effect, priority will have to go to providing additional secure or semi-secure centres perhaps by converting existing open establishments.

Accommodation problems would also be felt at the present borstal allocation, punishment and recall centres. The new borstal allocation centre at Manchester may be sufficient to deal with the larger numbers, but Reading borstal may need to be used entirely as a punishment centre and another establishment, preferably in the north, turned over for recall purposes.

No mention is made in the White Paper on how the Y.T.C.s are to be staffed. Presumably some sort of offer will be made to those who staff the senior approved schools of joining the present borstal staff to form the staff for the Y.T.C.s. Yet it is difficult to see how this could be worked out in practice

owing to the very different conditions enjoyed by approved school and borstal staff. Senior approved schools are run by a headmaster and deputy head who are qualified teachers paid on the Burnham scale and enjoying conditions rather better than borstal governors and deputy governors. Assistant teachers and instructors are also on the Burnham scale and their conditions of eight weeks leave and only one week-end on in three are considerably better than borstal staff. Housemasters usually occupy a different role to borstal A.G.'s and are paid on the rate £755—£1,350. Staff are not on conditioned hours and are paid a flat rate allowance of £300 a year for supervision duties out of normal school hours.

It appears that the rules governing the new Y.T.C.s will be more like the present borstal rules than the approved school rules. Many of the present approved school staff would be loath to come under a system involving the variety of duties and restrictions imposed by the borstal rules. The control of Head Office is much less clearly felt in an approved school than in a borstal. The possibility of moves would be resented by approved school staff used to moving on application rather than on posting.

Even if an agreeable formula regarding pay and conditions could be evolved, it is doubtful if many of the staff at present working in senior approved schools would

wish to join the staff for the Y.T.Cs. It is likely, therefore, that staffing the new centres will be a major problem and it is to be hoped that recruiting policy will be adjusted in good time to meet these demands if they are to arise.

Certain advantages will follow from the implementation of the proposals in the White Paper. The principal one is that there will be one service dealing with the young offender undergoing residential training between the ages of 16 and 21. Matters of vital importance to the future of residential training will be centred on one service instead of being fragmented

between two. Research can be more easily planned and carried out and staff training can be made more professional and effective. Another advantage would be that the number of institutions would increase as compared with the present number of borstals making possible a greater variety of regimes. A degree of regionalisation should be easier to attain with over 30 Y.T.C.s situated over the country. Perhaps this point will be borne in mind if the proposals are to be implemented when the Home Office negotiates which schools in which part of the country are to be used for Y.T.C.s.

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## British Congress on Crime

A BRITISH CONGRESS on Crime will be held at University College, London, from 5th to 9th September, 1966, to celebrate the centenary of the Howard League for Penal Reform and its parent body, the Howard Association. It is being sponsored by the three national societies concerned with the study of criminal behaviour and the treatment of crime, i.e. the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency, the British Society of Criminology and the Howard League for Penal Reform. The purpose of the Congress, which is the first of its kind in this country, is to bring together three groups of people: those who teach, or do research in, criminology, sociology, psychiatry, social administration, psycho-analysis, law and case-work; those who seek to apply the principles that are being discovered and taught; and those who are engaged in managing and administering social and penal services. The aim is to take stock of what is known and of what is not known, and to perceive the frontiers of criminology so that progress can be made beyond them.

Further details and application form from the Howard League for Penal Reform, 6 Endsleigh Street, London W.C.1.