

Magistrates and Prisoners

G. M.

THE FIRST of these books is a study of variations in magistrates' policies; the second is a comprehensive study of the short-term inmate himself.

Both represent laudable attempts to place criminology on an up-to-date scientific foundation and, as far as methodology is concerned, both inquiries are generally sound (though Dr. Andry does not seem to the reviewer to have allowed sufficient time "at risk" for his data on re-conviction to be of great significance).

It is to the conclusions of the investigations that criticism may mainly be directed. Thus Mr. Hood's statement that short-term imprisonment meets no more successes than does "fining or probation for the majority of offenders" tells us nothing about how to discover which offenders form this majority, nor does it allow for the possibility that lenient forms of treatment may well "recruit" more offenders in the first instance. It is commonplace that criminals often regard probation as "getting off". Moreover, the fact that prison provides a useful means of preventing offenders from being "at risk" ought not to be forgotten.

Dr. Andry's conclusions, though still open to similar criticisms, are less sentimental. He recommends "Reconstruction Centres" plus heavy fines as a combination of treatment, deterrence and recompense. Here again, the tragedy is that the taxpayer would often have to meet the fines imposed, not to mention the cost of building, running and staffing such centres recommended for the "leisure-time treatment" of offenders not sent to prison.

Both books are very well-written and presented. Their importance would seem to lie in their fact-finding roles and in their ability to serve as models for future research. There are as yet too many "imponderables" in the field for firm conclusions to be drawn. As modern penal practice shows, ultimately the will to reform must come from the offender himself; apart from prevention, detection and deterrence, only marginally are treatments of inmates successful.

Sentencing in Magistrates' Courts

ROGER HOOD

Steven & Sons. Price 20s. 0d.

The Short Term Prisoner

R. G. ANDRY

Steven & Sons. Price 28s. 0d.