

Readers' Letters

No More, Please!

Sir,

As a regular reader of the PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL, may I please ask your Board to spare us from any repetition of the *thirteen* pages from the pen of Pauline Morris. Many of us know her views, and from where she got her information . . . "the large local prison."

I feel sure that if we are to read this sort of thing then your figure of 75 per cent readership will soon be a lot less. This is a pity, because so much good use could be made of our Journal regarding communications.

I offer this as constructive criticism, not as a moan.

Yours sincerely,

A. G. G. RICKARD.

H. M. Prison Exeter.

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A Plea for More Cadet Forces

Sir,

Since 1576 when Houses of Correction tried to reform wayward apprentices and prostitutes, the British penal system has turned full circle. It has used many systems, within itself, including

transportation, the separate and silent regimes, not forgetting treadmills, cranks and hard labour.

Today, a more realistic system tries to help men who are willing to use facilities, such as trade training courses and evening classes, available at most penal establishments. Even so, no matter how well equipped an ex-prisoner may be, he still faces problems over work on discharge.

There is, perhaps, one place in the system where inmates could be given training which would almost guarantee employment on discharge

The Armed Forces are not closed to ex-borstal lads, but it is not easy to enlist after release, because, not unnaturally the authorities are sceptical as to a lad's sincerity, and they may think he is choosing the Forces as a last resort. How much easier if lads produced proof of interest in their choice, and if a referee could vouch for their temperamental suitability.

Although I have no first-hand knowledge of Cadet Corps in borstals and young prisoner centres, they do exist: I merely make a plea for their extension. Visualize an Army Cadet or Air Training Corps in all such places, with facilities equal to those in most cities. Here lads could really learn something of leadership. It could be organised on a voluntary basis, each lad being told that facilities exist for all who think they could, or would like to, make a career in the Forces.

At the same time as a lad is taught discipline, he could be trained in trades likely to benefit his possible enlistment such as Signals, Motor Mechanics, Cooking or Engineering.

This may not be the long-sought answer to the ever-growing problem of After-Care, but it might be a step in the right direction.

For several months I have taken opinions of almost every grade of prison staff, and not once did this suggestion meet with ridicule. Most staff said it would be a difficult undertaking but that it would be a valuable addition to training.

I also quizzed many inmates. More than half said they might have been better off for Forces training. Of lads actually sentenced to borstal training, many wished they could make a career in the Forces but thought that their criminal career would have prevented this.

Supposing that 60 per cent of our lads took an interest in the Cadets, and if only a quarter of that percentage actually maintained that interest to a successful conclusion, surely the scheme could be regarded as reasonable.

I am Sir,

Yours faithfully,

TERENCE KNOX.

90, Whinney Hill,
Durham City.

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A Reply to Mrs. Morris

Sir,

"There is a very great need for much improved welfare facilities for staff—and exclusively for them." (Pauline Morris, *PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL* No. 6, January 1963.)

Pauline Morris refers to problems which stem from our social lives, and suggests that two welfare officers are inadequate. After reading her article on 'Staff Problems' I was left with the impression that it is not welfare officers we are short of, but medical officers holding the Diploma Psychiatric Medicine (for the staff, of course—and "exclusively for them"). Her description of prison officers labels us a bunch of paranoids.

The psychologists could assess the degree of our paranoia by meeting us at our local branch meetings, in the Officers Mess, at the Gate Lodge, or as Pauline Morris appears to have done, by solely reading the *Prison Officers' Magazine*. This magazine would show them the extent of our delusions of grandeur, pride and persecution.

Call it a delusion of grandeur if you like, but we believe that we have those in our ranks capable of passing the "Country House Test" by virtue of their social adaptability and confidence. We sometimes live and mix socially with our superior staff, and while we give them their

entitled respect (yes, we still believe in 'sir-ing'—much better and effective than 'Good morning, Cuthbert'), we know that socially we are their equals. As for confidence—if we were short of this we would never have joined. What man without confidence would throw away steady employment (as many do) to take the Wakefield "gamble". Let me hasten to add that it wasn't the choice for most of us "the local 'nick' or the Labour Exchange". Perhaps, however, we reported for interview and medical whilst suffering from an illusion of grandeur.

