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### Comment

This issue of the Journal is one of a general nature but has, in fact, addressed itself in large measure to developments that have been taking place in two interrelated areas: the 'shared working' scheme and the interface between the Probation and Prison Services in institutions. There are good examples here of the way in which co-operation between the two services has been mutually beneficial and has provided constructive and purposeful activity for prisoners. The pre-release schemes highlighted here are only some of many; in some the Probation Service have taken the lead, in many others, particularly the first ones at Ranby and Ashwell prisons, the Prison Service took the lead training its own staff who then run the courses. A wider area and, in some respects, a more central one, is the development of the original 'Social Work' in Prisons' scheme now referred to as 'shared working'. For those of us in establishments struggling to commence such schemes it seems that the commitment to support the schemes has never been matched by the provision of adequate staff resources and there are certainly lessons to be learned in terms of applying resources to support a policy initiative. However, interestingly Nigel Stone considers an alternative strategy in his piece on the role of the prison probation officer. Could it be that the presence of the Probation Service has actually hindered the development of the 'social work' content of the prison officer's job? He argues for a social work service based on outside field teams and would remove the existing probation officers from penal establishments. In so doing the resultant vacuum might well lead us to a radical reappraisal of how we are to handle the problems of being a prisoner. Disappointingly for me he suggests that the existing probation role might well not be filled whereas it might be that the withdrawal of the Probation Service would impel us to create social work provision in establishments developing our own officers to take on this work. Finally there is the ever-present issue of overcrowding and initiatives to reduce the prison population. Two of our contributors address themselves to the Home Office review of parole and the original suggestion of extending the parole system with the hope of a 7,000 reduction in population. In the event as we know the approach will be to introduce provision for partially suspended sentences which as our contributors indicate has never been seen as a very sure way of effecting a population reduction, indeed it may well contribute to an increase. As always with new sentencing measures it is in the area of speculation and it will be later in the year before we have any idea of the impact.

The Prison Reform Trust Dr. Stephen Shaw

Home Office Review of Parole in England & Wales— A Critical Examination Roy Light

Home Office Review of Parole in England & Wales— A Critical Appraisal Clive Welsh

An Analysis of Pre-release Courses in Highpoint Prison Enid Tunney and Jim Farebrother

Ford Prison Pre-release Course Christine Caldwell and David Richards

Task-centred Casework in a Local Prison Andrew Deller

Why not? The Alcoholic Prisoner

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### Swings and Roundabouts—the Current State of Prison Welfare Nigel Stone

Health and Safety—Two Sides of the Coin R. C. Cope

The editorial board wishes to make it clear that the views expressed by contributors are their own and do not reflect the official views or policies of the Prison Department.

**APRIL 1982** 



Dr. Stephen Shaw is an economist by training and a graduate of the Universities of Warwick, Leeds and Kent. Now the Director of the Prison Reform Trust, he was previously employed by the Home Office Research Unit and by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. Within the Home Office, Dr. Shaw worked on projects investigating the enforcement of fines and the problem of delays in magisterial justice. For NACRO he prepared the first comprehensive account of the financial consequences of British penal policy.

# TRUST

PRISON

### Dr Stephen Shaw

REFORM

### The Background

Few people would deny that Britain's prisons are in a state of crisis. The present Home Secretary has admitted that prison reform is his most urgent task and the Director-General of the Prison Service has denounced prison conditions as "an affront b) to civilised society". Prison staff are increasingly militant in their demands and industrial relations problems abound. This results in part from the denial of the officers' positive aspirations for a change In their role. For their part, prisoners are denied many of the rights introduced for their counterparts in Northern Ireland. c) Some prisons have witnessed riots. And the prison population continues inexorably to grow. The Prison Reform Trust has been set up to help us break out of the present crisis. It intends to do so by promoting the widest debate about prison conditions, by encouraging community interest in penal establishments and by advocating constructive reforms of prison rules and of penal policy generally. It is our firm belief that prison reform is an idea whose time has come. However, it is not an idea which It will be possible to promote to a general public which is both uninformed and un-Interested. By acting upon that chronic lack of information and of public interest, the PRT believes it possible to facilitate the changes in the system which are essential to meet the crisis. In this objective of changing public attitudes towards those who transgress against society's rules, we hope to follow the examples of Holland, Scandinavia and some states of the USA.

to tackle some of the other features of our prison system which contribute to the present crisis. Some of the more obvious problems which have spurred us to take this initiative are:-

- a) The length of prison sentences.
  - The numbers of unsentenced (remand) prisoners and the conditions under which they are detained. In 1979—the most recent year for which figures are available—the *average* period between

as happens to many of those unconvicted or unsentenced prisoners who are remanded in custody.

This stagnation and squalor which characterises so much of Britain's penal estate means that piecemeal patching up of the system will not do. Nor would the massive building programme, which some have advocated, be of help since this would merely consolidate the present pattern of sentencing, the present prison regimes, and the present penal philosophy. There is evidence to lead us to believe that the size of the prison population is supply-led, and we reject any building plans which add to existing capacity. However, the alternative to a massive building programme is not simply to continue with the status quo. A better alternative is surely a planned and diversified programme of liberalisation, based on the example of other countries, which will set the pattern for penal policy in Britain well into the next century. There is now a mountain of research showing that prisons serve a minimal rehabilitative purpose, and precious little in terms of containment which could not be obtained much more cheaply in community-based alternatives. If we free resources from the prisons there is far more we could do in crime prevention and in providing for the innocent victims of crime, for whom we reserve our greatest sympathy.

committal and trial in London for those detained in custody was nearly 19 weeks.

- The expanding population of young people behind bars and the "short, sharp shock" methods now being introduced.
- d) The insanitary conditions which exist within our penal establishments, based on the degrading ritual of "slopping out".
- e) The under-utilisation of open establishments in the context of an overall shortfall of some 6,000 places.
  - The distorting effects of an excessive emphasis upon security.
- g) The excessive secrecy and the general degree of censorship.
- h) The numbers of socially inadequate petty offenders detained within penal establishments despite the fact that

### The Problems

In addition to the continuing battle against prison overcrowding—and who cannot be horrified by the Home Office forecast of a prison population of 48,000 before the end of 1984?—the *Prison Reform Trust* is keen all authorities are agreed that they should be diverted from prison. The endemic industrial relations problems and the low morale of prison officers.

 j) The failure to develop a positive and welfare role for prison officers. Nor is this an exclusive list of the problems facing society in its relation to its prisons. Many people are unhappy with the way in which parole operates and with prison disciplinary procedures. Moreover, no-one would attempt to justify prisoners being locked up for up to 23 hours a day

### The Need for a New Organisation

The *Prison Reform Trust* has been founded by people—with the notable exception of Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper—not previously involved with the cause of penal reform. The Trustees have come together because they are appalled by the current state of our penal system. The PRT has been formed for a short period (probably only three years) in order to help bring about those

improvements in the system which all the authorities consider to be urgently necessary. The PRT intends to promote a widespread understanding of the need for fundamental reform of the prison system so that no Home Secretary could fail to take account of it nor lack support among the public in introducing such reforms.

There are of course other organisations which already exist to promote penal reform. But no concentrated effort has been made to place the problems of the prison system before the public. Both NACRO and the Howard League for Penal Reform strongly support our initiative because they recognise the need for the public voice which the Prison Reform Trust will provide. The PRT will not duplicate the work of either organisation, which is of a quite different nature. NACRO is not primarily a prison reform group, while the Howard League has to work on a range of day-to-day issues-many involving individual cases—which are not confined to prison matters. The Directors of both NACRO and the Howard League will, however, play an important role in influencing the direction of the PRT's activities, and we will be drawing on their support and experience. The Prison Reform Trust does not intend to become a permanent addition to the political scene. For this reason, and because we will be totally independent of the Home Office, we will be more able to comment openly and fearlessly than many existing organisations. We should state plainly that the PRT intends to operate

that one of the major stumbling blocks to a more rational prison system has been the fear by politicians and officials alike of a backlash from public opinion. We believe we can overcome that fear by educating public opinion to see the need for reform. We are convinced that the Home Secretary and the Director-General of the Prison Service themselves favour broad changes in the way prisons are organised and will, therefore, welcome our endeavours.

Our objectives are interdependent for a further reason. More open access and greater community involvement in the administration of prison establishments are both methods of exciting public interest as well as characteristics of the reformed system which we wish to see. The demand for openness and accountability is both a means to an end and an end in itself. Obviously there is a balance to be drawn between short-term and long-term objectives, and between what can be achieved within the three years we have set ourselves and what could only be achieved over a longer period of time. In the shortterm we think we should set ourselves certain specific targets by which we may be judged: a) On the size of prison population. If by the end of 1984 the prison population has reached the 48,000 predicted by the Home Office we will clearly not have met our objectives. We believe there is much to be said for a planned reduction of the population involving specified totals. On "short, sharp shocks". We confi**b**)

While in the main we will rely on existing sources of information, we shall also be commissioning some short-term research, as research in the prison system has been run down in recent years. We envisage research projects of about six months' duration which will assess the functioning parts of the prison system which we consider most constructive.

In addition to the general public, we hope to influence prison staff—especially on the issues of openness and prisoners' rights—as well as Westminster and Whitehall. We are particularly keen to involve prison officers, not only because of their very considerable power of veto at the operational level, but also because we believe there is a genuine desire by the officers to take on a more positive role than that of turnkey. We are thinking here particularly of the 'Social Work in Prisons' experiments. We believe prison reform could have substantial benefits for prison staff and we intend to carry them with us. Addressing a conference of prison visitors last October, the Home Secretary, Mr. William Whitelaw, himself argued for an end to prison secrecy. He said: "The more informed debate we have about the prison service the better". We hope to encourage prison reform as a central topic to both the local and national media, and to various voluntary organisations. Women's organisations, for example, might consider the purpose of women's prisons and look at the problems of imprisoned mothers. Young people's organisations like the National Association of Boys' Clubs would be encouraged to take an interest in Detention Centres and Borstals. The Prison Reform Trust would facilitate these developments by providing information and organising meetings.

with a high profile.

The timing of the launch of the PRT is particularly sensitive as the prison population reaches a new record high, after the temporary reprieve afforded by the prison officers' dispute. The timing also means that we can build on the signs emanating from the Home Office that it too would welcome the chance to open up our prisons to more public examination. In the past no other area of public responsibility has been less open to inspection and debate. Yet, as the May Committee noted: "Closed institutions above all require open, well-informed discussion". We believe that we will find a receptive audience among MP's and the general public to the argument that people have a right to know what is being done on their behalf in Britain's prisons.

### **Our Aims**

dently expect this 'experiment' to have been abandoned.

c) On Prisoners' Rights. We expect to see the conditions granted in Northern Ireland shared by prisoners on the mainland.

In the longer term we wish to see a replacement of the present prison structure by a structure based on smaller urban prisons with greater community involvement and a reduced emphasis on security. We also wish to see the development of a genuine penal policy and not the present mish-mash of political inertia and administrative convenience.

### **Our Methods**

b)

c)

**d**)

Given that it is our intention to generate a much wider spread of interest in penal affairs than exists at present, we shall:

a) Generate publicity about prisons both nationally and by running local

### A Major New Initiative

The state of British penal establishments, the rules by which they are run and the numbers held within them represents both one of the greatest social anomalies as well as one of the most pressing political problems of the 1980's. Reform on a variety of fronts is long overdue, but reform will only be possible with public support and if the prisons are open to the widest examination. The Prison Reform Trust has been set up to promote that examination and to encourage that support. The PRT does not intend to be a permanent creation. Rather it aims for a onceand-for-all catalytic effect which will give the cause of penal reform the impetus it needs. Public prejudice against prison reform has been successfully overcome in Holland, Scandinavia and in many states of the USA. In launching our appeal for support we are setting out to overcome public prejudice in this country. And indeed the reaction to the BBC Strangeways series of documentaries last year suggests that the public may not be as unsympathetic to our cause as they are sometimes portrayed.

The Prison Reform Trust has five stated objects. These are: to promote the constructive treatment of offenders; to promote the education of the public and to further knowledge of the penal system; to promote research into the penal system; to promote the education of the public and to further knowledge of the training of prison officers; and finally, to promote the above objects by the use of the media, publications, lectures and research projects. Clearly these objectives are not inde-

pendent of each other, for we believe

nationally and by running local campaigns through public meetings, regional newspapers and broadcasting. We expect the first of these local intiatives to be in train by Christmas. Encourage community involvement and help to form links between the community and the prisons. Advocate changes in prison policy and reform of the prison structure. Seek a new impetus for the idea of prison reform with MP's and officials, complementing the work of the All-Party Penal Affairs Committee.

**APRIL 1982** 

# **Review of Parole in England & Wales**

1981-THE HOME OFFICE

## A Critical Examination

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Parole was introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1967 and became fully <sup>operational</sup> in 1969. In 1978 the Home Office undertook an internal review of the system over the previous decade and in May 1981 published the results of that review. Entitled "Review of Parole in England and Wales", it is a timely and well-produced document in two parts. Part 1 considers the history and present working of the system and Part 2 details possible changes in scope and <sup>operation</sup>. Also included is a very useful list of appendices. As the Home Secretary states in his foreword to the report—"it will be most helpful to Parliament and the public to have this document available as a basis for informed discussion of these matters". The present system of parole is under attack from several directions. One view of parole can be illustrated by reference to a recent statement from the National Council for Civil Liberties. "The parole system is inherently unfair and incapable of meaningful reform. It is selective and secretive.... This system of resentencing by the executive has created more resentment and anxiety among prisoners than any other aspect of penology". (1) The report attempts to answer such criticisms and to counter the arguments for the abolition of parole. An opposing view of parole sees its <sup>o</sup>peration as diluting the effectiveness of sentences of imprisonment by providing that the full sentence will rarely, if ever, be served. The report not only attempts to allay this fear but also seeks to test out public opinion in relation to an extension of parole to cover sentences of less than 18 months and to the automatic granting of parole to all sentences of less than three years.



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fitted in well with such thinking. It has though, always been difficult to see how this 'peak of treatment' idea can be used as a justification for our system of parole. Apart from the difficulty of identifying this peak (if indeed such a peak exists), is the fact that eligibility is subject to an arbitrary time limit of one third of the sentence. So that a person serving a sentence of three years could reach this peak after one year, but a person serving a 30 year sentence could not reach it for at least 10 years. Coupled with this is the current disillusionment with the 'treatment model' of punishment and the almost universal acceptance of the inability of imprisonment to rehabilitate or reform. The report deals with these points by stating that the 'peak of treatment' concept has never been the sole criterion for the grant of parole, although "it was an element very much in mind when the scheme was introduced". Failure of faith in the 'treatment model' is then noted and

### Part 1

Contains much of a purely descriptive nature concerning parole and its procedures but also some observations on certain areas which warrant further con-Sideration. A review of the history of parole concentrates on its ideological background as set out in a 1965 White Paper (2), which

was formulated in an era coloured by much optimism concerning the rehabilitation and treatment of offenders. Parole, with its concept of a prisoner reaching a peak of rehabilitation during his sentence and then being released into the community to receive after-care, via the probation service,

reference is made to a statement by the Home Secretary in 1975 (3) and to a section of the Parole Board's Report for 1977 to show that the emphasis is now

"Primarily on the estimation of risk to the public. Consequent criticisms of the scheme on the ground that its reliance on the peak of treatment theory is unsound are now no longer even partially in point. Indeed the Parole Board's Report for 1977 (para 6) advanced almost the opposite doctrine that early release may be desirable precisely because the reformative and rehabilitative functions of imprisonment "are frequently limited" and can "therefore become expensive and wasteful of human resources". (a) If we are to take from the foregoing that parole is now to be granted to those who have become of no risk to the public, then this new concept of a point of non or least dangerousness, must be open to the same criticisms as was the old concept of a peak of treatment. If imprisonment is ineffective, and possibly harmful, in relation to affecting a prisoner's behaviour, then it seems futile to base parole on any concept which assumes such an effectiveness. Although not expressly stated to be so, it seems that the only rationale for parole is the reduction of the prison population by executive action designed to reduce the length of time that a person serves in prison. Could this be a factor which leads the report at a later stage to put forward the idea of automatic parole for sentences of up to three years? The historical perspective is continued with a consideration of the present threetier administrative structure of Local Review Committee, Parole Board and Home Secretary. This structure appears to be a compromise between the need to keep the system within the general scheme of the penal system, and the need to allow the scheme to be administered "by the collective wisdom of a number of people with different viewpoints". The position of the Home Secretary within the system and the composition of the Parole Board are said to reflect this compromise. The structure is a complex and cumbersome one which results in a protracted and restrictive process. Proposals for "speeding up the process" are contained in Part 11 of the report.

