

Lions and Elephants

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"OF COURSE," said the Commissioner as he and I entered the prison gates a few months ago, "they have to keep a fire burning here all night to keep the lions away". The prison was the women's establishment at Langata just outside Nairobi in Kenya, and this phlegmatic statement illustrates how different are some of the problems our overseas colleagues have to face from those we meet at home. At Manyani prison, in the same territory, elephants, made desperate by the prolonged drought, had attacked the water pipes. Such hazards might raise an eyebrow or two amongst some Foremen of Works I know.

These thoughts came back to me the other day when the Colonial Secretary's Advisory Committee on the Treatment of Offenders was laid down, upon the transfer of this and like functions from the Colonial Office to the new Department of Technical Cooperation. This seems to be the moment when some note should be taken of the part the English Prison and Borstal Service has played in the Commonwealth territories. Perhaps we were a bit Victorian when in 1946 we opened the Staff College with the name,

Imperial Training School, but that blessed word announced the proud fact of the contribution in training, advice and service which it has been our privilege to make to the Empire and Commonwealth over the years. Nor is that contribution diminishing with the shrinkage of the old Empire. As I write, quite apart from a number of officers who have recently returned to us, there are no fewer than seventeen others, either temporarily transferred or in "approved employment" overseas, ranging from Mr. G. J. Hawkins, once of the Staff College and now lecturing on criminal science in New South Wales, and Major James, also of the Staff College, who is Commissioner of Prisons in Singapore, to Mr. T. H. Pool, a Supervisor of Works but building, as I write, a new prison in Bermuda. To this number should be added others like Mr. O. V. Garratt, once a Housemaster at Feltham and until recently Adviser on the Treatment of Prisoners to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the present Director of Borstal Administration, who served for some time at a borstal in Burma.

From very soon after the opening of training classes for officers

at Wakefield in 1925, a tradition was created by which we always had some serving overseas, a tradition inspired very largely by the late Sir Alexander Paterson, who had himself visited many of the territories. From time to time these officers and others recruited outside the Service would return to this country to undergo a prisons tour led by Mr. Paterson as he then was—some of us irreverently called it "A.P.'s Colonial Circus". After the tour the party would end up at Wakefield and adjourn to Bradford, there to enjoy the generous hospitality of Mr. D.G. Ackroyd, J.P. On one occasion Oxford was included in the tour and A. P. arranged for a lecture to be given in his own University College on the *Ethics of Punishment*. The lecturer was a university don and the development of the theme was profound. At the conclusion there was the usual embarrassed hush before discussion breaks out. It was not long before the silence was broken by a tough from Tanganyika. "Well, of course, there is only one thing to do: flog 'em." What better opening could there be on such a theme?

These grand tours are no longer appropriate to this day and age. In their place the Staff College provides every year a three months

course for prison officers native to their several territories, and as I have travelled the world I have met brown and black colleagues in the overseas services for whom Wakefield is a magic word: it spells for them fellowship and has led them in their turn to offer me the most generous hospitality.

I have mentioned Paterson's visits to foreign parts. Selections from some of his reports can be found in S.K. Ruck's *Paterson on Prisons*. After the war and on his retirement, the first Director of Prison Administration, Mr. N. R. Hilton himself undertook a number of journeys at the request of the Colonial Office and I have had something of the same good fortune since 1955. In Jamaica, British Guiana, Barbados and Kenya, and in Cyprus with Sir Lionel Fox, my visits have both enlarged my circle of friends and given me a vivid appreciation of the kind of problems they are facing. Life in the territories overseas is very different from what it is here. Our colleagues there have no welfare state as a supporting context. Lions and elephants are amongst the least of their troubles. Short though we are of staff at home they are even shorter. Let us keep them in mind from time to time.