Yes, we have pride. We are proud of our "relics of paramilitarism"—we know that it helps us maintain some dignity and above all some discipline. Would our wayward motorist respond to a "bowler-hatted" traffic policeman waving an umbrella? I have spoken to inmates (yes, I can do this without speaking out of the corner of my mouth) and the inevitable reply when asked their opinion of civilians in prison is one of complete contempt. One of their most derogatory expressions is "he's only a 'civvy'." This of course does not include the governor or medical officer, but I have known officers of these ranks suggest that it would be sometimes beneficial for the superior grades to go into uniform. However, pride is a symptom of paranoia—so our psychologists will take note.

Because of our persecution complex (a definite clue to the paranoid) which is so apparent by our contributors to the *Prison Officers' Magazine*, we are a bunch of malcontents. According to Pauline Morris we are continually at war with the Prison Commissioners—this is not so. The prison officer's opinion of the Commissioners is in complete contrast to his opinion of certain members of the Howard League. Our persecution complex leads us to believe that these good folk are after our blood.

In our quieter moments, we have peculiar fancies. One of our fantasies is that prisons are hospitals, and that our charges are patients, we of course are the nursing staff. We regard our superior grades as doctors, and doctors in training. We believe that the treatment meted out to our patients is at present correct, and that although they may become ill again, at least they derive some benefit from it. The system is running smoothly. Then, from outside the hospital some general practitioner (alas! unlike our true life medical counterparts, never did his training in the hospital) tells us how to do our job. We then become angry and our paranoia becomes really apparent.

If Pauline Morris has assessed us correctly then there can be no doubt we are truly in need of psychological workers for the staff

—and exclusively for them. I would hasten to assure them that although we may be difficult patients, we are not necessarily dangerously aggressive.

its Victorian look, and is a more up-to-date looking magazine.

Yours faithfully,

R. F. BUNKER

May I also say how pleased I was to see that the Journal has lost

*H.M. Prison,
Camp Hill,
Newport,
Isle of Wight.*

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

ANDREW A. FYFE is an ordained Minister of the Church of Scotland who entered the Prison Service in 1950. He is Housemaster at Lowdham Grange, having previously served at Portland. He was educated at Hutchesons' Grammar School, Glasgow University, and Trinity College, Glasgow. He is a member of the Iona Community.

FATHER A. HARRIS is Senior Roman Catholic Priest at Liverpool Prison.

GODFREY HEAVEN is Tutor-Organiser at Wandsworth Prison. A post-war graduate in Economics and Sociology of London University, he was engaged in school and adult teaching until his present appointment in 1955 and had previously been employed in insurance, social welfare work and International Voluntary Service.

DAVID ATKINSON is a New Zealander who before joining the Prison Service as an Assistant Governor at Wakefield in 1959 was a director of a Midlands engineering firm.

N. J. TYNDALL is Staff Course Tutor at the Prison Service Staff College, Wakefield.

Prison Classification by Computer

Sir,

As a ratepayer I am informed in October of each year how the rates have been spent in the preceding year, i.e. six months after the closing of accounts.

Local Authorities are adopting the Automatic Data Process in an effort to streamline expenditure and, if possible, lower the rates.

As a former prison officer I am interested in the state of the prisons as reported in official publications of the Prison Commissioners, by the national Press, and in the memoirs of former inmates, staff and prison visitors.

At present there does not seem to be any definite co-operation between the Home Office, Prison Commission, and local Councils where prisons are situated. A link between local officials and local prison administration would give the Commissioners up-to-date information at short notice by Automatic Data Processing.

Before the last war my local prison had a daily average population of one hundred and fifty male inmates, now the figure is four hundred. Why is this?

When the casual wards were in existence, they were used by the class of person who now makes the local prison a resting place in summer and refuge in winter. The casual ward was the nightly stopping place for the tramp and persons of "no fixed abode", looking for work, or "on the run" from the Law or marriage ties. The former workhouse, now turned into a National Health Hospital, has no place for these people in our present society.