These statistics cover most aspects of the system for the years 1969 to 1979 but, as might be expected from a review, not much in the way of conclusions is drawn from them. However, the statistics are said to

"Demonstrate convincingly that the parole selection procedure does identify people who in the event do comparatively well on parole, but is this a question merely of picking out the obvious 'best bets' or does parole itself have any influence?" (c).

The report does not attempt to answer this question but refers the reader to Home Office Research Study No. 38 'Parole in England and Wales'. Indeed, the report uses in defence of parole the question of the possible breakdown of the prison system should the persons now on parole have had to serve their full sentence. Further, the large financial costs involved in keeping such persons in prison and possibly supporting their dependants is seen as further support for parole. However, shorter sentences initially, as, for example in Holland (5), could achieve the same ends and provide additional financial saving in the shape of the cost of the administration of the parolesystem.

The only aspect of parole on which there appears to be almost universal agreement is the beneficial effect on reconviction rates of compulsory after-care, which the report contends would be lost if parole were to be abolished. Of course, compulsory after-care could still be applied in the absence of parole. Lastly the report notes the research findings of Dr. Keith Hawkes in the U.S.A. that the move from indeterminancy towards the 'justice model' has led some states to adopt a more punitive approach with the result that their prison populations have increased. Those who advocate the abolition of parole in England and Wales recognise that to be effective our sentencers must follow the example set in countries such as the Netherlands rather than to adopt a more punitive approach and this is in line with present official thinking on the matter (6).

### Part 11

An introduction notes the success which parole has had in achieving its objectives, (although nowhere in the report are these objectives clearly stated) but recognises that it has also been the subject of criticism and even condemnation. "Possible changes in scope and operation" considers these "in relation to the various proposals for replacement or improvement of the existing system to which they have given rise".

### **Abolition of Parole**

The report concentrates on the argument for abolition which objects to executive intervention in the length of time which a person serves in custody, as this leads to disparity in the amount of imprisonment served for similar offences.

When the 'treatment model' enjoyed currency this was seen as acceptable, but present disillusionment with this approach has led to a move towards a 'justice model' of punishment. This approach, with its concentration on the offence rather than on the offender requires "standard prescribed sentences for all offences which may be departed from by the sentencing court only if there are aggravating or mitigating circumstances which the court must specify". This approach would also result in the removal of the element of indeterminancy in sentencing, which research has shown not to have the reformative effect which it was once thought to have. These ideas appear to be accepted by the report, but no attempt is made to reconcile them with parole. All that is offered is to point out that they are of more relevance to parole systems, such as that in the U.S.A., which contain a much wider discretionary element. The report thus fails to deal with

EXTENSION OF PAROLE TO SHORTER-SENTENCE PRISONERS Prisoners serving sentences of less than 18 months are not eligible for parole and in 1979 this meant that 45 per cent of sentenced prisoners were excluded from the scheme. The report properly notes the practical difficulties in carrying out effective assessment procedure for these shortersentence prisoners, although recognising the desirability of extending parole to include them. This leads to consideration of an alternative scheme (originally suggested by Dr. Roger Hood (7)). "One approach would be to recognise the impracticability of assessing shortsentence prisoners while in custody and to make the element of supervision instead an integral part of the sentence as passed by the court" (d). Thus the offender would serve onethird of his sentence in custody, one-third would be held in suspense and be served on release under the supervision of a probation officer and the remaining onethird would be covered by remission. Any loss of remission, it is suggested, should serve to lengthen the time spent in custody rather than to shorten the time spent under supervision. Because of "the need for a credible minimum period of supervision", the shortest sentence to which the new scheme is suggested to apply is six months, whilst an upper limit of three years is proposed. A similar provision already exists under section 47 of the Criminal Law Act

"Developments in Parole Procedure" details the increased number of prisoners granted parole per annum "from just over 1,800 in 1969 to around 5,000 since 1976, although the number of eligible prisoners has by no means increased in proportion. Whilst welcoming this increased use of parole, the report stresses that being granted parole is not tantamount to a prisoner 'escaping' a part of his sentence, almost as of right, because "parole is an integral part of sentence, although served at liberty (but with supervision) in the community and is a privilege not a right" (b). Part 1 ends, with an explanation of the statistics contained in the appendices.

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this most fundamental aspect of parole and leaves us even further away from establishing a logically correct rationale for the system.

The abolitionist argument which sees parole merely as a far from ideal attempt to ameliorate the problems and injustice produced by an excessively punitive sentencing system is not faced at all by the report. Professor F. H. McClintock has stated that parole has been seen as "a political trick to reduce the prison population without interfering with the sentencing powers of the judiciary" (4). 1977, which allows the court to suspend between a quarter and three-quarters of a sentence of imprisonment of six months to two years. This section has not been activated

"because of fears that the new sentence would be used to give a 'taste of imprisonment' in cases where at present the courts would impose a fully suspended or non-custodial sentence. Inevitably, too, in a proportion of cases the suspended part of the sentence would be subsequently activated" (e).

This appears to be a lesson which has been learned from experience of the way in which the courts have responded in the area of fully-suspended sentences. It is by no means certain that the courts will not react to this new sentence in a similar fashion which would lead to counter-productive results, for example, by imposing longer sentences to counteract early release on parole. An appraisal of the advantages of and objections to Dr. Hood's proposals can be found in a recent publication by N.A.C.R.O., which concludes. "The drawbacks and problems of the present parole system could be largely overcome by Dr. Hood's fairer and more determinate scheme, which would also make a considerable contribution to the reduction of pressure on our severely-overcrowded prisons" (8). The report echoes N.A.C.R.O.'s conclusion and states that taking an optimistic view of all possible factors that "the effect could be a reduction in the prison population of up to 7,000. Additionally it would save the annual cost of considering some 3,500 cases and of supervising some 2,000 cases. That relief would offset to some extent the supervision required by the new scheme"(f). This section of the report, if implemented, would go a long way towards answering many of the present system's critics. However, it will still be seen by 'abolitionists' as merely tinkering around with a discredited system in a futile effort to attempt to ameliorate the true problem, which is one of excessively-long prison sentences. Influential support has been received for the new scheme from, the Lord Chief Justice, the Howard League for Penal Reform, the Parole Board, the all-party Penal Affairs Group, and the Fourth Report of the Home Affairs Committee. Whether the legislation promised by Mr. Patrick Mayhew, the Minister of State at the Home Office, will follow, and whether the changes will have the desired effects, remains to be seen.

grant of parole. The Parole Board's sensitivity to the public reaction which might follow a sentence of say 15 years resulting in only 5 years being served goes some way towards explaining the present criteria and their application. Additionally, the report sees most long sentences as resulting from the commission of grave crimes and therefore the public may be put at risk if such offenders are given early release on parole.

Although this is of course true, it is difficult to see how the public is afforded any long-term protection by continued incarceration, which has already been recognised by the report as being incapable of having any beneficial effect on the inmate and in many cases is counterproductive. We see here the inherent contradiction and dilemma within our system of imprisonment. We cannot allow certain forms of conduct, so those who indulge in such conduct are imprisoned to stop them. Imprisonment is not effective in modifying their conduct and may make it worse. Therefore we use parole to release them, but their conduct is unchanged and therefore to prevent further undesirable conduct we must keep them in prison. The discretionary nature of parole can therefore be seen as an uneasy attempt at a compromise which allows the decision as to release to be exercised at the point of (hopefully), minimum risk both to the offender and to the public. The general criteria governing the grant and refusal of parole are here reproduced in an appendix and the reader is referred to a resumé concerning these, published by the Howard League for Penal Reform (9). Recognising the difficulty a prisoner may face in attempting to assess his chance of a successful parole application by recourse to these official criteria the report states "There can be no precision or certainty in a system of discretionary release" and stresses that individual consideration rather than bureaucratic application of rules results in a fairer and more humane system. Even so, the vague and indeterminate nature of the criteria can be seen to produce unfairness. The evident disparity of standards between L.R.C.s therefore has the disturbing implication that a prisoner's chances of parole may to some extent be influenced by the procedure of allocating him to a particular institution. The report accepts the problems caused but appears to recommend no move towards a clearer

### Letting the prisoner put his own case

At present a member of the L.R.C. interviews a prisoner (if the prisoner is willing) and puts what the prisoner has to say before the full L.R.C. Additionally the prisoner may make his representations to the L.R.C. in writing. The number of prisoners considered each year, is said, to make it impossible for the Parole Board to interview each one and the setting up of regional parole boards to overcome this practical difficulty is not seen as feasible. The possibility of the prisoner being interviewed by the full L.R.C. would, the report suggests, lead to demands for legal advice (and possibly representation) and access to reports made on prisoners, (considered below). Continuing the argument against full L.R.C. interviews the report cites with approval a passage from the Parole Board Report for 1977: "Personal hearings, whilst they might work to the advantage of the sophisticated criminal could disadvantage the unsure and the inarticulate. There is much to be said for the view that good documentation by people with knowledge of the prisoner over the years is the best means of guiding those who have to decide whether parole should be granted" (11). This problem already exists in the interview with the one member of the Local Review Committee (L.R.C.) and also in the prisoner's preparation of a written submission to the full L.R.C. Further it shows a marked lack of confidence in the ability of L.R.C. members to listen sympathetically to the inarticulate and to see through the ostensibly plausible. If this argument against being present and allowed to state one's case is valid then it would be equally valid in relation to hearings in the ordinary courts.

### **Giving reasons for refusal for parole** The issue of reasons being given was not raised during the passage of the legislation introducing parole and the Court of Appeal has upheld a High Court decision that a prisoner has no right to be given reasons for refusal of parole (12). However, the Home Office and Parole Board recognised that it would be advantageous to give reasons if possible. Jointly, they concluded that as different members of the Parole Board may have different reasons for refusing parole in a particular case, it would be difficult to give 'A reason' for refusal. Concouvently they devised a standardized

### Substantive alterations of criteria for the grant of parole

The longer a person's sentence the less likely he is to be granted parole at the first review, and this is seen to be a result of the application of the present criteria for the definition of the general criteria.

### Making the present administrative procedure more judicial

The report expresses doubts as to the advisability of applying certain judicial aspects to what is an essentially administrative procedure, but advances no reasons for this. Several areas have attracted particular attention—letting the prisoner put his own case, giving reasons for refusal of parole and disclosure of papers and legal representation. Consequently they devised a standardised list of factors which caused concern and these could be selected from for a particular case.

Difficulties were experienced in attempts to apply this standardised list method (especially by L.R.C.s in an experiment tried in 1978) and so far no satisfactory alternative method has been devised. A further problem anticipated by the report, if stereotyped reasons were to be given, is an increase in the number of prisoners who might challenge a parole

refusal. This would lead to increased work for the Home Office (the Home Secretary already receives some 1,400 petitions per year against the refusal of parole), the Parole Board, and the L.R.C.s-"and most importantly—the reasons given would be open to challenge in the courts". This is seen as a step towards the making of parole into a right rather than a privilege which would be a major departure from what Parliament originally intended. Also the court hearing would lead to the discovery of the parole papers which may lead to those who write them feeling inhibited as a consequence of the reports possible future publication. The Parole Board offered formal advice to the Home Secretary in a letter in 1979 (reproduced in an appendix to the report) on the question of giving prisoners reasons for refusal of parole and concluded that if reasons were to be given the effect would be to make parole a right to be claimed rather than a privilege to be earned. This would change the very nature of parole and could therefore only be effected by Parliament.

analysis of the existing parole system and the other is to put forward the idea of automatic parole for sentences of less than three years. So far as a critical analysis is concerned the report does outline most of the arguments which have been levelled against parole. It gives no depth of field to these, but it does at least provide the opportunity to find them all in one place. This, is I am afraid, all that can really be said for the report in this respect, for after briefly stating the arguments and in a majority of cases recognising their merit, the report somehow manages to come to the conclusion in every case that no change is recommended (15).

In view of the overwhelming and virtually unanimous condemnation of the closed and secretive nature of parole decision-making it is difficult to accept these conclusions. Those who advocate abolition will welcome these recommendations as proof that parole is incapable of reform and therefore should be abolished, (16), whilst those who wish to see parole continue, but with a far more open and fairer procedure will recognise the specious nature of the report's conclusions (17). The intention behind the report is not difficult to see—a reduction of the prison population which is at a record level. Pleas to the judiciary to shorten sentences have fallen on deaf ears and alternatives to incarceration for certain categories of offender, are politically unacceptable to the present government which is committed to a tough line on law and order. Thus the report is an attempt to 'sell' to parliament and the public the idea of an extension of the parole system. The report therefore stresses how successful the present system has been and demonstrates that it has considered the arguments against parole and dismissed them, which leaves it free to propose an extension to the system which would reduce the pressure on the prisons by some 7,000. There is little doubt that the suggested extension of parole would reduce overcrowding. Those serving sentences of less than 18 months would become eligible for parole and as most of these are at local prisons, where overcrowding is at its worst, the beneficial effects would be maximised. The automatic nature of the process would not be confined to sentences of up to 18 months but would extend to those of up to three years. So there are really two proposals, one that prisoners serving sentences of 6 to 18 months should become eligible for parole and two, that parole should become automatic for sentences of up to three years. This second proposal seems to create something which looks more like remission than parole, as there is no assessment or recall procedure, but there is compulsory after-care and the possibility of a fine if this is not complied with.

compensate for the proposed system, then it should successfully achieve a very useful reduction in prison numbers. However it would not provide a solution to the problem of prison numbers, but merely ameliorate the problem, which is due to the passing of excessively long sentences. The Home Secretary has expressed the wish to see the use of shorter sentences but is reluctant to intervene as the Executive should not interfere in judicial matters, but parole is based on such executive intervention.

The proposed automatic parole would result in the judge having less power than the Executive. The judge would pass sentence but the Executive would be able to control two-thirds of that sentence. So the judiciary could go on passing excessively long sentences which the Executive could quickly reduce by two-thirds. *"It would be simpler and more honest* to cut sentences by half, retain onethird remission for good conduct and abolish parole...(coupled with) a good after-care service" (18).

### Disclosure of papers and legal representation

Dealt with summarily in two paragraphs. The disclosure of reports could lead to a reluctance on the part of those making the reports to freely express their opinions and the resulting non-committal reporting could then not be fully relied upon by the Parole Board and the L.R.C.s. Having dismissed the question of disclosure the report then states that without disclosure of documents there is no need for legal representation. These views reflect the closed nature of the parole decision-making process, which is symptomatic of the secrecy which surrounds our penal system (13). The resulting system has been well-described by Professor Morris: "Here, then we have a sentencing exercise carried out in the absence of the offender who is denied the right of advocacy as well as the right of audience. And if this were not darkness enough, he has no certain knowledge of the criteria employed" (14). Added to this is the absence of any form of appeal against refusal and the nondisclosure of reasons for refusal (even to those involved in the decision-making process), and the result is difficult to accept in a free society. However, whilst recognising how undesirable such a system is, the report appears to support its unmodified

### References

- (1) Rights, Vol. 4, No. 2.
- (2) The Adult Offender, (cmnd. 2852), 1965.
- (3) Roy Jenkins, House of Commons-1/8/75.
- (4) The Future of Parole in Prisons Past and Future, Ed. John Freeman, Heinemann, 1978.
- (5) See for example—Some Developments in Penal Policy and Practice in the Netherlands, H. Tulkens, Barry Rose, 1979.
- (6) See for example—the Fourth Report from the Home Affairs Committee, The

Prison Service, H.M.S.O., July 1981.

- (7) Some Fundamental Dilemmas of the English Parole System and a Suggestion for an Alternative Structure in Paroleits implications for the Criminal Justice and Penal Systems, Cambridge 1974.
- (8) Parole-the Case for Change, N.A.C.R.O., Barry Rose, 1977.
- (9) The Parole Decision—a Guide from Official Sources, Howard League for Penal Reform, Barry Rose, 1977.
- (10) The Local Review Committee, J. P. Martin in The Future of Parole, Ed. D. J. West, London 1972.
- (11) Report of the Parole Board 1977, para-28.
- (12) Payne v Lord Harris of Greenwich and Others, TLR 26/3/81.
- (13) See Prisons' Secrets, S. Cohen and L. Taylor, 1978.
- (14) The Case for Abolishing Parole, T. Mortis, New Society 19/6/80.
- (15) For a selection of contrary views see Prospects for Parole. A Review of the System and Attitudes to it, by S. Mackey,

continuance.

### **Speeding up the process**

The process takes some 15 weeks to complete. The report recognises this as a serious problem, but after itemising the various stages in the process concludes that it is not possible to cut this delay appreciably.

### Conclusion

6

There are two distinct purposes served by the report. One is to present a critical N.A.C.R.O. 1980.

- (16) See e.g. Parole Should Be Abolished, A. Samuels, Justice of the Peace, March 17, 1979.
- (17) See e.g. the Guardian Leader of 6/11/82.
- (18) RAP Policy Statement. The Abolitionist, No. 8, Spring 1981, p.25.
- (a) para. 4.
- (b) para. 26.
- Any attempt to reduce the gross over- (c) para. 38. crowding in the prisons is to be welcomed (d) para. 56. and providing the judiciary did not react by (e) para. 58. increasing the length of sentences to (f) para. 59.

