

Meeting the Public

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"YOU SHOULD HAVE a big lash in front of that" was the comment of a very respectable-looking housewife as she passed along the thirty-foot stand of the Prison Service at the July Liverpool Show.

"Here is half-a-crown for the poor discharged prisoners" was another answer to the call to join the Service, this time from two equally respectable-looking housewives. A more personal interest was taken in the scale model of Walton Prison by a youngster who asked "Which wing's me Dad in?"

A more frequent aside was "That's the place they're always escaping from."

Prominently displayed was the invitation "Come and talk to prison officers from Styal and Walton" and the four of us met some interesting conversationalists ready to discuss penal reform, some of whom began by saying to one another as they came forward "They don't look like prison staff, do they?" We could not help feeling that T.V. had not done us justice!

The stand itself was constructed from material left over from the exhibit mounted by the Central Office of Information at the 1960

Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders. It had been at Wakefield, used for some time in the new Training School, and now refurbished by the painters and carpentry repairs instructors at Liverpool. Photographs from the Central Office of Information, with advertising layouts from Messrs. Smith-Warden, told the story of the Prison Officer, the whole being designed by various members of the staff of the prison.

Who came forward as potential recruits? A bricklayer who came specially in his lunch hour because he had heard we were there: some of the A.T.S. Band who were due for demobilisation in the next few months; a sixteen year old school-girl awaiting her G.C.E. result—and (we thought this rather a tribute) three soldiers from the Army Recruiting van.

Recruiting apart this was a splendid exercise in public relations: not the first in the country of course (Hull Show has already done this sort of thing very successfully) but the first in the North-West, and the first to feature both men and women officers... and we hope it will not be the last.