

# Three Training Plans

- Vocational Training for Recidivists
- Shocks for Stars
- Child Psychology for Young Offenders

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I AM A MEMBER of the staff of Liverpool Prison. I am called a Prison Officer, or, if you prefer the phraseology of the wrong-doer, a "Screw". It is my intention to bring home to you the seriousness and danger of social reform in Her Majesty's Prisons.

Today we take too much notice of politicians, welfare workers and religious bodies who are apparently prepared to base the treatment of the present day criminal on a famous quotation—"There but for the Grace of God, go I". This is all very well in theory, but is this what is actually the treatment for people who err? In a civilised community, we must have laws and responsible citizens to administer these laws, or men would return to the primitive stage of the uncivilised. Why not leave it to the experts who have years of experience in dealing with the wrong-doer, that is the police and the prison officer. Surely living amongst these individuals for many years makes us the spec-

ialists. . . . I will endeavour to set a plan which, in my opinion, would be successful in correcting the wrong-doer. I honestly believe that, both physically and psychologically my plan would work and the criminal would be able to return to society as a useful citizen.

My plan is based on conversations I have had with my charges, some of them young offenders, some habitual criminals and some first timers.

## Habitual Criminal

Why does he come back?

There is not just one reason, but a combination of reasons. Possibly lazy, bitter, hating society, not given a chance, he becomes his own persecutor and prosecutor. He has been sent to prison from his early youth and has suffered the isolation of the prison cell for weeks on end—nothing but dull routine. He gets very little sympathy nor does he ask for any. On returning to his family, relatives or associates, he

may be treated by them as a returning hero; but society in general treats him with suspicion. This, to my mind, is where everyone falls down. We frown upon him being an ex-convict and avoid his company. Employers will not give him a job, the police hound him and he feels an outcast. I suggest that, in prison, we correct his faults and when he is discharged, help more in his rehabilitation. Set up State Vocational Training Centres and teach him whilst giving him a living wage a useful semi-skilled or, where possible, a skilled trade and get the backing of the Trade Unions. The most important part of rehabilitation is being accepted back as a useful citizen. Although he may have been convicted several times, by his terms of imprisonment he has paid his debt to society. So now we can use that very wise quotation in its correct perspective—"There but for the Grace of God, go I".

The most surprising thing about these unfortunate characters is that they are kind and considerate to their wives and families and in return they receive a high degree of loyalty in their absence.

To sum up, the habitual offender being sent to prison by society and losing his freedom and civil rights is surely punished enough whilst there. The Prison Directors have gone a long way in assisting them to regain their status as men; if the community will not accept

them back, then we fail to find the answer to crime.

### The First Offender

Assuming that this individual has fallen to temptation for the first time, I suggest that, if practicable, he should be sent to prison for a short term of about twenty-eight days, with strict discipline and rigid training. This I maintain, would act as a good deterrent for future waywardness and, when he walked out of the prison gate, it must indeed be for the first and the last time. To illustrate this, I was a C.Q.M.S. in a Military Corrective Training Establishment, Khartoum. The sergeant major was a kindly man at heart, but a martinet in the camp itself. Because of its reputation for severity, the crime in the district gradually dwindled to nothing and finally the camp was closed. I am not suggesting for one moment that this type of man management should take place in civilian prisons, but a short, sharp lesson often works wonders.

### The Young Offender

This is the immediate beginning of graduation into crime. Let us first find out from where it started. I am seeing this problem through the eyes of a family man with four children and not as an official. After a great deal of difficulty and patience, I have won the admiration and confidence of my own children. These are the two main factors—admiration and confidence; without them there is no hope of success. The child becomes

a weak character and, like all children, will ape anyone who takes his fancy, quite often the wrong type. In my opinion, the danger age is reached when the child reaches its eleventh birthday. Character and personality start to develop and, when the child is well disciplined, half the battle is won. Parents should not give way at this stage or they fail in their duties and become bad parents.

At fourteen years of age, children have developed sufficiently to know how far they can go. Some of their responsibility lies within their educational training. Parents and teachers should co-operate, but I am afraid that all too often they have their differences. Taking notice from stories often brought home by the child, the parents are often the culprits. We should never give way to the child, even after investigation of any complaint. Problems can easily be settled admirably by discussion with the teacher. If both sides fail, the child becomes irresponsible, selfish and, perhaps, develops high emotional feelings. This is the beginnings of the present day juvenile delinquent. The child breaks the law and it is up to the learned judge to find the answer. What follows is detention centres, approved schools, borstal training or even imprisonment. Now the prison officer takes command. Are we using the correct psychological approach to get their minds into a more healthy condition? I think not. Public opinion, politicians, welfare workers and religious

bodies dictate to us. It is not our heritage to be considered a cruel or a brutal nation. Even our enemies in war have never suggested that. So, there should be no reason to suspect men who have been selected as prison officers resorting to any form of treatment that would be frowned upon by the average person. The Governor is responsible for the conduct of his staff, the Prison Directors must answer for the Governor and the Home Secretary answers to the Government for the welfare of inmates. Surely, we come under the category of responsible citizens and our dealings with the wrong-doer should never be challenged. I believe that the treatment of the young offender is much more difficult to administer. A doctor has a much more simple task in treating a rare disease than we have in doing our job, at least he has found what disease his patient is suffering from before he can treat it and, with his patient's co-operation, he is successful. Our task is so much harder, because of lack of any such co-operation. We must be firm; if the young offender suspects a weak-in an officer's armour, he will pounce upon it. In order to qualify, a professional psychologist must be trained. We have thousands of psychologists in Her Majesty's Prisons—every inmate becomes one.

Discipline must play an important part in the correction of this type of inmate. Without it they would over-run us. The Prison