**APRIL 1982** 

## HOME OFFICE REVIEW OF PAROLE IN ENGLAND AND WALES (MAY 1981) A Critical Appraisal

### Clive Welsh

The Parole system has now been with us for 15 years, and recent events have highlighted the conflicts which exist concerning its aim and purpose. Last year's 'Review' not only discussed possible changes to the current parole system, it also made it clear that the Government intended to introduce a form of parole for prisoners serving between 6 months and 18 months. As we know, this proposal met bitter opposition from the Magistrates' Association and much of the Judiciary, as well as from Conservative Party members. As a result, it has not been included in the 1981 Criminal Justice Bill. Nevertheless, the incident did highlight the prime purpose and the basic objection to the proposal: its purpose was to reduce the prison population (rehabilitation was but briefly mentioned); and the objection was that the scheme would 'interfere with the powers of the court'.

as advantages of the scheme. When the parole scheme was modified and extended in 1972 (C.J.A. gave power to the Local Review Committee to recommend release in certain cases) and 1975 (the Home Secretary announced new, more liberal, criteria for early release), which were both periods when overcrowding was regarded as critical, many felt that rehabilitation had been replaced by 'administrative considerations'.<sup>2</sup> Such a view is hardly surprising: most Western countries have been making attempts at reducing the populations of their increasingly expensive prisons and psychiatric hospitals<sup>3</sup>; simultaneously, the treatment and training model has been called into question. Indeed, the Review admits to the abandonment of the concept of a 'peak of training' and, in effect, the abandonment of the rehabilitational charter upon which parole was founded. There is, in any event, little evidence that early release on licence has any effect on reconviction rates in the long run, though offending

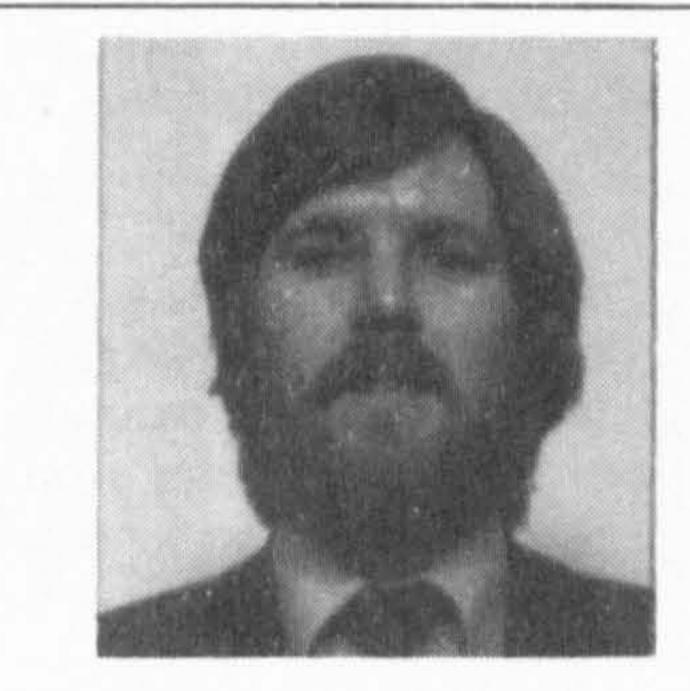
Prior to discussing the proposed scheme, and my views on the lessons to be learned from the whole episode, I propose to make a few points with respect to the wider review of the current parole system.

Parole was introduced at a time when the prison population was rapidly rising, and there was a widespread belief in the efficacy and desirability of 'treatment and training'. It was felt that a tariff system of sentencing (however modified by mitigation) was a barrier to rehabilitation, because the Judge could not be expected to know when a man would be 'fit' for release, whereas the prison staff and specialists could recognise a 'peak of training' which was the optimum time to release offenders, at least in terms of rehabil-Itation. The first logical difficulty encountered by the parole system is that rehabilitation decisions may conflict with the other aims of sentencing: deterrence, protection of

the public or a dramatical statement of society's denunciation of a serious offence. It is clear that many parole decisions are based on these 'quasijudicial' factors rather than on the question of rehabilitation.<sup>1</sup>

The extent to which parole has been used as a device to try to reduce the prison population has been a source of concern to observers ever since the publication of 'The Adult Offender' in 1965 and the 1967 debates in

Parliament. Both referred to the relief during the period of the licence is of overcrowding and financial savings slightly reduced.<sup>4</sup>



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However, these were not the concerns of the Home Office's Review. It concentrated on the piecemeal reforms suggested by critics to improve the current system. The ideas that prisoners should be given reasons for being refused parole, that the administrative system should be speeded up and that the prisoner should be able to present his case to the L.R.C. are all discussed in some depth and rejected. Equally, the proposal which aims to achieve all the ends contained within these reforms (Regional Parole Boards) is rejected, mainly on the grounds that it is believed that it would be impossible to staff these Boards with people of a sufficiently high quality to allow the Parole Board to delegate their authority to these Boards, which would, it was felt, need to meet very frequently. The only radical changes suggested by critics which are (briefly) discussed are abolition and making the process more judicial. The latter is, in my opinion, rightly rejected on the grounds that the complexity of parole decisionmaking is not susceptible to the judicial processes of legal representation and evidence; though this, in itself, calls into question the objectivity of the decisions made. This is not to call the motives of decision-makers into question, it is merely to point out that we know too little about the actiology and predisposing causes of crime to be able to state with any confidence the likelihood of an individual offender committing another crime, or the likely seriousness of that crime. The process is further complicated by the problem of public reaction to parole decisions: it is hardly surprising that in addition to the possibility of putting the public at risk, "the practice of the Parole Board is to give first priority...to the public interest".<sup>5</sup> Abolition is also ruled out on, what are for me, revealing and unconvincing grounds. The review refers to the economic advantages of the scheme and claims that abolitionists too readily identify the faults of the American system with Britain. It states that abolitionists' views are linked to the 'justice model' (true), punitive sentiments (a misreading of the concept of retribution), increased prison populations and plea-bargaining. Whilst these have been symptoms of some American states which have abolished parole, they are not inevitable consequences. There are alternative methods of dealing with prison overcrowding and increasingly long prison sentences, if there is the political will so to do.

Parole, I feel, tends to represent an attempt to tackle these problems without appearing to limit the 'authority' of the court'. One suggestion, which could hardly be branded in these reactionary terms, was put forward by the May Inquiry: "a more sophisticated version of the conditional release scheme operated in Northern Ireland". (p.56) This proposal does not receive a mention in the Review, though its similarities with the proposals for 'parole for shorter sentences' are, I feel, obvious. Equally, methods of freeing the parole decision-making process from the previously mentioned 'quasijudicial' considerations, which bedevil the system, are not mentioned. An example of this type of reform is suggested by D. A. Thomas.<sup>6</sup> He suggests that the Courts could be given the power to restrict parole elgibility (as did May) on the basis of the nonrehabilitational aims of sentencing, especially deterrence and denunciation. This would free the parole board to concentrate purely on the question of rehabilitation. Such a proposal is obviously lessened to the extent that the rehabilitational ideology, which heralded the introduction of parole, is in decline but the same could be said of the whole notion of parole. What

for activation. There was, however, to be no provision for recall by the executive. The Review refers to a 'suspended' period and to the supervision being similar to Suspended Sentence Supervision Orders; these are less exacting than Parole or Borstal supervision licences. The whole scheme is described as a 'rethink' of Section 47 of the Criminal Law Act of 1977, which has not yet been activated.

Section 47 provided for partial suspension of between a quarter and three-quarters of a prison sentence between 6 months and two years. The Review justified its non-implementation in terms of a fear that it might result in offenders being given a 'taste of imprisonment' where now a noncustodial or fully suspended sentence might be given. It states, vaguely, that Section 47 would not "confer any advantage in the treatment of individual offenders". (p.14) In the light of these comments, it is suprising to find that, in the face of opposition to the proposals, the Government has decided to implement Section 47, amended in three ways: to reduce from 6 months to 3months the minimum sentence to which it can be applied, and to reduce from one-quarter to 28 days the minimum period which must be spent in custody; whilst these may in themselves be laudable amendments, they seem hardly likely to reduce the possibility of the Review's concern about offenders being given a 'taste of prison'. Thirdly, a Court will not be able to pass a partially suspended sentence unless it satisfies itself that a wholly suspended sentence would be inappropriate; similar constraints with respect to Community Service Orders and Suspended Sentences themselves do little to inspire my confidence that the new provision will be a genuine 'alternative' to a sentence of imprisonment. The crux of the Review's criticism of Section 47, however, is the fear of the activation of the partially suspended sentence; all of which would be activated if an offence is committed prior to the E.D.R., whereas, under the proposed scheme, only the unexpired part of the 'suspended portion' of the sentence could be activated on conviction prior to E.D.R. Thus, a crucial aspect of the 'rethink' was that offenders would be at risk of reactivation for a shorter period, and the period of the reactivation would also be shorter; in other words, the proposed scheme was expected to have a greater effect on the reduction of the prison population than Section 47.

is significant is the absence of a discusssion of this problem.

As a consequence of the selection of the criticisms of parole presented in the Review, the overall impression created is that there are only three alternatives: the current system (amended only by the proposals for shorter sentences), a fully judicial process, and abolition (with Americanstyle consequences). It is, therefore, wholly unsurprising that the Review opts for a continuation of the current system.

### The Proposals for Shorter Sentences

The Review suggested that extending release under supervision to those serving sentences of under 18 months would be beneficial. It admitted that the length of time it takes to process reports and decisions (up to 6 months) prevented the extension of the current scheme. It suggested that for sentences between 6 months and 3 years, there should be 'automatic' release on a modified form of licence at the onethird point of a sentence (plus lost remission). Any conviction during the period of the licence would result in that portion of the sentence up to the E.D.R. (two-third point) being eligible

The other attraction of the Review's proposal was that early release would involve a period of supervision by a Probation Officer. The length of this supervision would be as little as 2 months. The current parole scheme is already criticised for the shortness of the period of supervision (49% of 1978) licences were of less than 6 months duration), and research has cast doubt upon the effectiveness of short licences and suggests that "for the most part, the reality of community supervision is that it offers crisis support for a short time in cases of need, provides continuing oversight, and fulfills the general requirement of maintaining an association between a convicted offender and the penal system for a specified period".<sup>7</sup> (my emphasis). Whether such supervision is always needed or beneficial is rarely questioned. am not criticising the Probation Service, merely asking for a realistic assessment of their capabilities, especially in the face of hostile offenders, those who do not relate in casework terms, and, for that matter, those who do not 'need' supervision: in short, the casework relationship should not be regarded as a panacea. In view of this, there is a case for a more flexible approach to early release; either the Court or the Executive could be given the power to substitute a suspension of the unexpired part of the sentence for supervised release on licence. The disadvantage of this idea, apart from the fact that a longer portion of the sentence is likely to be eligible for reactivation, is that it reduces the Important tactical contact between the offender and the penal system. However, the failure of the Review's proposals to convince sentencers that It represented anything other than a reduction of their power suggests that this factor is not, in itself, crucial. Two other points raised by the Review in connection with the proposals for parole for shorter sentences are of wider significance. Inexplicably, the Review seems to feel it necessary to add weight to its proposals by suggesting that it was put forward by Roger Hood of the Cambridge Institute of Criminology. In fact, in 1974, Hood suggested that a scheme of automatic parole like this should replace all parole, though this suggestion was not discussed in the Review. Secondly, the possibility of Courts being able to insist that the middle third of the sentence be served in custody in certain circumstances is raised; for example if the offender has previously failed supervision. This idea

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is similar to that of Thomas which I have already mentioned.

Whilst all these specific proposals are not so relevant, now that they have been shelved, the comments and thinking of the Review remain as an insight into the logic of current policy. Personally, I hope that the Review's proposals for short-term parole will be introduced (in the future) as an alternative to partially suspended sentences, that is if the current parole system is still in force.

### **A Future for Parole?**

left to decide whether it is likely to have accounted for the whole rise, especially after 1969, when the early suspended sentences were completed (or activated). If, as suggested, parole is not a particularly effective method of reducing the prison population, what is its future, if indeed it has one? Increasingly, critics are suggesting that all the grounds for its introduction are invalid, at least within its current framework. Lawyers argue that the process is unfair because it is not judicial. Whilst Payne lost his High Court application to be told the reasons for his being refused parole in July 1979, the recent increase in judicial review of decision-making in prison, implied in the St. Germain/Hull B.O.V. case, suggests that the current processes may at some stage be forced to become more judicial; the spectre of legal representation at parole hearings would surely result in reform. Automatic parole must be considered a possibility, as must greater power for the courts to restrict eligibility. These reforms may well stave off greater judicial review of the decision-making. However, in view of the criticisms of the rehabili-

The suggested system of release on licence for shorter sentences was probably the best part of the Review. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognise it for what it was: an attempt to reduce the prison population (by up to 7,000) rather than a provision designed to improve the rehabilitation of offenders, or even to remedy the problems associated with offenders serving 18-36 months under the current parole system; though, that would have been the case. This fact tends to reinforce the conclusion that parole is now essentially an administrative tool in

Sentence Lengths for 1961-1974, based on an index of 100 in 1961. (Source: Prisons and the Prisoner, HMSO 1977.)

Year 1961 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974

Index	100	93.9	93.4	120	126	132	131	131	142	155
No. of 10 yr + sentences							86		111	87

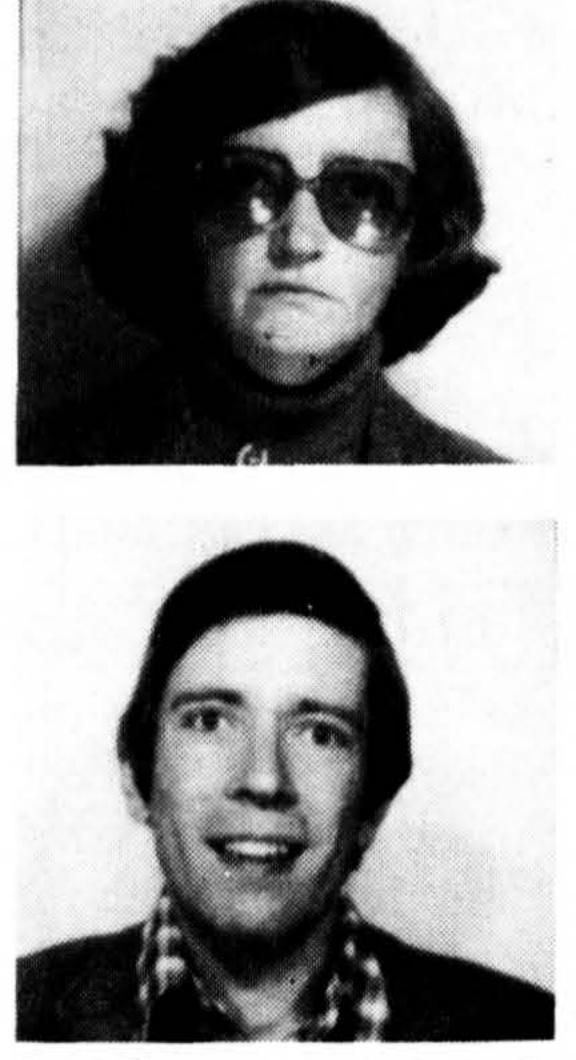
the battle against overcrowding. Its advantage, in terms of not appearing to directly alter the power of the courts, has now been diminished by the processes which led to the shelving of the proposals. However, I feel that this supposed advantage has always been overstated: even the Review had pointed to the possibility of sentences being increased had the proposals been implemented. The experience of increasing sentence lengths since 1967 adds to the doubts about parole effectiveness with respect to the prison population. Whilst direct comparison with the years before 1967 are not completely accurate, because of the introduction of suspended sentences at the same time as parole, the following table does illustrate that between 1961 and 1967, sentence lengths had been falling; that there was a sharp increase in sentence lengths in 1968; and that they continued to rise until 1974. Whilst the activation of suspended sentences must account for some of these rises, the reader is

tational basis of parole, it is unlikely that the mounting criticism of the scheme will stop. Only automatic parole could have that effect with respect to lawyers and criminologists; the courts would presumably take an altogether different view, since automatic parole would be seen as an erosion of the sentence in much the same way as increasing remission.

