

Crime Without Profit

D. W. BUTLER

AFTER READING the articles of J. E. Thomas and Winston Martin in the July issue of the PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL, I realized how closely they were related in the fact that one had partly the answer to the other. What is the role of the modern prison officer?

John Vidler partly knew the answer to this question, the prison officer was a member of his community who he tried to weld into a team with a common aim, the rehabilitation of his charges; to him, every man in prison—officer and inmate alike—was the member of a community, with each subject being dealt with in a different way with a separate approach, the same humanity being extended to both (if this did not take place the officers eventually became more institutionalized than their charges), he realised this problem and dealt with it accordingly. In how many prisons does this approach take place today?

Many officers are as difficult to change as are their charges, and it can only be with the governor grade influence by taking officers into their complete confidence as part of a team, instead of only paying lip service to modern methods of

penal reform, that they can hope to retain their position in the prison.

Normally the main training of an officer is by experience and the influence of higher authority over him within the prison. This affects the whole outlook of the officer, also his charges, because they are normally of the same social standing, and feel for each other, the inmate knows when pressure is being brought to bear on his officer and reacts accordingly. This (in my opinion) is the reason why trouble is kept to a minimum in prison, because the inmate feels the same pressures as his officer and partly accepts them in the same spirit.

This same spirit is not abroad in the majority of cases with the new expert that is coming into the prisons, the welfare officer, the social worker, the assistant governor, the administration officer. The officer grade feels that these are now empire builders, all creating positions of power and influence, but in actual fact creating confusion to them and their charges because, as I have explained, the inmate looks practically through the same eyes as the officer at these intruders coming into their

world, treating them as pawns in a game. I sometimes wonder how the governor of a prison must feel with his position gradually eroding away from him, because normally he has no specialised training except knowing how to deal with human beings and experience of service, having all these experts below him competing for influence and power must make him feel insecure at times.

Every so-called expert on prisons accepts the fact that the officer is a very important person in the prison who knows his charges under him and should be a part of penal reform, that is as far as they go, they will not say that selected officers should do all the welfare work, be trained for governor grade, be sent for catering courses at recognised colleges, how to organise and run modern factories, to be trained for any position in the prison service. I feel this position is so because the universities are now producing so many students of criminology, social science studies etc., that as prisons are the main outlet for these students, pressure has been brought to bear to accept a large percentage of these into the prison service. This, in my opinion, will eventually harm the service because most of these students are stereotyped anyway before they arrive in prisons or borstals and without having previous responsibilities or worldly experience (the most important experience in dealing with human beings).

Today the prison officer feels in

a void or vacuum, the public look upon him as an ignorant oaf, a bully, unemployable in any other job, ridiculed in newspaper articles, cartoons and on television. Why has authority allowed this position to arise? Without doing anything constructive to alter it, maybe it is because there is no direction at the top as to what the role of a prison officer should be, maybe they have realized that with all the expert advice on crime and criminals, and the mounting number of people making a living out of criminals who have been caught, that Parkinson's Law has become rife and it will take a brave man to say that the answer may lay in the officer grade, that the chaplain and principal officers could do the welfare work and the governor and chief officer may, after all, be the best people to run a prison, and rehabilitate and deter men from coming back to prison. Rehabilitation has a very important part to play, but a deterrent also must be kept in its proper content.

Even John Vidler had a deterrent, any man whom he felt was untrainable or did not fit into his unit or would upset his community was transferred. One fairly obvious conclusion must be, that some prisons should be only used for a deterrent purpose, other prisons as just security prisons, to hold complete misfits in society. Staff would be trained to take their place in these various communities, call them what you may, but the staff in training and rehabilitation and

workshop prisons would be highly trained, not just guards, these posts would be left to the security prisons only, and would be advertised as such.

Officers know today that so many books have been written, speeches made, by outside bodies, the actual results from all these sources have proved negligible in practical results. I would go so far as to say that the public are not getting an honest return for the money they have to pay to combat crime and hold criminals in prison, so that it no longer pays to commit further crimes.

Crime does pay today and prison may be helping this state of affairs by the drifting and not having a determined policy being applied.

Now is the question, how can this be changed? May I put forward the following proposals for the future role of prison staff:

- (1) That all staff should go through the officer grade.
- (2) That after initial training at Wakefield, staff would then have a period of prison and borstal training, during this

time they would be selected by examination and interview and capabilities to take the various courses available, i.e. assistant governor course, (cook and bakers) a catering course, (hospital officers) should take courses in hospitals unless already qualified, staff going to workshop prisons—trained in the particular trade needed, even if this was at least an initial period of two years' training, it would be much more realistic than the present situation.

- (3) Certain staff would be trained for guard duties, being recruited for this purpose only, but these would be needed in very few prisons.

Finally, I think it fair to conclude that the old type of prison system failed, that the present type has failed (more expensively so), and that prison now should be made on the whole into productive producing units, that the cost should be borne on the criminals' shoulders not the taxpayer, with one end in view, that *crime should be seen not to pay.*