

After Care:

Moulding or Re-thinking—Which?

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I READ with great interest the articles in the PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL. Whilst these are excellent in themselves, there appears to be an "intoxication" in relation to the phrases "after-care", "inadequacy", "group counselling" and "casework".

I have been allowed to associate myself with the work of "rehabilitation" (horrible word) and the policy suggested was that we consider the person concerned as a normal human being, which indeed comprises 75 per cent of the prison population, i.e. the man not being the victim of circumstances but a victim of himself. Therefore, we were to try to direct his thinking into other channels which might cause him, when he left prison, to believe he was a whole man capable of finding his way in the world with his own capabilities of honest work realized by himself.

After two and a half years of this work, I have found that the above method has been quite successful. Whilst I do not, by any means, consider this to be the complete answer, it has certainly proved worthwhile. The hostel

residents worked on have been P.D.'s, long term prisoners, stars and also men with a history of mental instability. I feel that these facts substantiate my point that after-care, applied as a general policy, can be as damaging as no after-care at all.

Men who have never worked before have responded well, working overtime and often under arduous conditions, in order that they could support their families.

There are no "group discussions" as such, but there are the same talks when such matters arise as would be talked out in a family, and this far exceeds that which would come out of a group discussion as is normally understood by the term.

We have dealt with men's welfare, County Court actions arising from hire purchase debts which have accrued whilst men have been serving sentences and many broken marriages have been placed on a firmer footing.

I firmly believe that many a man has gone out with a totally different mental attitude towards life and with a better appreciation

of his potentialities than before. For instance, a majority of these men, when employed normally rise to above average level in relation to the people with whom they are employed. This certainly indicates that the term "inadequacy", as understood, really means "use". The co-operation of wife and/or relatives is sought and much appreciated. We do indeed differ on the point that once a man has left we advise him to regard his imprisonment and hostel experience as a "closed chapter" in his life and henceforward to regard himself as a normal, average citizen. We do not say that others are wrong, but we do believe that there is room for other schools of thought.

We have found that after-care, in many cases, based on a substantial proportion of the prison population, not only irks but gives a feeling of inferiority. This can

cause a man to feel that he is still serving another kind of sentence and result in his "kicking over the traces" (the word the men use is "patronize"). This, of course, does not apply to all men, but a considerable proportion of the prison population falls into this category.

I have written this because, in every issue of the PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL the opinions given appear to be that *officer participation* can achieve very little. However, the results have proved these opinions to be unsound.

The reason the uniformed men appear to be reluctant to join is because this work could be done by the Prison Service during sentence by the application of sound commonsense—not as is conceded by inmates and staff that after-care often results in having to do what someone else thinks and not oneself.

THE TREADWHEEL is admirably calculated to effect its intended purpose of offering both labour and punishment at the same time; the former being obtained by the vexations and fatiguing exercise on the wheel, the latter by a knowledge that all the vexatious labour is entirely in vain as the machine itself does not perform any kind of work either for the use of the prison or otherwise.

*Description of the House of Correction, Folkingham,
Lincs., 1808*

Contributed by Officer P. Lynch, Feltham.