

## Letters to the Editor

# Senior Managers and Junior Governors

*To the Editor,*

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

SIR.—The article in the July issue entitled “Managing to Govern” written by Mr. J. R. C. Lee contains some references to which objection has been taken by members of my branch which covers those of the general executive class who work in penal establishments. It would also be misleading to members of the public who read your journal who may not be aware that an administration officer can be a Home Office senior executive officer, a grade described by the Treasury as senior management, while an assistant governor, who Mr. Lee would like to see in charge of this administration officer, is the junior grade of a departmental executive class.

We are also at a loss to understand what he means by his reference to “the struggle which exists between administration officers and the governors”. We are aware of no evidence to support such a statement. Throughout the penal service governors and administration officers work harmoniously

together and differences are surprisingly few for a Service of our size and complexity. Indeed, governors generally, and in particular those ex-governors who have reached high rank in the Prison Service and the Home Office, continually pay tribute to the assistance and support they have received from administration officers.

Mr. Lee’s blanket reference to the “clerical department” is also unhappy, since he is apparently using it as synonymous with the term “administration officer’s department”. Indeed it is not clear that he is aware that this department, as well as including our indispensable colleagues, the clerical officers and typists, includes executive officers, higher executive officers and in the larger prisons senior executive officers, as well as specialist officers such as technical officers grade I who would hardly want to be regarded as inferior in status to assistant governors. Mr. Lee may not like it, but the administration officer’s responsibilities must place him in

a key position in an establishment. I cannot quote Royal Naval analogies but in military terms he combines the role of adjutant, quartermaster, and paymaster among many other duties. He is also responsible (*vide* Standing Orders) for the employment of inmates. It is laid down that he is responsible in the performance of his duties to the governor, i.e., the governor in charge, and this does not mean to any other junior member of the departmental class of governors. Mr. Lee's mention

of a communication and administrative task force with an assistant governor in charge is nonsense. It shows a complete lack of knowledge of the task of the administration officer and of his responsibilities to the governor of a penal establishment and to the Home Department.

Yours, etc.,  
J. W. CLARK,  
*Chairman,  
Society of Civil Servants,  
Prison Department,  
Outstation Branch.*

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## Social Workers or Managers

*To the Editor,*

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

SIR.—In your July 1966 issue were two articles expressing views on the role of the assistant governor, or housemaster in borstal. "Managing to Govern", by J. R. C. Lee and "Borstals and After-Care—Post-A.C.T.O.", by T. R. Carnegie, which illustrates the dichotomy in the present role of the assistant governor, a dichotomy which is reinforced by the syllabus of the Staff Course at Wakefield.

Mr. Lee says "... A.G.s will need to have a *basic* (my italics) understanding of social casework techniques so that where applicable they can introduce them, and

support their growth within an institutional structured programme. But far more they should be concerned with management principles and practice, institutional relationships, the psychological aspects of organisations, with the practice of research and development. *For these are the areas within which they should be operating as governors.* (My italics.)

Mr. Carnegie thinks differently. He clearly wants A.G.s to be high powered social workers dealing directly with inmates and acting as a link with the inmates' future outside associates.

Both these arguments have

validity. However, I feel that Mr. Carnegie would quickly isolate the A.G. from areas of decision-making which must be his within the scope of his house and the remainder of the institution. Mr. Lee rightly says that perhaps the principal officers should undertake the role examined by Mr. Carnegie. I would agree wholeheartedly. From my limited knowledge of borstal institutions I have noted a clear lack of involvement by the P.O.s, not always voluntary. The present system does not allow them this involvement. The same argument applies to senior officers. They feel out of touch. This causes

low staff morale and I am sure is one reason for the present loss due to resignation of many of these men.

I agree with Mr. Lee when he says we are making the change, albeit slowly. Must it be slow? The Service has the means to make the change if it so wishes. The Staff College provides this means. Has it the will? We cannot stick with tradition in this fast-moving world. We are already behind, and losing ground.

Yours, etc.,

J. L. UZZELL,

*A.G. II, Feltham.*

## “Suspended” Sentences

*To the Editor,*

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL.

SIR.—The White Paper, “The Adult Offender”, is a realistic attempt to put into effect many aspects of modern thinking regarding penal reform in that it aims to overcome the deleterious effects of long terms of imprisonment, and to offer a positive inducement to convicted prisoners to co-operate in matters of reform and rehabilitation to a degree hitherto not achieved.

With these aims and aspirations,

most people connected with the training and treatment of the lawbreakers will no doubt agree, and yet, one wonders if it is in fact the most effective and economic formula available.

Given the present economic state of the nation and the fact that in any event the cost of the penal system must be kept within reasonable grounds, other far less costly and possibly equally effective methods are available without, of course, losing sight of the aims set out in the White Paper.