This paper has offered no real solutions to the problems faced by the parole system; indeed, many readers may feel that the problems presented are too complicated for solution. The crucial point is that the problems are complicated: certainly more difficult to resolve than the Review suggests. As a final criticism of the Review, I would like to point out that the one real alternative to parole as a means of reducing the prison population—namely restricting sentence lengths and the imposition of custodial penalties—is not mentioned.

continued on page 21





# Highpoint Prison

## Enid Tunney Jim Farebrother

Senior Probation Officer

**Probation Officer** 

### History

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Pre-release courses using a social and lifeskills approach have become an important part of preparation for release in several prisons. Most seem to be run mainly or entirely by prison officers and claim a significant level of effectiveness in enabling inmates to plan more appropriately for their return to society. Courses run at Highpoint are unusual in that they were initially devised and run entirely by the Probation Department with marginal support from other prison staff. The successful involvement of a prison officer was achieved after the courses had become established and recognised. We had to accept seemingly unsurmountable hurdles like changes of prison officers' work schedule, sickness and industrial dispute. The courses have been running since May 1979 but over the past seven months we have been working in a positive partnership with other prison staff for their continued development.

Social and life-skills training derives from research carried out in the fields of experimental and social psychology and it employs an active educative process in which participants decide on the types of skills they wish to develop. We found this particularly appealing in the prison setting which inevitably limits the choices and initiative open to prisoners. Rather than attempting to teach people what constitutes the "right" behaviour in any situation, social skills training encourages them to identify the most appropriate behaviour in any problem situation and develop the desired behaviour through a process of modelling, practice and feedback. We were reluctant to be involved in traditional prerelease preparation which relies primarily upon a didactic model and the use of visiting speakers, feeling that this approach denies prisoners the opportunity of making a contribution to the learning of others based upon individual experience or existing skill.

Enid Tunney entered the Probation Service in 1957 serving in Lancashire and Cheshire before appointment in 1967 to Blundeston Prison. After promotion in that post she returned to the field in 1972.

After training at Southampton University, Jim Farebrother became a Probation Officer in 1973 and served in Worcestershire for 4 years.

Both joined Highpoint Prison in 1977 where they established a system of shared working with Prison Officer grades. They left Highpoint in 1981 to run a Probation Hostel in Ipswich where a comprehensive social and life skills training programme for young offenders is being developed.

tion, setting up, and running of a community-based social skills course (for unemployed statutory clients of field probation officers in the Ipswich area) we would assert that we face the same recruitment and attendance problems as any community-based course if the spirit of 'voluntarism' to which we subscribe is conscientiously applied. We do have different organisational and management problems from those mounting communitybased courses. When we started running courses questions were asked from several quarters about the wisdom of our considerable investment of resources (2 probation staff out of a total complement of 3) and we also had to tackle the more subtle problems arising out of the apparent discrepancy between a one-week intensive course offered to a few inmates, and the "usual instant welfare service" which an institution relying on history and tradition expects of its Probation Department. We answered the first question by pointing to the positive results achieved for most inmates who attended our courses, and currently cope with the second by arranging for wing-based Prison Officers to cover during our absence. This has had a useful spin-off over a period in the accelerated development of prison officer involvement in 'welfare' tasks, and more sensitive use of each others' skills. Apart from the difficulties relating to our role in the prison setting we also face the usual issues of obtaining physical resources, e.g. rooms, printed material and video equipment, and recruitment of course members.

The five day courses which we now run grew out of our personal experience on social skills training courses and the optimistic, practical and open-ended approach we encountered. We found social skills to be a particularly helpful way of focussing upon realistic and meaningful personal objectives. Our work has been closely modelled upon the methods and material compiled by Priestly and McGuire et. al.<sup>1</sup> One of us had brief involvement in an employment preparation course run with the prison Chaplain and a volunteer personnel manager, which was a forerunner to our pre-release courses.

### Resources

Undoubtedly the characteristics of the prison regime and features of the inmate population (Category C & D, mainly short and medium-term sentences) have played a significant part in enabling us to develop courses. We do not support those of our colleagues who feel that prison probation officers have less problems in getting social skills courses off the ground because (unlike field probation officers) we have a malleable "captive audience". Having had considerable involvement in the prepara-

### The Client Group

Inmates who are serving any length of sentence but are within 3-6 months of release are recruited. We have found that a reasonable length of time between the end of the course and release offers opportunities for further work to be undertaken, e.g. job-interview practice with visiting personnel managers or focussed work with Probation Service staff. Our criteria for a place on the course are flexible and we usually invite those with a definite parole date to join. We are convinced that men who have been working on an individual basis with wing Prison and Probation Staff who have been able to identify problem areas tend to gain the most from attendance on the course which then forms a continuum of intervention. However the course also has value in enabling other men who do not have a clear focus to explore their release problems in more depth and they usually define areas upon which they can subsequently work. Potential course members are seen on an individual basis when the purpose, content and methods adopted by the course leaders are carefully explained. After this interview, if the man seems interested, an initial questionnaire is completed. This gives a measure of perceived problems, level of confidence, and attitude towards learning how to handle himself and others more effectively. Answers given on the collective questionnaire of potential course members form the inital basis of course content, which is arrived at by scoring how frequently a particular aspect is mentioned. We have found that "employment and job finding", "accommodation" and "money problems" are invariably featured, whilst the more nebulous areas of "settling back into the family", "facing other people", "coping with officials", "thinking for yourself", also figure quite highly. More personal concerns such as "staying off drugs" or "coping with the responsibilities of fatherhood" are usually expressed at this stage. The initial questionnaire forms part of the follow-up evaluation conducted by personal interview between course member and leaders and it is completed again at the end of the course, thereby giving an objective comparison. Potential course members are seen collectively twice as a group to confirm commitment, clarify what the course involves and identify probable content.

amount of advice and information is likely to be helpful unless feelings of confidence and competence in handling a particular problem situation are explored. Consequently our main but not exclusive focus as course leaders has been upon the area of feelings about self in relation to other people.

The assessment phase of the course involves the group in learning to work individually and together on various pieces of material to enable clearer identification of likely release problems, strengths and weaknesses. As early as possible we encourage course members to consider the impact of their behaviour on other people and explore alternative ways in which they can change the handling of their situation. In addition we set up a pattern of small group meetings as well as whole group sessions. We have found this to be a particularly effective way of ensuring that course and personal objectives are decided on the second day of the course. We invite every member of the course to write and display a personal objective and these can range from "finding a flat before I leave prison" to "being a success". Course objectives are similarly agreed and displayed and typically include very practical goals, e.g. "practising job interviews", as well as more intangible aspects, e.g. "building selfconfidence" or "improving my ability to put myself across". Most of the remaining time is then devoted to working at course and personal objectives by intensive *learning* sessions using a whole repertoire of social skills materials and group work including discussion, role-play, video, questionnaires, rating-scales, etc. The limitations of the prison setting are recognised, i.e. that certain objectives may have to be left until after release to be fully attained. The areas usually covered include returning to the family, employment and simulated job interviews, coping with stress, attitudes to authority, finance and the DHSS, handling personal relationships and accommodation. We endeavour throughout to identify strengths and build upon these. The pre-release course is a tangible reminder that life after prison is real and not the fantasy by which some inmates live out their sentences. It is often the first opportunity a man has had since commencing his sentence to make his own decisions. He takes part, defines objectives and attends as he chooses without fear of sanction. Most course members acknowledge during the week that there is a life to return to which will demand skills, independence, self-management and awareness of others. We aim to try and help course members explore their options in stressful situations and expose how they feel using the climate and duration of the course. We have found that this process is considerably enhanced by our willingness to be involved in group exercises which usually expose our own uncertainties and inabilities as well as strengths in certain situations. These can then be shared with course members. We believe that course members' ability to

experience us as human beings with strengths and frailties rather than functionaries performing a role has a crucial bearing on future attitudes to and successful encounters with authority figures.

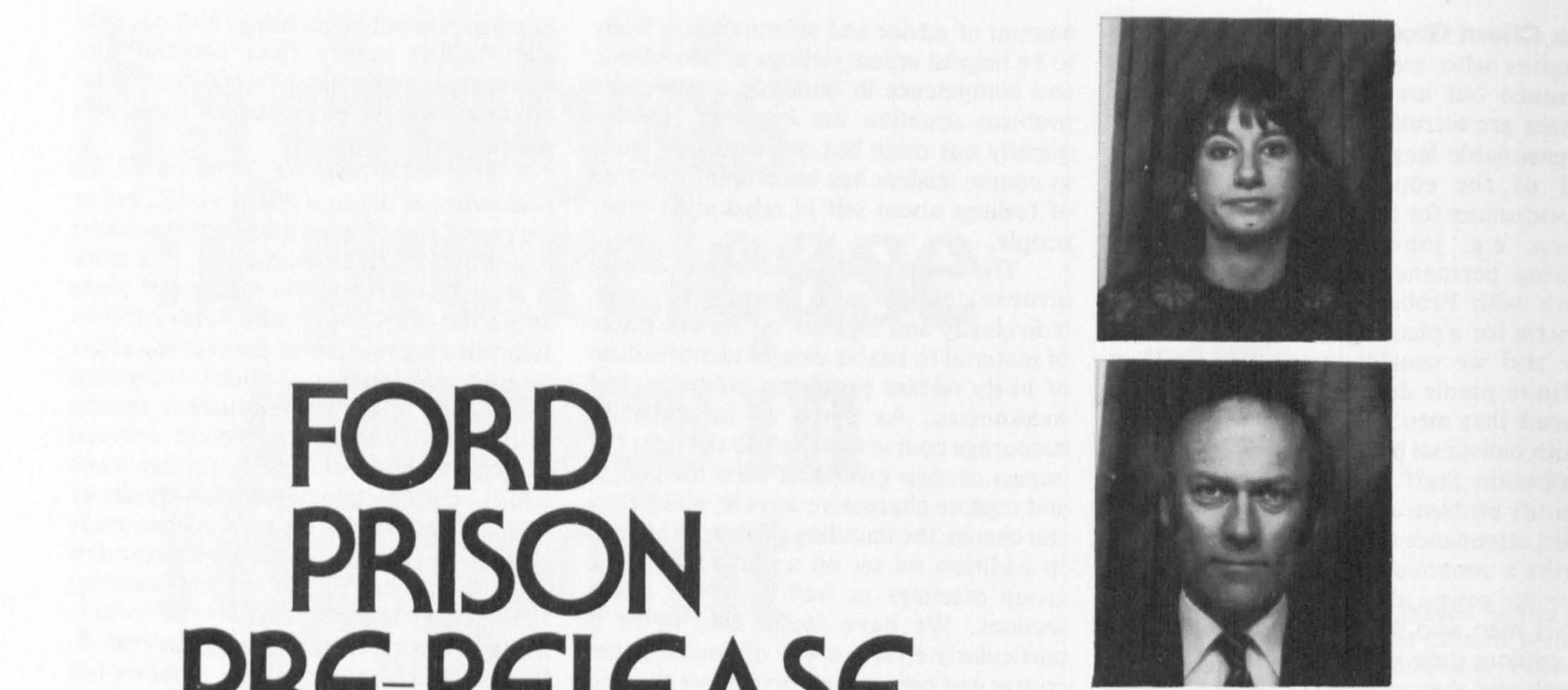
The final session is devoted to evaluation of the course as a whole, but at the end of each day we ask course members to evaluate the work of that day. The latter is an invaluable objective measure of views about the course but it also helps confirm subjective impressions of the course's effect on each individual, e.g. when it is creating difficulties. The final evaluation session attempts to summarise ground covered during the week and clarify further work which could be attempted individually or with staff assistance. We offer and normally have a post-course evaluation interview with each course member. At these meetings the course leaders discuss the course member's performance during the course, how he has come across to us, what we feel he has achieved and suggestions for further work. We complete an assessment questionnaire independently. The course member provides his own appraisal of what he feels he has achieved and further objectives may then be agreed. In many instances the prerelease course opens up further areas of work and can be followed by linking men with other resources. Some of these resources have been developed as a direct result of the course, e.g. Gamblers Anonymous, others are used more effectively as a direct result of it.

#### **Course Climate**

We have found that the intensive and varied experience of working closely with other people can enable course members to get a better measure of their personal strengths, skills and potential which may have previously gone unrecognised. This can have considerable impact upon their subsequent handling of situations at least within the prison. We know of one inmate who felt that as a result of negotiating skills, partly discovered on the course, he was able to explain his infringement of prison discipline and put himself across more appropriately to the Board of Visitors. For others the course can suggest alternatives, an inmate who in his own words "just seems to give up" decided to redouble his efforts to work upon his family's problems. Apparently trivial changes such as these are a recurring feature in the aftermath of the courses and in the prison setting where personal esteem amongst many inmates is frequently at a very low ebb they can represent a real achievement. Feedback from visiting personnel managers who conduct realistic job interview practice also suggests that inmates coming to them from the course are particularly sensitive to how they put themselves across. As a result of course members' involvement in finding alternative ways of handling their own release problems some have shown considerable creativity in helping to devise a game which simulates likely budgetting and financial problems to be faced in the first week after release. continued on page 24

### **Group Process**

Pre-release courses comprise four interlinked stages. Approximately 11/2 days is devoted to assessment, 1/2 day setting objectives, 21/2 days learning and 1/2 day evaluation. Course sessions are planned within a 6-hour working day. Although we have a written programme for each day we have concentrated on developing a flexible approach sensitive to the needs of the moment as we understand them. We have moved away from practical information-giving as the main method adopted. We have come to the conclusion that no



## PRISON PRE-RELEASE COURSE

Christine Caldwell David Richards Christine Caldwell trained at the Middlesex Polytechnic and joined the West Sussex Probation Service where she worked at Crawley until 1979. For the next two years she was seconded to Ford Prison and is now at the Horsham office. Her interests include student supervision and work in the field of social skills.

After 13 years in the Telecommunications industry David Richards completed the Home Office mature students' course in 1969 entering the Probation Service at Coventry and subsequently working in the Berkshire and West Sussex Services, including 3 years at Ford Prison. He is now at the Bognor Regis office and has a particular interest in the effects of

The team of 6 probation officers seconded to Ford Prison began considering alternative ways of working within the prison in September 1979. We decided to concentrate our resources on pre-release preparation, in particular we identified a need for basic social skills training for a proportion of the men leaving Ford Prison. As an attempt to meet this need it was agreed that we would establish a pre-release social skills course for 2 weeks each month. For this to be possible we had to have a commitment to it from the whole team, and it was necessary to carry out a major reorganisation of our work in the prison.

### Motivations

Our policy in setting up the pre-release unit was to provide an easily understood approach to working with inmates using as wide a variety of sources as possible. We hoped to improve an inmate's ability to prepare for and to cope more ably with the problems he would face during the early days of his release, for example housing, employment and money. In the broadest sense we hoped inmates would acquire and retain basic facts, ideas and skills for future use, now commonly known as social skills. We felt that inmates going through the two-week course would be better-equipped to handle any social situation that they would find in their own environments and thereby have some control and self-direction over the course of their lives.

exercises and written information about himself are kept in this file and retained by him for the 2-week period. He is allowed to take this file out on release, and hopefully will use it as a ready source of information or as a reminder when attempting to cope with any problems that arise. This file is confidential to the inmate and is not read by any member of the staff. alcoholism on criminality.

all issues apertaining to obtaining employment, for example writing for a job, telephoning and role-playing interviews follow. The programme attempts to cover all areas that are likely to be encountered during the first few weeks after release, and these include employment, D.H.S.S., Social Services, leisure and so forth. Various forms of learning are employed and it is stressed that there is no direct teaching. The emphasis is on course members learning from each other. A diversity of presentation is used and in the written exercises we have drawn heavily on the ideas presented in the training course run by Philip Priestley and James Maguire.1 Others include role-plays and simulation using video equipment. To avoid the course being too intense, some sessions were inserted to provide light relief -not only for the prisoners but also for the course leaders-although these were chosen carefully to ensure that they were of some benefit. Session leaders were drawn from various sources and include probation voluntary associates, prison education department volunteers, tax inspectors, a solicitor and the probation officers within the Ford team as well as demonstrators from the Post Office and Gas Board. However, for consistency and evaluation the authors of this paper were fully involved for the 2-week period, and one or both continued on page 17

At the commencement of the course each inmate is given a personal file and

### Planning

The programme was planned so that the practical issues were dealt with early on, gradually reaching a point where more indepth issues such as personal feelings and self-awareness were tackled once members of the unit gained trust in the group. Certain subjects were designed to follow a natural progression, i.e. employment where the realities of the subject are discussed and then

**APRIL 1982** 

# Task-centred casework in a LOCALTISOII

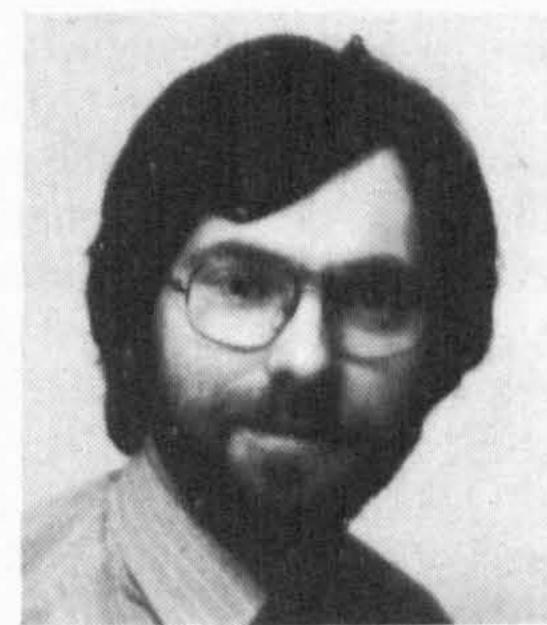
### Andrew Deller

A Probation Officer working in the Prison-setting has dual responsibility—to the functioning of the institution and to the maintenance of acceptable standards of social work support for the inmates. For some Probation Officers the constraints on and ethics of Prison-based work are irreconcilable with their personal values or working philosophy; there is often reluctance amongst field workers to enter secondment into a Prison Probation team and suspicion, doubts or straight fears about the motives of a colleague who "goes inside". At the worst, Prison Probation work is seen to be an escape from the pressures of field work, the final niche of a team-mate who has "lost his nerve". Yet, the decision to work "inside" can be rooted in a genuine desire to followthrough the client's life experience, to effect social work at a time when the individual's personal resources are under greatest constraint; to create in an environment of containment an atmosphere which allows individual change.

step towards helping the individual client towards coping with these emotions en masse.

