

## Look Back . . . and Forward

*Changing Concepts of Crime and its Treatment* is the title of a new book, edited by Hugh Klare, published, just before the Congress, by Pergamon Press at 50s. 0d. A symposium of eight essays is prefaced by a foreword from Rt. Hon. Kenneth Younger commenting briefly on the centenary of the Howard Association which in 1921 became the Howard League.

Celebration of anniversaries, particularly centenaries, may be said to be the bread and butter of diary publishers and the obsession of the B.B.C., but, in the penal world, critics of the Look Back in Admiration (or Horror) School are often heard to say how they deplore the constant reference back to Howard, Fry, du Cane, Sarah Martin, Maconochie or even the latter day saints or sinners (name your own choice), but they should remember that every day new people come into the world of prison, be they officers, social workers or magistrates, and every day someone who has never come into contact with prison in the course of his professional life does so for the first time, be he solicitor's clerk, bread delivery man, the Man from the Ministry or ministry. So it is necessary to provide newly presented accounts of the old folk lore of the world of prisons and to make them available, by direct sale or by reference via those of us "inside"

who have a teaching or showing relationship with those from "outside".

This book can bring all of us, inside and outside, thoroughly up-to-date, beginning with a look at present-day crime. Terence Morris, examining social toleration to crime, takes a panoramic view of all the crimes so popularly (and properly) denounced by Press or pulpit, and draws some startling comparisons from criminal statistics. Did you know, for instance, that more people (4.7 per cent) were found guilty of failing to take out radio, car or dog licences than of breaking and entering (3.6 per cent), or that twice as many people cheated British Rail as were convicted of violence against the person? In the final analysis, he says "crime is what the other person does. What I do, if it is against the law, is susceptible to redefinition through rationalisation".

Tolerant we may all be, here at home. How tolerant would we be in America towards some of the attitudes shown towards negro and white offenders? Marvin E. Wolfgang, Pennsylvania University's professor of sociology, on Race and Crime, maintains that the general attitude of the courts (Garfinkel's survey of ten counties in North Carolina between 1930-40) was that the slaying of a white by a negro was almost *prima facie*

evidence of guilt; of a white by a white required objective administration of justice; of a negro by a negro was just a routine affair deserving only moderate attention, and of a negro by a white probably involving some mitigating circumstances like provocation.

Criminal activity varies from person to person, place to place, and our treatment of criminals has changed. Dr. Gibbens' essay on the development of forensic psychiatry is a calming mixture of fact and opinion for those who criticise any and every theory about behaviour and treatment, while Dr. Miller's account of an approved school is an example of how progress has been made in institutional life by the introduction of practical psychiatric help.

Charlotte Banks takes a look at prison, borstal and detention centres, gives us many statistics and asks many, many questions. One of her conclusions is "if the official statistics can be relied on, or if there is no startling change in the figures for 1965 and '66 we might, then, expect the failure rates for borstal *and* prison to get rather worse". In the next breath she adds: "It is not possible to conclude anything about detention centres". No doubt she means about the failure rate.

Changes in concept, in policy, in staff bring change in the daily routine of an establishment. Paul de Berker has some fascinating things to say about the sociology of change in penal institutions.

From the challenging opening statement that "it is possible to say that the essential task of the institution is to preserve itself from chaos" he sweeps boldly on, takes us behind the scenes of group life in various parts of an establishment, and concludes that while "so far most of the energy of the institution has been devoted to the engineering of new staff communications systems as instruments of management whereby a rehabilitative policy can be put into effect", the question as to what role is taken up by the prisoners themselves, in the changing situation, remains unanswered.

The last two essays are historical accounts of the men (and the buildings) in prison life from Howard to the present day; Paul Cornil, Secretary General Belgian Ministry of Justice comparing Howard's notes with the Standard Minimum Rules of the United Nations Congress, and Duncan Fairn, looking to the future, considers that following on the results of research, "administration may be founded less on inspired hunches and more on observed fact".

"New" prison people will find this book gives them sufficient background material on crime yesterday, many thoughts for today's dealing with criminals, and just enough forecasting of the future to make tomorrow worth anticipating.

M.W.