Local Housing Committees are rightly intent on building housing estates, the Health and Mental Deficiency Committees are concerned in extending hospital accommodation. The Regional Hospital Board have plans in hand for the erection of a psychiatric unit in the grounds of the local general hospital

The local prison remains ignored in the town planning and rebuilding going on round it, although this ancient building is overcrowded with inmates of every type and classification. A modern Newgate.

By the use of the Computer

with programmed information from local department sources, the central prison authority would be able to give local prison staff immediate informed means of segregation, classification, and allocation as required by law, in a quick concise manner. By earlier transfer of convicted inmates the means of keeping down the local prison population would be a reality.

Is it not possible to classify and keep separate boys, first offenders, recidivists, corrective trainees, preventive detainees, debtors, remands, trials, special watch and hospital observation cases in the same hall or wing? Early information is most urgent when staff may be depleted by court duties, escorts, sickness or, as always, by under staffing. Hospital observation cases, either convicted, for remand or trial, are often persons requiring treatment in a unit separate from the local prison.

I have in view, a unit where the assistant governor, the probation officer, and the prison welfare officer can get a complete picture of the history and condition relating to an inmate, for transmission to the programmers at the local and central computer points. A place where other official and voluntary bodies would be able to pass on their information, for the prison governor to put before the courts classified statements for the guidance of both magistrates and judges.

At present young persons, on remand or for trial, are kept too long in the doubtful atmosphere of the local prison, especially during the Long Vacation.

A "time and motion" study over ground covered by people concerned in compiling data would cut down the present casework. At present it appears that the function of the probation and prison welfare officers tend to overlap—both officials appear to cover the same ground to arrive at one ultimate purpose.

While the prison officer is the custodian of the failures of our present society, he is expected to influence his charges into the path of reformation by example and advice where possible. In this connection I would suggest a stricter segregation of misdemeanants and aggressive psychopathic inmates both of the star and recidivist classes.

To this end, classification in the modern form, by the aid of the Automatic Data Process would aid group counselling and inmate co-operation, and I would indicate twenty sources of Automatic Data Processing material.

1. Health Department.
General health. Physique. Abnormality.
2. Education Department.
I.Q. Religion. Grade. Further education. Technical ability. Attitude of parents.
3. Housing Department.
Accommodation. Ability to pay

- rent. Arrears. State of household. Degree of responsibility.
4. Children's Department.
Family history. Delinquency. In need of care and protection. Separation. Foster parents. Approved school. Future prospects.
 5. Employment Officer. Ministry of Labour.
Previous employment. Trade. Self-employed. Unemployable. Re-habilitation. Benefit. No fixed abode. Place of settlement. Immigrants. Integration. Deportation.
 6. National Assistance Officer.
In need. Unemployable. Age bar. Medically unfit. Industrial injury. Compensation. Pension. Material assistance.
 7. Probation Officer.
Suitable for probation. Co-operation with local departments and voluntary bodies.
 8. Police.
History. Offences. Associates. Class of crime. Link with probation officer. C.R.O.
 9. Medical Officer. (Psychiatric Unit.)
Reports on all remand and trial cases. Juveniles. First offenders and re-convicted. Disposal.
 10. Mental Health Officer. (Local Council.)
Degree of mental health. Disposal. Removal and settlement. Liability of relatives and other authorities to contribute to cost of maintenance.
 11. Immigration Officer.
Health. Chargeability. Deportation.
 12. National Insurance Officer.
Benefit. Entitlement. Insurance cards. Pensions. Link with employment officer and national assistance officer.
 13. Family Service Unit.
State of home. Financial. In need of advice or assistance.
 14. Marriage Guidance Council.
Keeping the family together. Maintenance. Divorce.
 15. Women's Voluntary Service.
Advice to women offenders. Clothing. Need.
 16. Personnel Officers (Industrial).
Situations vacant. Redundancy. Rehabilitation.
 17. Discharged Prisoners Aid Society.
Financial aid. Reports to Commissioners. Local publicity. Funds.
 18. Prison Minister of Religion.
Attitude to religion. Prospects of aid in reformation.
 19. Officer in charge of Remand centre.
Report on visits.
 20. Prison Welfare Officer.
Ability to programme and read Automatic Data Process.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

J. H. HURST.

6, Gorseburn House,
New Parks, Leicester.