My experience of probation work in the local prison environment of high turnover and often short-term involvement has been that the task-centred format optimises the scope for social casework. For example, my records indicate that over the past eighteen months I have entered a mutually-agreed contract of work with a mean weekly total of 55 inmates from a pool of 120-180, the determining criteria being the number of interview man-hours of the working week. I should like to give a simple explanation of the task-centred technique before moving on to explain its relevance for social work in the institution (Prison) setting. The term "task-centred casework" produces an allergic reaction in some people and for those who are unsure of its workings it seems to be variously, incomplete casework of a hurried technique of disposal. I like to think that my clients find it none of these. By way of explanation, I shall create stages of the casework relationship, as follows.

Over the next twelve months, around in conjunction with the field worker as to 8,000 men will pass in and out of the main who becomes the prime worker or acts as Block at Norwich Prison. This represents a the Liaison Officer, working on behalf of formidable turnover of caseload for the his colleagues in the field. three Probation Officers who work there. In a local prison, the input of normal With inmates serving sentences as short as work-load becomes magnified by Turnover 7 days and as long as tens of years, their and high numbers. The client's emotional requirements, expectations and demands state is a seesaw between tension and relief are varied. The length of stay at Norwich and the Prison Probation Officer is often Prison is indeterminate and, whilst it is seen, by inmates and Prison Officers, as possible to make some prediction as to The Beginning the provider of rapid solutions as the client, how long a sentenced prisoner will be in The first point to be ascertained is the in his desperation, channels successive the Main Block section of the Prison before demands through any open channel. existence of a mutually-acknowledged being moved to a training establishment, Anxiety, frustration, anger, resentment, difficulty, one which is within the scope the pattern of casework can be broken by of the worker and his agency. The taskinsecurity, unhappiness, manipulations, the client's sudden transfer to another centred framework encourages the worker boredom. For the Probation Officer, any institution. Norwich Prison is similar in organisation and regime to the many local Prisons about the country, and the areas of probation work responsibility are the same; to assess the client's needs, to instigate through-care support where appropriate, to help the client make (or to effect on his behalf) provision for his release. The Prison Andrew Deller worked as a Probation Officer Probation Officer decides the tenure and in Peterborough for three years before being scope for involvement. This varies with seconded to Norwich Prison for the period each institution, but the broad possibilities 1979/81. He is currently at the Norwich office are that the Prison Probation Officer decides of the Norfolk Probation and After-Care Service.



to look at the type of problem, from amongst a number of categories:

- i) Interpersonal conflicts.
- ii) Dissatisfaction in Social Relations.
- iii) Problems with formal organisations.
- iv) Difficulties in Role Performance.
- v) Problems of Social Transition.
- vi) Reactive emotional distress.
- vii) Inadequate resources.
- viii) Personality or behaviour disorders not classified in i) to vii) above.
- ix) Lack of problem clarity.

These categories are self-explanatory and may be taken literally. The first eight have been established through research, whilst the ninth has been added as the result of field practice (1). The worker and client decide upon one problem area on which goals of intervention are based. Taskcentred casework is different from many approaches in that it draws attention to problem-type and not client-type. A thorough discussion and checking of the client's situation at the outset will often result in the client's identifying a particular set of difficulties as being the concern over others. The worker should take the client's perception of his difficulties and his ideas about solutions may differ from the worker's judgment; only by experiencing the consequences of his initial judgements will the client learn about his situation and himself. If no area for mutual work can be decided upon, the case should be terminated.

the final interview. There should be no need for the continued involvement of the worker (a side-effect of working in a task-centred way is that it causes the social worker to think keenly on the scope for 'change') and the overall experience imparts to the client a problem-solving technique which will render him better able to tackle, in future, any further difficulties, hopefully without dependence on professional social work support.

I see the task-centred model as a framework for working. It does not impinge on the worker's style or orientation. Certainly, it invites the worker to be specific about the goals and methods of his undertakings. As such, it demystifies casework. Recording is simplified and minimised, thus 'traditional' blow-by-blow recording is not necessary, and the worker is freed for other things. A common first reaction to the taskcentred model is "It's what I do all ready". In fact, task-centred casework is very different—it is not very basic but intensive. It is not an Americanised attempt to reduce relationships to speedy encounters of the impersonal kind. To work in a task-centred way does not require the worker to interact in any less human a way than his usual self dictates. Task-centred casework is about helping people to help themselves and to know the whys and wherefores of doing so. To give illustrations of possible tasks, the following two cases are cited:

motivation towards change. In a taskcentred approach, a basic assumption is not "Is 'A' motivated?" but "Towards what is he motivated?" The depth and complexity of the tasks set, whether they involve people other than the worker and the client, depend on the client's needs and abilities. With 'A', there was a noticeable increase in his self-esteem and confidence from week to week as he was able to mark progress he had made. Yet, equally, the same man's request for the 'Welfare to bring my suit in' could quite easily have been resolved by the Prison Probation Officer picking up the telephone and making all the arrangements literally within minutes.

### II Moving on

Having completed the stage of problems exploration, the goals for client and worker are mutually agreed. The worker determines the client's priorities and formulates the target problems in such a way that they are clear descriptions of the condition to be changed. The focus of activity is clarified; up to three goals should be contracted, which means a clear set of client and, where appropriate, worker tasks. By definition, a task is the action needed to alleviate the problem. Tasks should be defined as clearly and as simply as possible. Very often, they are couched in behavioural terms. It is usual to give the client a written list of his goals and tasks.

### Case A

54 years, serving his seventh prison sentence. Chronic problem-drinker, no fixed abode, living in local Night Shelter. Divorced fifteen years ago, thereafter downwards spiral through accommodation addresses, failing to hold jobs. This and previous prison sentence for criminal damage to DHSS property.

### Case B

37 years, single, serving first prison sentence. Has lived in several hostels, but feels unable to cope on own. Homosexuality worries him, as does his heavy drinking.
(Definition: Inadequate resources.)
Goal: 1. To obtain post-release hostel accommodation.

- Shared tasks: i) Compiling self-history.
  - ii) Making hostel applications for post-release accommodation.
- Client tasks: i) If
  - i) If offered hostel, writing own letter of acceptance to Warden.
    ii) Interview with Job Centre official prior

to release. At the end of the contracted period, 'B' assessed his situation and achievements and

### III Working through

The strategy of intervention flows from the task-structure. The number and duration of interviews are agreed upon at the onset and in the course of subsequent interviews the worker reviews progress by all parties involved monitoring and recording the problem state. By role-plays, discussions—by any "casework tool" find that the emphasis is on the client through the tasks. I frequently find that the emphasis is on the client through the tasks. I frequently find that the emphasis is on the specifience, it is rarely necessary to redefine tasks, if properly assessed and formulated at the outset.

(Definition: Problems with formal organisation.)

- Goals: i) Retrieving suit from drycleaners.
  - ii) Arranging to have Sickness Benefit back-pay sent to prison.

Retrieving his suit from the cleaners involved his making formal application through the Prison system to have the suit received into the Prison; this called into question his ability to convey to his landing Prison Officer his desire to authorities in an 'acceptable' and understandable manner -all of which was preceded by role-plays between the two of us. Thereafter, he had tasks to complete a property indemnity form, write a covering letter and send it to the outside Probation Officer, who would then be able to collect the suit. The issue of retrieving Sickness Benefit involved his dealing with the very bureaucracy he perceived as the cause of his present predicament, and worker and client tasks were detailed accordingly. With the above client, a person of very limited functioning ability, it is often difficult to see scope for work, or even

felt that "for the first time" he had been allowed the responsibility for determining his own situation: he had clear thoughts about his work abilities and limitations and was "more aware of the sort of mistakes I should be careful of making next time".

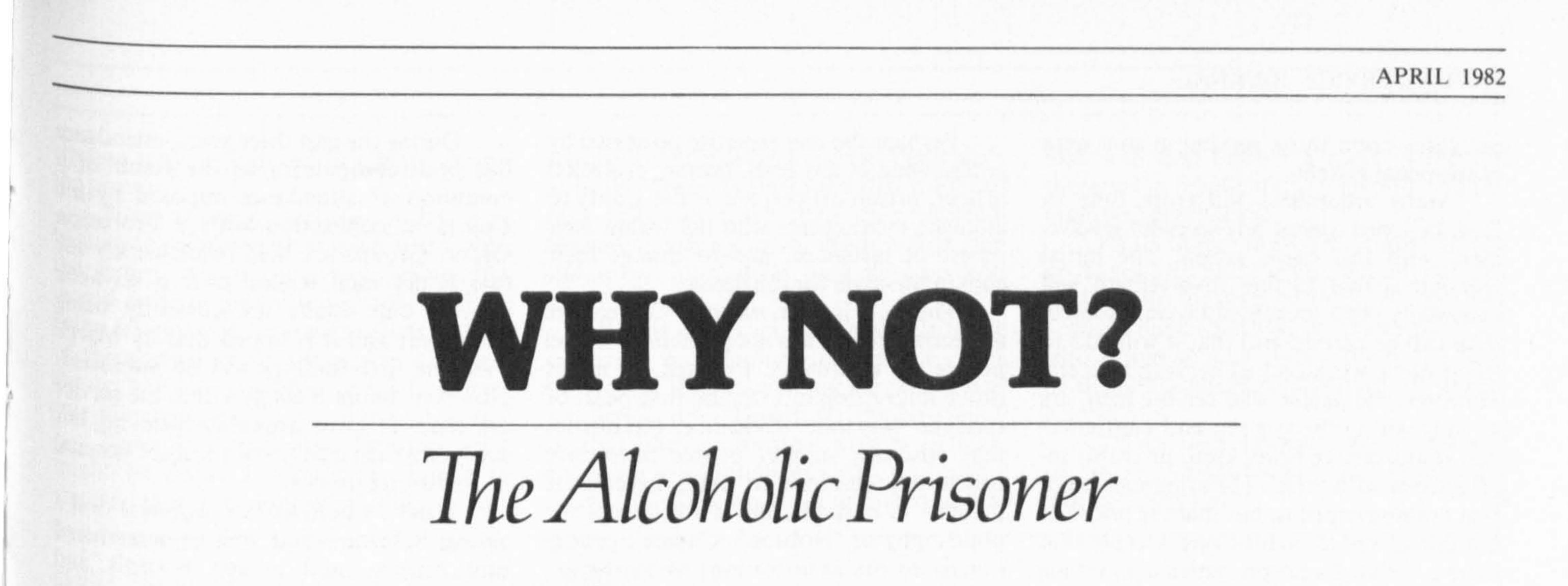
Client's self-determination is the keystone to the task-centred method. How often do social workers in and out of institutions "help" semi-captive clients who either do not need or have not asked for such involvement? The first impression of the prisoner population might be of a captive caseload, not asking for help but having it shovelled upon them. In reality, within the local Prison there can be strong pressures against a man's having regular contact with "the Welfare" (ranging from peer group stigma at being unable to cope, to loss of a privileged job because of absences from worksite)—certainly, a host of pressures exist to counter-balance the

### **IV** Termination

This is built into the model. Providing the client has accomplished his tasks, the contacted problem should be resolved by

social work encounter as certainly as societal pressures exist "outside".

As a microcosm of the wider world, the Prison produces the same type of issues for the task-centred approach within its walls as would be experienced by the field worker. The decision to terminate involvement because tasks have been accomplished can lead to pressure from other agencies within the Prison (e.g. Medical staff, or uniformed officers) for continued involvement, in the same way as the field worker may have to explain his termination to G.P.s *continued on page 21* 



### Malcolm J Smith

'There are lies, damned lies, and statistics' I have not only been told this, but have come to believe it. However, try as I might, I cannot avoid introducing at least two sets of figures in the hope of establishing a point.

Firstly, I remember once reading that 75% of all prisoners at H.M.P. Stafford were discovered to have an alcoholic problem, prior to sentence.

Secondly, a 1977 study in Bedfordshire showed that 40% of all crime in the 16/17 age group was alcohol-related.

The reason for introducing these apparently unrelated figures, is to establish the democratic nature of the problem, at least so far as age and, one suspects, also as far as social class is concerned. It also shows a relationship between alcohol and crime. In simple terms, the problem that faces the Prison Service in Stafford and elsewhere, is likely to be self-perpetuating unless the Prison and Probation Services look at both the nature and extent of the problem and positive means by which they might engage with it. There is invariably, a natural supposition that when the terms alcoholism, problem-drinking, alcohol-dependence and other euphemisms for the same condition are expressed, that people know instinctively what is meant. This may not be so. Unless there is some universal agreement upon this point, it will obviously prove difficult to the point of impossibility, to provide any positive service towards prisoners and clients aimed at their recovery and removal from the crime and punishment merry-go-round.

appears third in the national league table of deaths, behind cancer and heart disease.

Some years ago, it was thought there was a group of people born pre-destined to become dependent upon alcohol, and that there was no possibility of the remainder of the population ever joining them. This view is often described as the categorical model of alcoholism.

The more recent view of alcoholism, and one which has all but displaced the categorical model is the dimensional or continuum model, which will be seen to be more realistic. Simply this states that anyone who consumes alcohol is on a journey from social drinking through heavy drinking, to psychological and ultimately physical dependence. However, the journey does not necessarily need to continue to the bitter end. For people may choose by the quantitative limits they put on their drinking, or indeed, their reasons for drinking, to remain where they are. They may also choose, having progressed beyond their chosen destination, to return, either by reducing their alcohol intake or by total sobriety. It may be fair at this stage to suggest that what evidence exists would indicate that for those who have reached a point of physical, as opposed to psychological dependence, total abstinence is almost certainly the only solution. I have already made some mention of psychological and physical dependence. For this reason it is perhaps important to distinguish between the two.

processes. That is, drinking as a response to emotional stress, the consuming of alcohol as a relief from the pressures of living. Perhaps drinking as an ineffective means of problem solving.

In simple terms, physical dependence is most noticeable following the drinking client ceasing from the consumption of alcohol, even for short periods. The onset of withdrawal symptoms may then follow; shaking, sweating, loss of memory, etc., etc.

As far as the Prison and Probation services are concerned, it is always as well to remember that the symptoms of abnormal drinking will be socially recognisable long before medically recognisable symptoms appear; loss of job, and friends, marriagebreakdown and the onset of criminality. This factor, perhaps, above all others, must lead the members of our respective services, whether singly or in partnership, to the belief that it is possible to positively engage with this client group, in a positive and successful manner. However, I suspect, that the initiation of any such involvement may well begin by the motivation and interest of one or two uniformed officers, supported by the Prison Officers' Association and their Governor. For, although much lip-service is paid to the need for such an active approach by politicians at all levels, little support of a practical nature appears to be forthcoming. Certainly, for those of us active in the field the feeling is that the making of debating points does little to relieve the human misery involved, or to By psychological dependence is meant

that form of drinking controlled by mental reduce the prison population and the

The difficulty is that to a staunch temperance believer a glass of sherry at a wedding may indicate a considerable dependence, whereas others do not believe that alcoholism affects any who drink proprietary brands of alcohol, being merely symptomatic of the meths drinker.

The truth embraces to an extent both viewpoints. Alcohol is a depressant drug, that is not only freely available and socially acceptable, but of known addictive and dependency-inducing properties. By the very nature of its open sale, it has become the largest single drug of abuse. Alcoholism



Malcolm Smith qualified as a Probation Officer in 1971 and is based at the Corby Northants. office. In 1972 he was co-founder of the County of Northampton Council on Alcoholism, has initiated experimental work with alcohol-dependent clients and during 1981 was sponsored by his Probation Service to investigate treatment procedures in the Netherlands.

pressures upon those serving in that area of the penal system.