It would be wrong to generalise

when attempting to assess the manifold effects a long term of imprisonment can produce, but the fact remains and only the effect differs in direct relationship to the character and outlook of the person concerned. Experienced prison officers are well aware of this, and can note the effect that imprisonment is having on the individual concerned, they are also quick to note changes in the person's sense of values. As a prison officer, I have over the years endeavoured to assist and advise men trying to adjust themselves to face long periods of detention, and have found it most difficult at times to deal with men whose basic attitude to life and crime has been completely changed by the shock of imprisonment and the thought of the many years they must spend behind bars. Yet this frequently happens. The officer who is in daily contact with these men is in a unique position to observe this; and equally to observe when the initial shock wears off and the years in prison leave their mark. To see the visits of his wife and family grow more and more infrequent (often to cease altogether), to watch them become accustomed to prison life and to accept new standards of behaviour, often lower than when first convicted.

I would illustrate this with an actual case: a man with whom I have almost daily contact. He is a very intelligent and ingenious man who committed a whole series of

crimes (shop and warehouse breaking). He thought himself more efficient and intelligent than the police but was brought to book. It was his first appearance in Court and he was sentenced to ten years imprisonment. About three years of the sentence has now been served. In his present state of mind he would be unlikely to offend again; unfortunately, however, a bitterness toward society in general is now becoming apparent and it requires little imagination to anticipate that when he is eventually released this bitterness will dominate his mind and will be the spur to further activities outside the law.

The effect of the new proposals will tend to improve the situation, the unfortunate part is that they do not go far enough; they assume that all men released on parole will need the assistance of the parole officers. This is not so, and to compel this would only serve to inflate the cost of the new proposals out of all proportion to the results obtained. The scheme does not carry on the deterrent value of the sentence after the date of release, i.e. when his period of parole has passed and he has effectively discharged his sentence.

What alternatives are available? The ideal would surely be a scheme whereby a man's sentence could be suspended at any stage when it was thought that he would be least likely to offend again. It may arise at the time the committed person

is sentenced and in the judge's opinion unlikely to offend again; it may be much later and under the direction of the Prison Department.

Such a system would go a long way towards breaking down the present attitude of long-term prisoners, in that it would to a greater or lesser degree—

1. Continue the deterrent effect of a sentence indefinitely in that the unexpired portion of a sentence would be re-imposed at any subsequent conviction.

2. Encourage men to co-operate, to a degree not generally achieved now, with the prison departments concerned with his welfare, training and rehabilitation, in order to achieve an early suspension of sentence.

3. Give the judiciary power to "suspend sentence" in any case

where it was felt that the person was unlikely to offend again.

4. Encourage any person so released to give his whole-hearted co-operation to the probation service on a voluntary basis in order to steer clear of further trouble. This would give added impetus to the probation service.

5. Prevent the break-up of many marriages and the ensuing bitterness against society generated thereby.

6. Enable a man to be released from prison whilst the shock of his sentence is still very much in his mind, before the worst influences found in prison life have had appreciable effect and at the time when the deterrent value of imprisonment is at a high level.

R. J. ELVY  
*Wakefield*

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## Who Leads Who?

*To the Editor,*

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL.

SIR.—Being an officer who is interested in "extending my professional life" I was keen to read the recent article by J. E. Thomas: "After-care and the Prison Officer".

This keenness unfortunately waned and finally left me with the same feeling that the majority of

such articles create. That is, the hierarchy of this somewhat antiquated Service is reluctant to carry out any positive planning, and is even more reluctant to accept ideas from the minions who serve under them.

The department and N.A.D.P.A.S. must obviously have agreed on welfare officers coming into

prisons. The manner in which it was implemented must surely be condemned. They simply appeared, unknown to anyone, apparently on the basis of "Large oaks from little acorns grow".

Several welfare officers to whom I have spoken have agreed with me that they are little more than a voice in the wilderness. They have no plan of campaign (although I agree, one would be difficult to evolve). The greater tragedy is that there is little or no link-up between themselves and the staff around them. Neither side knows what the other is doing, so relationships are strained, while heads of establishments look on with benign smiles of indifference. They too have their limitations which one imagines leaves them on the proverbial "fence".

It was written in 1934 by a then retired senior medical officer that the Prison Service had never been organized, it had merely evolved.

Can anyone take pride for any real advancement since those words were written, or must it be agreed that the Service is still evolving in its own slow, inimitable fashion?

The answer surely lies in the hands of the prison directors. It is up to them to plan an amalgamated service. This would co-ordinate welfare, probation and social workers with their own experienced officers; they know more about their charges than anyone.

Pool all ideas and let a ground level committee sort them out. Our "Sirs" and "Lords" really don't know the problem, although I would hasten to add that they would prove an invaluable guide through the maze of the Service slow coaches.

One of the prime requirements of a prison officer is leadership. We know whom we lead—who leads us?

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## *Your Letters*

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