Many arguments will from time to time, be levied against any specialist involvement with this client group. The initial reaction is that further involvement will necessarily put a greater strain on resources than can be carried and that it will add to the present workload of serving officers. However, the people who require help, are already within the system, and manpower and resources are being used, probably ineffectively with them. The argument is not that nothing happens, but that the priorities are out of order. Whilst one accepts that there is within the prison system a prevailing philosophy of security linked to the Protestant work ethic this may not necessarily be either a proper or a rewarding approach. It would seem that the failure to acknowledge alcohol-dependence as a major factor in criminal behaviour is to adopt a point of view so blinkered as to verge on criminal neglect. At the present time, in British prisons there is a majority of a captive population who may well benefit from a fresh and a radical approach. I have often considered why there should be such a seemingly colossal neglect of such a vital area of our joint work both inside and outside of institutions. Basically the reasons may be divided into two areas. Firstly the compounded mythology that surrounds alcoholism and which is unhappily viewed by many who should know better as truth. Secondly, a fear by many professionals of working with groups. Also the risk that they may discover their own drinking habits and patterns fall outside of social drinking. Perhaps it should be possible to debunk some of the hoary myths which deserve to be relegated to some place where thay can no longer hinder professional judgment and involvement. It is often said that the 'alcoholic' cannot be helped until such time as he reaches something described as his, and no doubt her 'rock bottom'. The phrase is graphic but meaningless as a working tool. What does it mean? The customary answer to that being that the clients will know when they arrive. Suppose they don't? I believe quite firmly from some ten years personal experience that there are many points of intervention, and the fascinating 'rock bottom' is only one of them. I suspect that what I am really saying is that within this area, whilst it may be true that although you can lead a horse to water, you can't make him drink...I believe, you can also make him extremely thirsty! There is also a considerable feeling, much of it engendered by medical opinion, that for any chance of success clientmotivation is paramount. Realism should establish that if the client is sufficiently motivated to handle his pathological drinking patterns, professional intervention may well be superfluous. It would appear to me that the motivation of the therapist is infinitely more important than the motivation of the client.

Perhaps the one expertise possessed by professionals at any level, doctor, probation officer, prison officer, etc. is the ability to motivate those clients who fall within their sphere of influence, and to change their chosen life-style for the better.

Finally, it is often stated at Conferences and elsewhere that it is not possible to compel people to treatment. Perhaps, it might prove interesting to examine that pearl of received wisdom. Evidence establishes that you can compel people to receive education, children to care, psychiatric patients to hospital, and if you accept the philosophy of 'Hobson's Choice', probationers to the ministrations of Probation officers, etc., etc. One should not presume that the alcohol-dependent client is somehow excluded from the remainder of humanity, and that the pressures that work for others will not work for him. One of the factors that may influence a number of people against working in this area is the discovery that their own drinking, currently perceived as being within the boundaries of social normality, may factually, fall within the area of heavy or dependency consumption. For it is welldocumented that the regular consumption of four pints of beer, eight single glasses of spirits or wine, or indeed, any combination, is a level from which dependency is likely over a period of years, to occur. So far, most of what has been written has fallen within the area of facts and arguments. It is necessary to progress to the point where it is possible to examine if the Prison Service could have a specific role. At the present time, I suspect that many Probation officers are not good at documenting the relationship between a prisoner's criminal behaviour and their alcohol consumption. However, I believe that in this area, matters may be improving. Obviously it is necessary that some diagnosis should be available to the Prison Service if any action is to be implemented. This may be an area where Probation Officers in prisons could heighten the consciousness of colleagues in the field. Diagnosis does not have to be extended beyond an awareness that within the client's history, two or more offences should be seen to have occurred following excessive drinking, or with drinking offered as an excuse.

During the past three years, attendance has been compulsory as the result of a condition of attendance imposed by the Courts in connection with a Probation Order. Groups are held twice weekly for two hours each session over a six-week period. The results are currently being examined, and it is hoped that by March 1982 the first findings will be published. However, initial feelings within the service are that we have probably been no less successful than traditional forms of hospital in-patient treatment.

What I would like to suggest is that a similar scheme could well be introduced into prisons, and indeed Borstals and Detention Centres, particularly bearing in mind the fall in age at which alcoholism 15 currently recognised. For those who having read so far feel that this might be an area in which they would like to work, I give a few thoughts. Two days a week is really somewhat less of an involvement than the nature of the problem deserves but due to the pressures on Probation Officers' time, it is unlikely in the present climate that any greater period will be forthcoming whatever the virtues. Within the prison setting, I would like to think that a greater period of time might be allowed. The optimum number for any group would be eight clients to two officers. would stress that the whole balance of any group alters if there is any change in personnel and this inevitably means the two officers within any group must be prepared to commit themselves to all group meetings without exception, and rotas adjusted accordingly. Similarly the group must be seen as a priority commitment as far as prisoners are concerned. Obviously the purpose of each group is to educate and to permit an insight into the nature of the client's relationship with alcohol, its effect upon behaviour and to work towards a moderation in consumption, or indeed total abstinence. It may appear a small matter, but past experience has shown that it is important in a group-setting for the therapist to appear inconspicuous. For it is their role not to entertain the group but to facilitate discussion on the subject. In a hospital this is achieved by doctors and nurses wearing mufti and in prison could no doubt be achieved by officers eschewing the wearing of uniform, and with it, hopefully, the 'expert' role. Each group should be permitted to examine areas of importance to group members. Drinking patterns, development of drinking behaviour, human relationships of all kinds, social, marital, sexual, etc. Emotional patterns, introspection, aggression and so on. The areas are boundless but throughout is the necessity to recognise the links between alcohol and behaviour. I firmly believe that the working part of each group should be somewhere in the region of one and a half hour's duration, with a period of some thirty minutes allowed at the end for relaxation, as a great many

Having identified a clientele, the problem remains what to attempt. Although much good work in this area has been achieved by a one-to-one dialogue, the overwhelming medical and social work evidence throughout the world, is that the alcohol-dependent client is more likely to be helped within a group of similar clients than alone. For several years, the Probation Service in the now beleagured steel town of Corby has worked with groups of clients of both sexes and a variety of ages. Initially there was no element of compulsion and clients attended in a voluntary capacity. There were a number of successes, and of course, a number of failures.

stresses may be induced in clients during the group.

There are many techniques that may be used to reinforce what is learned within the group. All of these have value, but would perhaps prove more beneficial by being arranged as separate sessions outside of the normal group processes. Amongst the techniques available are, of course, role-play trust games, sculpting, etc., etc.

There is virtually no limit to what might be done. It would be foolish to suggest that the implementation of any scheme would guarantee success, particularly as in this area it is suggested that hospitals may fail with more than they succeed. However, every journey needs a first step and every innovation may develop and grow.

Whilst many people may claim an expertise on alcohol-dependence at a theoretical level, few if any may claim it at a practical one. Therefore, the possibility is that the uniformed prison officer, behaving in an intelligent way, and with a study of group processes and techniques, may well find himself a more influential therapist in this field than the most highlyqualified psychiatrist.

That there may be management problems I do not dispute, but anyone can find reasons for doing nothing. For my part I would have engraved on the heart of all who would achieve something in the field of alcohol-dependence, the words of Robert Kennedy:

"Some men see things as they are and say why, I dream things that never were and say, why not?"

were always in attendance when others were leading a session.

### Experience

We held our first social skills course in March 1980. Since then we have held three more, in April, June and July of the same year. Staffing shortages in the probation department prevented us from having courses in May and August.

The groups varied in size from 8 to 11 members, the members being drawn from those inmates whose release date falls in the following month. The group members were selected by each probation officer in the Ford team from their respective caseload. We found that this tended to result in a wide range of age and level of understanding and it is planned in the future that the two course leaders will make a final selection. The members of the 4 groups have generally been inmates with more than one previous conviction and with a poor employment record. It has also been found that the majority have previously had little contact with the prison probation department. As the courses were each only for a 2-week period it was essential that there was group-cohesion at a fairly early stage. This was achieved in a number of ways, for example everyone, including the course leaders, was on Christian name terms. Initially all the inmates were encouraged to take part in straightforward practical exercises including an ice-breaker exercise in the first session where each inmate introduced another to the group after brief discussion with him. Much emphasis was placed on confidentiality which is of particular importance in the prison setting where inmates are together for 24 hours a day. The inmates were surprised at the speed with which they began to trust each other and with the mutual support which developed in the groups. Once this existed they all took full part in the sessions and felt that the role-plays and the use of video were particularly helpful in assessing their own behaviour and the others' reaction to it. The programme was planned in advance of us beginning the courses. We have found that in the first few days the course leaders needed to make a large in-put, but as grouptrust built up along with an understanding of the aims of the course, the intensity of this in-put lessened. The use of sessional

leaders for specific sessions gave course leaders time to revitalise and also provided variety for the inmates. Equally a variety in the presentation of the different types helped stimulate the inmates' interest.

### Content

Although the content of the course programme was predetermined we found it needed to be flexible to meet the needs of the prisoners. In relation to this we built up a store of ideas and resources to fall back on. The video was invaluable and we were able to use it for the more formal sessions such as job and D.H.S.S. interviews as well as with the role-plays. One prisoner, Norman, felt this was particularly useful. He was an alcoholic who had decided that if he was to cope with his drinking problems in the future, he not only needed employment but an employer who was aware of his problem. Having decided that when applying for jobs outside he would be honest about his situation. He was able to practise this in the interview session and from the discussion which followed build on it. Sessions such as this emphasised that the course was definitely not based on direct teaching. We made it clear that we didn't have the answers and that the course was about sharing knowledge and learning from each other. Another example was Peter, a young aggressive Irishman with particular resentment towards the police. By involving him in role-plays in which he came into contact with the police, we were able to observe his aggressive reaction and discuss this and ways in which he might alter in order to avoid future conflict with the police. His aggression became more controlled throughout the two weeks; he began to understand how his behaviour contributed to the difficult situations he found himself in. However, Peter also demonstrated a weakness of the course in that for some it was far too short. The Prison Governor and prison officers have fully backed the course and were involved in discussions at an early stage in the planning. It was initially envisaged that prison officers would be involved directly in the course. However, this has not been possible because of the prison-staffing needs. However, involving a prison officer in the course could have drawbacks, particularly the difficulty of being on Christian name terms one day with

the inmates, and the next day being a discipline officer. This is an area which needs much thought and careful planning.

Typically, as with other projects of this kind, evaluation of the course proves to be difficult. We have not been able to define a measure of success. Our aim was to increase the inmates' ability to cope with everyday social situations. All course members were asked to evaluate the courses' usefulness in relation to themselves at the end of the fortnight and were given an evaluation questionnaire to complete. All were enthusiastic about the course and felt they had learned from it; they commented that it had got them thinking for the first time during their sentences and for some directed their thoughts to areas of their lives which they had not considered before. Sid, an East-ender, whose only form of work had been crime told us at the beginning of the course that for him there was no alternative but to return to crime. At the end of the fortnight he felt the alternatives open to him were limited but admitted that he had begun to think about the effects of this on his wife and children and to discover that they were important to him. He concluded by admitting that he would try to alter his life-style even to the extent of securing legal employment. Each inmate was also given a stamped addressed envelope and asked to write to us 3 months after their release with a resume of how they were coping. As yet we have only received 2 letters. We could check with the Criminal Records Office whether the man had re-offended or returned to prison, but would this really be a measure of the success or failure of the course? Perhaps what is more important is the fact that the inmates were able to understand and identify with the focus of the course and felt it was related to their lives outside the prison. Their attitude towards the probation staff and other helping agencies became more positive because they were able to recognise the relevance to them of what we were trying to achieve. In conclusion the authors believe that the Ford Prison pre-release course is a positive attempt towards preparing the prisoner for his eventual release, and that it has potential to be used in other areas of work with a variety of client groups.

<sup>1</sup> Social Skills & Personal Problem Solving. A handbook of methods. Priestley, Maguire, etc.



## Prison Welfare Nigel Stone

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The fairly brief period during which probation officers have operated as prison-based social workers has proved unsatisfactory and has pleased nobody. The controversy has taken a further step since October 1981, when the National Association of Probation Officers resolved to seek an end to secondment\* to prisons, arguing that this wastes valuable resources, inhibits the involvement of prison officers in welfare work, and that work with clients in prison would be better undertaken from outside. This move is likely to be welcomed by the Prison Officers' Association, which has long argued that the task of prison welfare is better done by prison officers, giving them increased job satisfaction. This article examines the issues underlying the debate, which has tended to be fuelled with ideological fervour and rhetoric, and concludes that the critical factor is not whether prison officers can 'do it', or probation officers are 'abandoning' their clients, but rather that what probation officers can offer is better done from without. Can the two services, prison and probation, accept the challenge?

key member of the institution, wherein "the keynote should be the individual rehabilitation of each inmate and his preparation for responsible freedom", and thus he was "an integral part of the life and work of the prison". The climate of penal opinion has, of course, changed since that era of optimism for individual treatment. The Home Office consultative document 'Social Work in the Custodial Part of the Penal System', 1974, stated that this search "is no longer thought to be realistic", and that prison establishments should try to create "a humane, dignified, constructive and participatory environment which looks outward to the community, and in which inmates are able to change and develop". Further, the principle of secondment has not worked out as intended and with the implications that the term embodies. Rather than being temporary but integral members of the institutional staff, probation officers can more realistically be perceived as operating outposts of the Service within the walls, and the change of title in 1977 to 'probation officer', rather than 'prison

### **The Historical Perspective**

The decision to second probation officers to prisons was reached in 1965, as part of the broader expansion of After-Care. Although After-Care was now to be placed as a central concern of the Probation Service, the decision to differentiate between workers within prison and those outside continued a split which was more explicable in the light of the previous complex, uneven and diverse provision of After-Care through Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies. Given a new, unitary foundation for After-Care, it might have been considered a suitable opportunity to end the rigid division of labour. However, the orthodoxy of After-Care thinking then determined that there was a real necessity for prison-based social workers, even though there was disagreement whether the Probation Service should supply them. (The ACTO Report, 'The Organisation of \*Currently affecting around 450 probation officers.

After-Care', 1963, suggested not, on the grounds that "to link the Probation Service with the prison system would prejudice its relationships with the public and the prisoner", but was overruled by the Home Office.) The main argument was that given that the Welfare State could now be relied on to meet the routine, material needs of the discharged prisoner, the prison social worker could concentrate on selection for and planning of After-Care. More broadly, the social worker would be a



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In the light of what we have since learnt about After-Care, and taking seriously the creditable aims stated by the Home Office in 1974, a strong argument can be made that the presence of probation officers within prisons has been a counter-productive exercise. The more recent efforts to achieve a demarcation of tasks between probation staff and prison officers (see J. Dawes, 'The Roles of Prison and Probation Officers in the Welfare of Clients in Prison', P.S.J., April 1979) as spearheaded with varying success in the seven pilot schemes in various prisons, cannot expect to solve the conundrum, despite

channel of communication on social problems with the outside world" (Home Office Circular 130/1967), the needs of prisoners are not confronted as a central concern of humane containment, but are unnecessarily diverted through a 'welfare filter', and become an uneven privilege rather than a routine expectation. This channelling may have institutional advantages in sustaining surveillance and security, and some social work advantages in being able to identify greater problems and stress underlying surface applications. But what might be regarded as natural rights, e.g. resolution of outstanding property problems, information to and from families, become laborious 'extras'. Institutions have not had the incentive to promote more straightforward communication between prisoners and the outside. Prisoners have tended to couch requests in appropriate 'welfare' language, thus promoting deviousness rather than plain-dealing. The PWO has occupied an intolerable no-win position, criticized by staff and inmates alike, sustaining dependency-inducing and paternalistic treatment of prisoners. Prison staff have naturally been reluctant to take on a role which seems expected of them only in unsocial hours at weekends and nights.

their sentence or afterwards". In fact, there was "no significant relationship between contact during sentence with a PWO, and the subsequent use of After-Care". Dishearteningly, the study found that those men with most objective need, and who scored highest on a scale of social isolation, had least contact with the PWO, and with the outside Service. Thus the apparent advantages of having a social worker on the spot to reach out to those who might benefit most, seem more illusory than real. The risk is that the outside Service will make undue assumptions about the capacities and coverage of the inside worker and will neglect to initiate appropriate contact with prisoners.

being the current fashionable trend.

### The Insularity of Imprisonment

One of the great bogeys of imprisonment as practised in this country is the excessive polarization between the inside world and the outside community, which we carry considerably beyond what is necessary and inevitable. In the struggle to make sense of After-Care, a major flaw has been the lack of outreach in both directions. The prisoner's transition from captivity to freedom (and vice versa) is unduly abrupt and damaging. The overall tenor, despite Home Leave, Pre-release Employment Scheme, etc., is of a great divide which the prisoner must cross alone. Quite apart from the separation from normal community provisions and safeguards which prison life imposes, the prisoner is denied many opportunities to promote his resettlement in Society. Immediate help on release is particularly poor. When sentence ends, there is generally a hiatus before effective help and support, if any, is mobilized. Those in greatest need tend to receive least assistance. The prevailing pattern both slows down the provision of outside help and inhibits almost completely any continuing help from inside. Prison staff have very little outreach towards the discharged prisoners\*, and yet are Often the individuals most trusted and valued by prisoners with least resources and without networks of help.

### The intrinsic limitations of prison probation work

It has frequently been argued that the PWO has become unduly immersed in administrative demands within the prison, and in practical tasks which do not make use of his training and skills. The essential problem is that the prison probation officer is institutionally based and this will continue to dog his outlook no matter how freed from 'routine', 'welfare' tasks he becomes. Within the institution, it is far more difficult to hold on to a sense of the prisoner as someone coming from somewhere and going to somewhere, and too easy to evaluate him in terms of institutional norms and values. While the PWO naturally attempts to transcend the vacuum and to place in perspective the artificial features of the captive role, he is necessarily limited by (a) his lack of direct contact with the outside networks available to the prisoner, and (b) his inability to follow the prisoner through to those networks on release. Of course, those who have sought to enhance the opportunities of prison-based social work have argued for "the potential latent in the controlled setting with breathing space from their social problems, and in the opportunity to confront clients with the consequences of behaviour as it occurs within the institution". (British Association of Social Workers Working Party Report, Social Work Today, 21 August, 1975). The evidence cited for this is the unreplicated Home Office Research Unit study in 1968 at Gartree and Ashwell Prisons of intensive contact between PWOs and randomly-selected prisoners. (M. Shaw, Social Work in Prison, 1974. HMSO.) The follow-up after release indicated that introverted

### Implications for the Probation Service outside

The double-tier approach to Through-Care and After-Care has hindered rather than enhanced service delivery by the Probation Service. The additional link in the chain of communication has, on balance, been an interference rather than a lubricant, and has contributed to the somewhat weak and inconsistent provision of After-Care. Important evidence of this comes from a recent study of men being released from Yorkshire prisons back to the Leeds area (J. Corden et al, 'After Prison', University of York, 1978), the first time that the passage of prisoners from institution to freedom has been monitored systematically. The authors found that despite the existence of a unified After-Care system for a decade, a number of men with real needs "had no clear understanding that a service was available specifically for men who needed help coming out of prison. They did not appear to be aware that they had any kind of right to expect help or assistance on release". Further, "relatively few men experienced the systematic teamwork of the relevant workers throughout

### Implications of existing practice for prisons

The role of PWO was conceived as adding an extra dimension to the prison, influencing the establishment and individualizing the programme. But because the PWO is "the normal

\*The Pentonville welfare scheme using prison officers to find accommodation for prisoners of no fixed abode is a worthy exception.

prisoners had significantly lower reconviction rates. Unfortunately, the study did not really address itself to the relationship between treatment in prison and After-Care, nor was there any evidence to suggest that prisoners gained improved links with the outside Service. The report concluded that "future work should be geared to the problems of transferring men from the welfare department to the After-Care Service, and to changing the concept of that Service".

Shaw states that the PWOs appreciated in their work (a) knowledge of the prisoner's daily life (b) the control in being able to secure interviews (c) the heightened anxiety caused by imprisonment in times of crisis. In fact, the PWO is not necessarily going to have familiarity with the prisoner's institutional performance, given the ratio of prisoners to welfare officers and the somewhat marginal role he occupies. He will gain most knowledge from the prison officers who have day-to-day responsibility and a closer understanding of the prison culture. The other factors are available to the outside probation officer. Given that prisoners appeared to respond well to heightened interest taken in them, the lesson might more appropriately be for the prison service and the outside Service to heed. The Shaw experiment has not been incorporated in any Prison Probation programme of selection and counselling. The Yorkshire study found that prisoners did not perceive the welfare officer as a counselling service, and there was "little to suggest that PWOs were carrying out systematic casework with prisoners". This did not seem to be because of a 'welfare cycle', i.e. continuous reinforcement of the practical, material use of the PWO. as postulated by Holborn in her Home Office study 'Casework with Shortterm Prisoners' (1975). In fact, PWOs did not seem to give much satisfaction with practical problems concerning home and family, matters more readily dealt with by the outside officer.

outide could be very different, and (b) that despite the attention drawn to After-Care by the experimental PWOs, the actual use made was disappointing. This contrasts with the Yorkshire study finding that the factors most associated with take up of After-Care were former good relationship with the outside probation officer, good contact from the outside probation officer during sentence, and help extended to the man's family by the outside probation officer during sentence.

An alternative role might be postulated for the PWO, regarding prison experience as another 'life situation' in which to get alongside the client to help him make maximum, resourceful use of it and to develop coping skills, to which could be coupled an active advocacy role. Such a prospect was suggested by Priestley ('The Prison Welfare Officer—a case of role strain', (1972) British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 23) when he outlined as innovative strategy for the PWO as "unattached worker...hanging around and evolving new and flexible forms of relationships with men in prison". One could conceive a community work role, trying to stimulate change strategies among staff and groups of prisoners within the prison community. That potential is unlikely to be realized, however, for the PWO would not enjoy the goodwill of staff to operate in such an independent and uncommitted niche. The innovative track record of Prison Welfare is not encouraging, for despite having a considerable opportunity to see trends in the use and problems of imprisonment and release, little attempt has been made to take an overview or to undertake research.

settlement. Early practical help immediately on release can significantly increase further uptake of After-Care. This is a key platform on which to build and expand.

A further message from the Yorkshire study is that whatever help the Probation Service can offer, this will be second choice to the hope of informal networks of support. Perhaps the sustainment of these, where they exist, and the creation of substitute networks, could become a growth area for Probation activity. The toughest challenge of all will be to provide a service for the rootless whom the outside Service may discourage and avoid.

### The implications for the Prison

The transfer of all probation activity to an operational base outside the prison has obvious implications for the institution. Clearly, the proposal is not that prison officers should take over the vacated PWO role. That is not just a matter of requiring training and skills, but an essential limitation stemming from the custodial role which remains the prison officer's paramount job and which colours his perceptions. Staff will need to re-examine a common inclination to assess individuals in institutional terms, as demonstrated in the Dover Borstal experiment (F. McClintock and A. Bottoms (1973) 'Criminals Coming of Age', Heinemann). There, evaluations made by prison officers tended to be based solely on trainees' performance and attitude towards the regime's demands of smartness, fitness and co-operation, which might have little relevance to subsequent needs and outlook. Prison officers may incline to a 'deserving'/ 'undeserving' assessment of prisoners' problems, linked to institutional demands and restraints, and provide welfare help on a reward/bribe basis, even more than social workers may do. Prison officers have been too inclined to blame the presence of the PWO for the limitations of their job, and would now be obliged to develop more straightforward, routine arrangements for handling the 'problems of being a prisoner', the provision of information, goods and services. Staff would obviously need to gain familiarity with DHSS and other welfare procedures, in much the same way as expertize in legal aid has already been developed. They would also need to match the outreach of the Probation Service with an equally vigorous commitment to contacting the Service when unmet need arose, and clearly

The further major Home Office study of Prison Welfare, though not a replication of Shaw's work, examined the impact of intensive work with prisoners in Liverpool Prison (A. J. Fowles, 'Prison Welfare', HMSO, 1978) and suggested that "inmates of local prisons generally may not be helped by extended, on-going casework". Particular conclusions were that (a) the assessments of a case made by the PWO and the probation officer

### The Scope for the outside **Probation Service**

The analysis thus far suggests that there is more scope and sense in the provision of social work help for prisoners from the sounder basis of the outside field team. The prisoners who have most links within the community and seek help to sustain them would be best helped by the probation officer having most familiarity with and access to those links. Those prisoners with least opportunities and propects on release, who tend to feel that the Probation Service cannot realistically offer them much, and make least demand on the Service, either inside or out, should best be helped by an active outreach policy towards them pre-release, and sustaining them over the transitional period of discharge and early re-

the response that the outside Service gave would either reinforce or deter good liaison. Clearly there would be a real risk that some prisoners, such as the completely rootless, with associated mental health or behavioural difficulties, might fall between two stools. It is recognized that some prison regimes are much more readily open to new initiatives and responsibilities, and it is likely that the style and manning of large local prisons would need particular review and adaptation.

parity so far as possible with the ordinary opportunities of the citizen. This should influence allocation procedures, and also increase the scope for other counselling and self-help services to be available to serving prisoners, with greater access rights. This is already familiar with Alcoholics Anonymous, and might be extended in respect of drugs, gambling, psychosexual and marital difficulties, etc., to extend the prisoner's choice of counselling options, and to increase community participation in prison life. The Probation Service could continue to offer an active contribution to specific programmes, such as social skills, educational, and encounter groups.

### Conclusions

The argument has been that the undertaking of Prison Welfare by the Probation Service was ill-conceived, and has neither forwarded the aims of the Service nor enhanced the prison system. In order to facilitate the bridging of the inside work and the outside community, and to promote After-Care, the Probation Service would achieve more from its normal operational base. There would inevitably be some loss of present help to clients, but the potential for gain would compensate for that, provided that the Prison and Probation Services are prepared to re-think their service delivery and co-operate together. 

The integration of Prison Welfare/ Through-Care into the outside Service would seem generally to be a healthy feature of the trend towards 'normalization' of prison life, to achieve

### HOME OFFICE REVIEW OF PAROLE continued from page 9

The Review fails to refer to the 1978 Review of Maximum Sentences, and whilst that Report was criticised by the Judiciary and the Press, most of the public anxiety was focussed on a comparatively small number of offences, most notably rape. The courts, quite rightly, have considerable discretion on sentencing within their powers as laid down by Parliament (they are not God-given). In fact, I regard the openness of judicial decisions (which are after all subject to appeal) as preferable, wherever possible, to executive decision-making: Thomas' idea on restricting parole eligibility is a case in point. Nevertheless, we should not be surprised if the Courts utilise their discretion by increasing sentences in the face of a perceived erosion of the effectiveness of the sentence. The

solution lies with Parliament and calls for political will; the exhortations of the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor for shorter sentences merely serve to reinforce the idea that the powers of the court are inviolable, whereas they are subject to Parliamentary legislation. As the May Inquiry puts it, with respect to the recommendations of the A.C.P.S. reports on sentencing and Maximum Penalties:

"In the long run they represent amongst present available means the best prospect for reducing the prison population". (p.58). If sentence lengths are not reduced by statute, all other attempts to reduce the prison population, including proposals for those serving sentences below the threshold of parole eligibility, are liable to fail.

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### TASK-CENTRED CASEWORK continued from page 14

or the local Police constable. The one problem I have found in common to both settings is of the client who seeks to please, to do what he feels he needs to do in order to gain acceptance—but this is possibly common to all approaches rather than a Phenomenom of the task-centred method.

The stereotype of the Prison Probation Officer is of a harrassed, drained shadow, struggling to cope with the vast turnover of clients, becoming confused about their names, faces and "problems", fast going under beneath a daily torrent of applications (i.e. requests to be seen), telephone calls from Prison Officers about inmates' demands for action and information, and telephone conversations from field workers and relatives. The task-centred framework 1s the deus ex machina for this environment. It provides a format for in-depth but fastmoving assessments. The aspect of prearranged appointments gives the prisoner certainty of contact. The prisoner's basic choice of action versus inaction, the scope

for self-determination, enables him to act for himself and to preserve some sense of self-identity in an otherwise total institution. The method of recording enables the worker to have readily available a fairly instantaneous picture of what he's at, for each and all of his clients. Responsibilities for particular actions or activities are easily discernible. Indeed, the advantages seem almost endless! As a framework, task-centred casework is becoming more common in the Probation setting. Geoffrey Dobson (1) has written of its use within the Differential Treatment Unit and notes that task-centred casework leads to a greater degree of accountability in the worker/client relationship. E. Matilda Goldberg and S. J. Stanley (4) comment that the task-centred approach helps the worker to realise that he does not have to do 'everything' for the client and that the overall effect of its usage is for a clear assessment of the client and his motivation. In a society where social workers are in-

creasingly called to task over their work, task-centred casework offers a base from which the professional can demonstrate clearly the core of his activities without having to shroud the exact processes of his doings in uncertain prose.

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# HEALTH & SAFETY

## Two Sides of the Coin

RCCope Safety Officer DIF

Comments in accident reports often give rise to a laugh from the investigator, particularly those relating to the less serious incidents. Such phrases as "unavoidable accident" and "caused by lack of care" are often followed by a detailed account showing who was to blame. During an investigation one usually finds that attitudes are coloured by self-preservation and the game of finding some-one to blame is played in real earnest. Has the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 affected attitudes in this field?

situation has now been righted under the 1974 Act by its application to employment generally.

### Attitudes

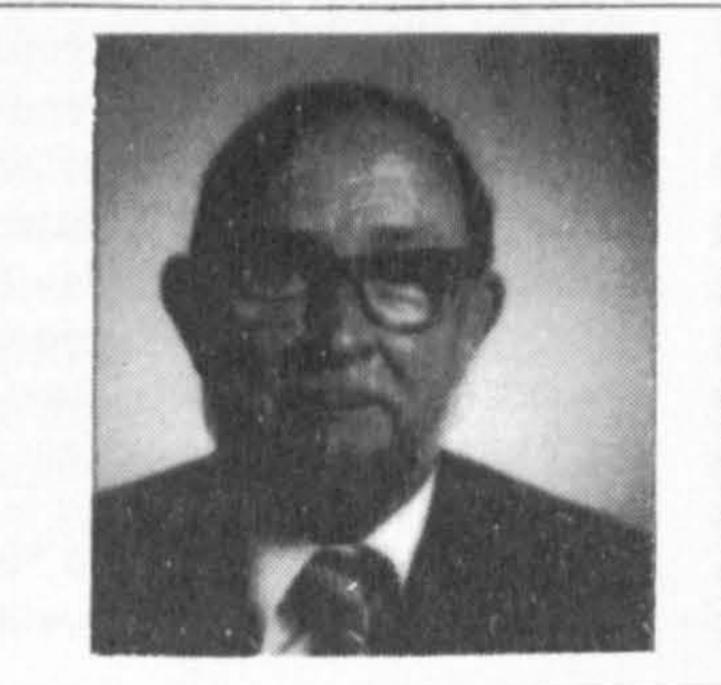
On the whole, management preferred definitions of the minimum standards or detailed requirements to indeterminate phrases-such as "a safe place of work", "safe plant and machinery" -used in the 1974 Act. Many work areas were infrequently visited by inspectors; others not at all; prisons only by invitation. It was common for inspectors to make contact with a firm only because they had been made aware that a serious accident or dangerous occurrence had taken place. The small number of inspectors employed made it difficult to enforce the law and it was common, even in well-run organisations, to adopt a "wait and see" attitude as to what the inspector would point out when he visited rather than to take the lead. Seeing the inspector as a "policeman" did little to encourage safety and health matters to be considered as prime elements of the work situation. Fines for breaches of the Act were often so small as to engender an attitude of "so what?"

### **Early Concepts**

Prior to the 1974 Act, safety and health legislation was administered under the Factories Act 1961, the Agriculture Acts 1956, the Office, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963, the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, and others. These Acts, with minor amendments, still remain in force and are likely to remain so for many years.

Such Acts and regulations developed in response to public pressure and concern. Better communication highlighted major accidents, such as colliery disasters, and focussed attention on working conditions. It was found that reliance on management (the old mill owner, the colliery boss) to improve conditions was unsatisfactory. New Acts and regulations were often delayed for many years by resistance from commercial interests. It is interesting to note that these Acts, and particularly the regulations made under them, were more often than not very precise in the detail they encompassed. Over the years they have given rise to a great deal of case law. They laid down standards, although usually minimum, which could be achieved without too much difficulty. Because of the various bodies responsible for the framing of such legislation a varying standard

could be set for similar tasks in different working environments. It is difficult to understand why the weight to be lifted by a worker under the Agriculture Regulations should be restricted to 180 lbs. whilst under the Woollen and Worsted Textiles Regulations it is 150 lbs. Despite such occasional anomalies and the setting of only minimum standards, credit must be given to the bodies that instigated them as there is no doubt that the enforcement of them has greatly contributed to a reduction of deaths and injuries. One failing was the narrow field of workers that they covered, it being necessary to prove that the regulations applied to the particular work situation. Could prison workshops, for example, be classed as factories, to which the Factories Act would apply? This



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#### **APRIL 1982**

Much more attention was paid to pressing or countering claims for compensation than was paid to preventing injury or ill-health. Management is usually willing to put guards on machines and plant, providing that such guards do not interfere with <sup>Out</sup>put. However, guards newly-fitted or replaced following a visit by the Factory Inspector, or Headquarter's Safety Officer are often removed within days. Resistance is usually shown in improving areas such as working environments, particularly those dealing with lighting, heating, dust and fume extraction. It is Surprising how managers, going into a noisy environment to discuss matters with a supervisor, will soon seek the quieter confines of the shop office. How, when the office heating breaks down, it is too cold to concentrate, yet the workers are creating a fuss over the broken door which lets the north wind blow into the workshop! How often does one hear the production manager remark that he worked in that dusty atmosphere for years and it did him no harm? When confronted with matters concerning health and safety, management develops its own concept of a reasonable man: that is, with a number of minor modifications, "one who always takes care of himself and does not do stupid things". "We knew the guard was missing but we expected him to take extra care"; "in any case, the workers broke the guard in the first place"; "it was obviously a stupid thing to do"; these are common statements made after an incident has happened. Matters that may pose problems are often referred to committees to deal with although a similar production problem would be dealt with at once. Provision of safety attire is usually agreed to after protracted arguments as it is normally the lesser of the two evils—protect against possible injury or health risks as opposed to getting rid of the likely cause. Dust and fumes are more easily dealt with by the issue of a mask rather than by installing extraction at source, With all its associated problems. Similar expedients are used to deal with noise by the issue of ear protectors as opposed to noise damping. Little account is taken of how uncomfortable devices are when worn for long periods. In the majority of incidents, the Immediate pre-accident state may have been within the worker's control but closer investigation often reveals that prior action by management could have prevented the incident. Investigation by a well-known national

company revealed that only some 7% of their recorded accidents could be attributed to technical or mechanical failures, 93% being due to some form of human error. A similar study indicated that our own record is much the same as this in respect of technical faults. The attitudes of workers about health and safety differ considerably, some work-situations producing a high awareness and regard for health and safety whilst others exhibit a complete apathy. Mining is an example of the one and shop working of the other. Miners realise that underground working produces dangerous situations and they take an active part with management in trying to reduce the element of risk. Shop work is seen as relatively safe. This may have once been the case, though I suspect that there are many shop workers who have had a finger sliced off when operating an unguarded bacon-slicer who would disagree. However, in many of the large stores, stacker trucks, lifting appliances, storage racking, and cutting machines are commonplace and present the same hazards as they would in a factory. The economic situation, particularly the employment state, tends to affect workers' attitudes to health and safety measures. In times of full employment, workers demand good standards but during times of depression, lowered standards are often tolerated. Often the shopfloor worker will work on badly-guarded machines, or with unsafe systems, without complaint. At other times, the worker will misuse, defeat and mistreat safety and health-guarding devices, although on investigation for non-compliance some other reason is usually at the root of the matter. The guard that has been removed is often found to be unsuitable, badly designed or in poor state of repair. In some cases, the devices make the task more difficult and it is understandable that they are bypassed. More often than not, machine-guards produced by management are designed with only one objective, and that is to comply with the law at the basic

from union members gave a further impetus to union involvement. Although such involvement was not new in mines and quarries it introduced union/worker involvement in most other areas for the first time.

I think it is agreed that despite initial worries, Safety Representatives have on the whole performed a useful function. The union training of Safety Representatives, although in some instances containing a certain bias, can only be described as very good. Many Safety Representatives are now in a position, because of the knowledge they have gained, to assist management in meeting the objectives of providing a safe workplace. Experience has shown that, with a few exceptions, Safety Representatives have acted in a sensible and positive manner. There is an over-reaction at times and measures are sometimes forced through which are out of proportion to the risk involved. Many managements would do well to make more use of their Safety Representatives to keep the workers informed regarding health and safety at their workplace. I feel sure that such action within the Prison Department would lessen the confrontation that often arises. One factor which is often ignored is that many of those in a position to contribute significantly to health and safety, the white-collar workers in middle and upper management themselves work in conditions that are relatively hazard-free. This colours their views and often produces a reaction against considering safe working conditions as an item with serious merit. Although retribution is no longer fashionable, I am of the opinion that, unless the Health and Safety Executive use their powers of prosecution much more widely, progress in achieving safe working environments will be very slow. Such action must be taken against those in a position to affect the issue. The director is not always the person with this power, personnel responsible for production often being more appro-

requirement.

Prior to the 1974 Act it was usual for unions to be involved in safety matters but a greater part of their effort in this field was in assisting with compensation claims on behalf of their injured members. Since the new Act, they have become much more involved in this field and provide considerable pressure with a view to reducing hazards in the workplace. The introduction of legislation governing the appointment of Safety Representatives



### **Likely Developments**

The intial impact of the 1974 Act has now died. Follow-up legislation and codes of practice though promised have not materialised. Progress on dispensing with old regulations and replacing them with more composite requirements has been painfully slow and a drift back to old attitudes can be clearly seen. Safety and health matters appear to have become a

political football being used in all kinds of different battles. Strikes, cutbacks, redundancies, now bring with them cries of "what about safety?" from one side. Financial constraints bring forth that old chestnut, "We would like to do it but we don't have the resources" from the other side. Why it was never done when resources were available is never explained. It must be accepted that some legislative measures may have far-reaching consequences, particularly for small work units and can, in the extreme, put them out of business. Against this must be weighed the pain and suffering inflicted on the worker who usually has no choice in the matter if he is to stay in employment. It is likely that as long as the economic state remains depressed, safety and health matters will remain a low priority despite protests from some sectors of the community.

The Prison Department is not immune from this approach and, in the present financial climate, each aspect involving expenditure has to be looked at: is health and safety one of them? I am often told that health and safety is just a matter of using commonsense. During an accident investigation it is always "some other person" until one interviews the injured party, who often attributes blame to himself (although this attitude can change if someone mentions compensation). Although you may work in a relatively safe environment, remember that you may be put in danger by someone else's folly. It is for us all to give "health and safety" the consideration that it deserves.

### AN ANALYSIS OF PRE-RELEASE COURSES IN HIGHPOINT PRISON continued from page 11 Results

The results of identical questionnaires completed before and at the end of the course also indicate an obvious increase in confidence amongst the majority of course members. A proportion of those who apparently became less confident about release seem to be more realistic about what they face as a result of the course:

### ANALYSIS OF SIX PRE-RELEASE COURSES

_				a
	Total number of inmates completing courses	• • •	59	
	Total number of inmates who did not complete courses	• • •	7	
	Total number of inmates assessing themselves as obviously			
	more confident about release	•••	33	
	Total number of inmates marginally more confident	•••	11	
	Total number of inmates less confident		10	
	Total number of inmates who did not complete both questionnaires		12	
	Total number of inmates who thought it was very important to			
	be able to handle people effectively in the period following			
	release (before course started)	•••	34	
	Total number of inmates who thought it was very important to			
	be able to handle people effectively in the period following			
	release (after course completed)		35	

The experiential nature of social skills courses does not easily allow dissemination through the written or spoken word. Increasingly as social skills become more widely used in the Probation Service there can be as many interpretations as there are practitioners. We normally try to tackle this problem by sending out copies of initial questionnaires and final evaluation documents together with an outline of objectives which a course member may have decided to work upon in the remainder of time left to him in the prison and in the immediate post-release period. This is always done with the man's approval. We also encourage him to share the exercises he has done and the material he has collected about himself with his home Probation Officer when they next meet.

release (after course completeu)			• •••	32
Total number of inmates who thought they could learn to				
handle people more effectively (before course)		• ••		35
Total number of inmates who thought they could learn to		-		
				12
handle people more effectively (after course)	•• ••	• ••	• •••	4.J

In a further attempt to evaluate the effects of pre-release courses we sought to follow up three months after release all inmates who had attended a course. Unfortunately only a very small proportion of the questionnaires we sent out were returned. Although the results of these were both interesting and encouraging we do not feel that there are sufficient numbers to make them significant. In our enquiries we also learned of one ex-course member who had been arrested on a very serious charge and

another who had failed to report for the first appointment of his parole licence.

### Liaison with outside Probation Officer

Course members were asked to rate their intended use of after-care services and agencies. The following table shows scores recorded by all men who completed both equivalent sections of the questionnaire (we have excluded those who did not complete the course).

### 

### Conclusion

The experience of running courses in Highpoint indicates that probation officers have an important part to play in prerelease courses using social skills, which are currently being run or planned in many prisons. The intensive work which we undertake would seem to accord with some of the findings of the Social work in Prisons study<sup>2</sup>. Our background and professional skills suggest that our contribution can be particularly useful in the area of enhancing inmates' self-confidence and ability to handle the feelings aroused by problems confronting them on release towards making more appropriate use of after-care. In addition we believe that there is scope for a positive partnership between prison officers and probation officers in running such courses to the mutual advantage of both in a collective effort to prepare inmates more appropriately for release. With the positive involvement of home area probation officers a much more satisfying role can be developed for all concerned working upon clearly agreed goals with an inmate due for release. A change in attitudes is more likely if we intervene in this way than if we respond and react to the immediate demands and concerns of a man serving a

	l A great deal	2 Undecided between 1 & 3	3 Quite a lot	4 I don't know	5 Not very much	6 None at all
Before Course	6	0	22	2	12	6
After Course	12	1	20	2	6	7

It can be seen from the above table that there was a significant shift of attitude favourable to increased use of after-care. We know of several course members who did not have effective contact with the Probation Service but subsequently made appropriate use of after-care probably as a direct result of the course.

#### sentence.

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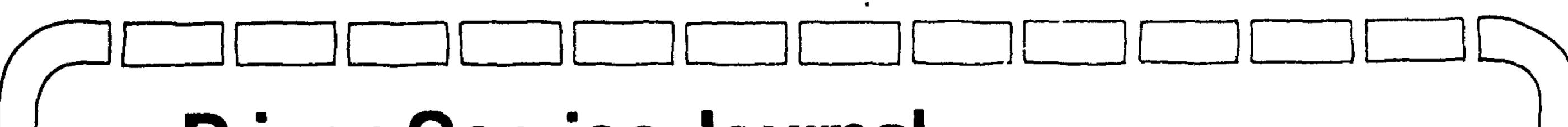
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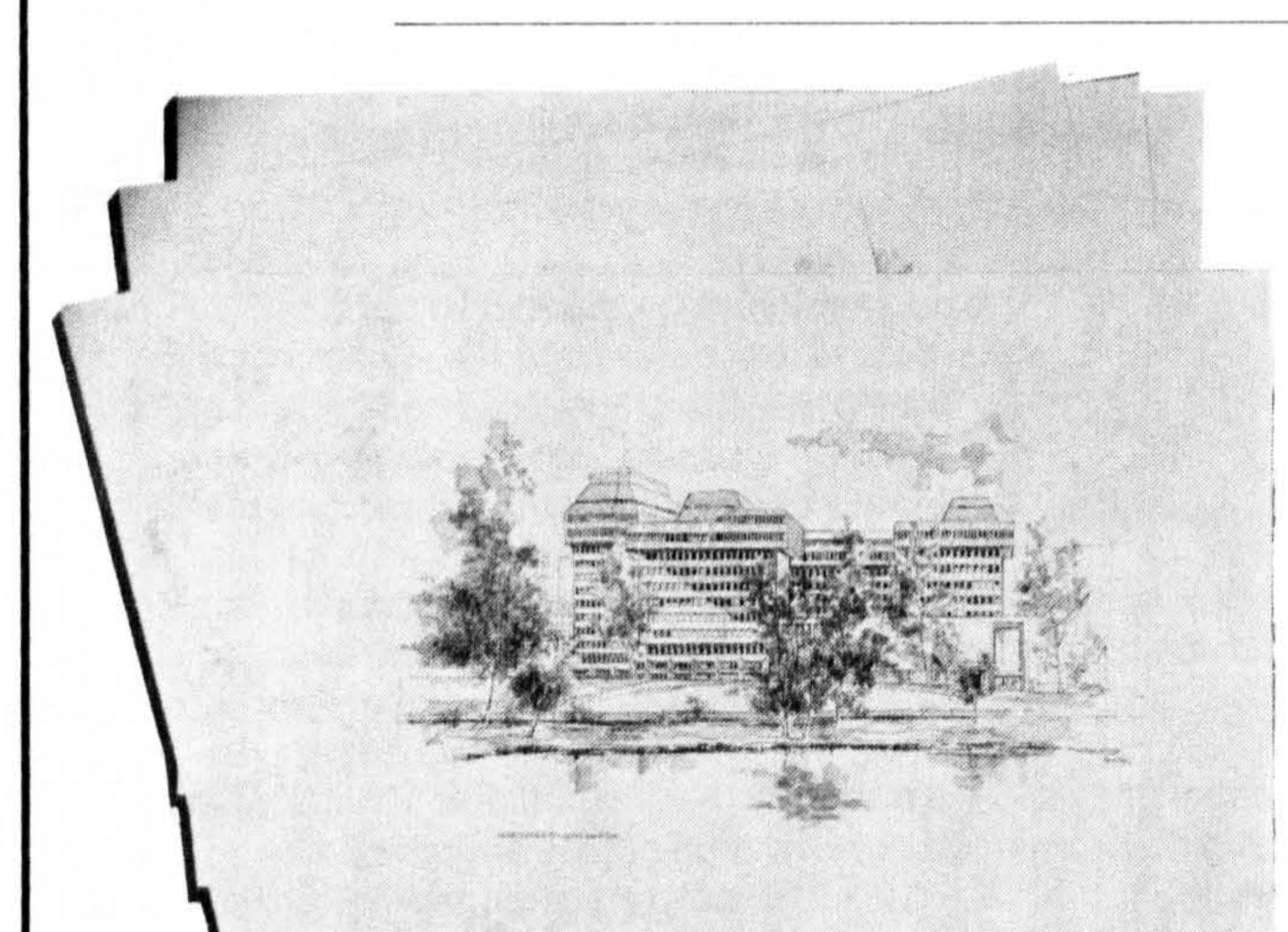
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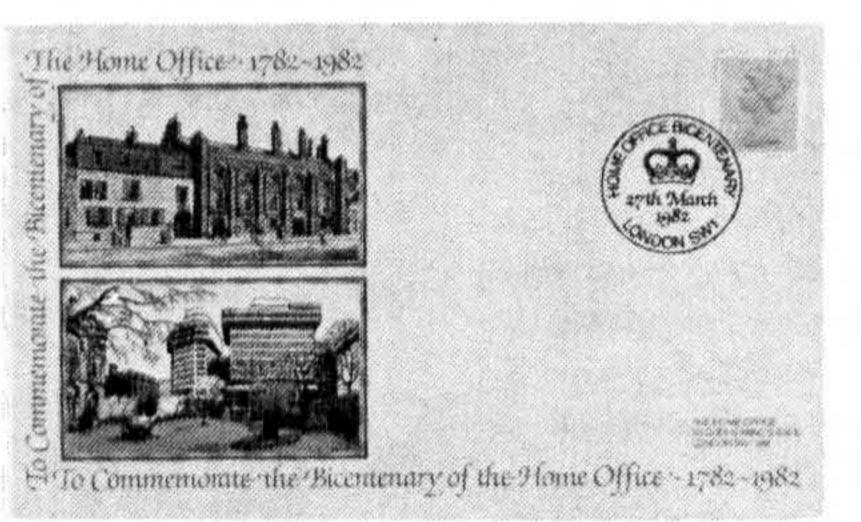
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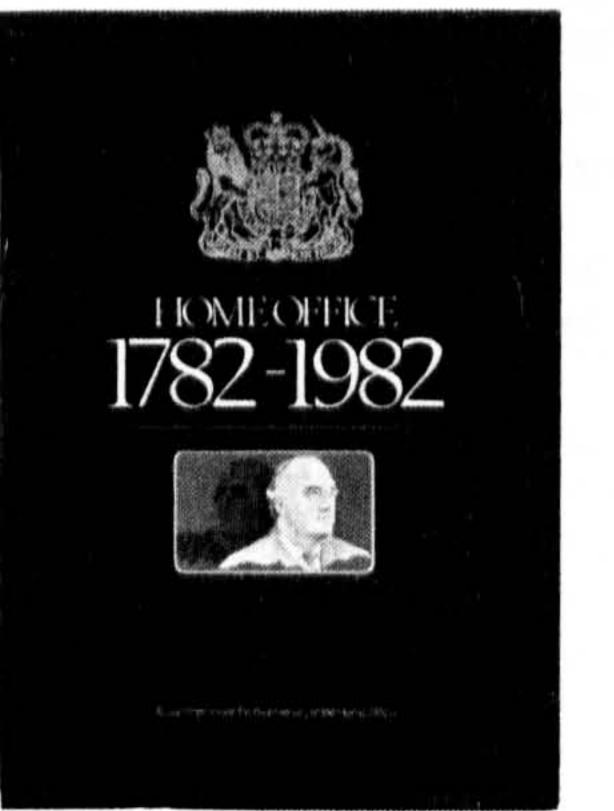
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