

# POST

No. 52 New Series

## prison. service journal

**Crimes of  
the jail  
protest  
prisoners**

ON ROOF—Two of the rioters patrol the roof while five others find shelter.

**Inspectorate 'hampered  
curbs on free comment'**

**Prisons advise  
quit over lack  
of independence**

# KILLERS ON THE ROOF...

More prison trouble possib.  
Albany officer tells confere

**Killings in new  
roof rampage**

**Dr Gaol men  
hold out**

**Empty hopes on Borst**

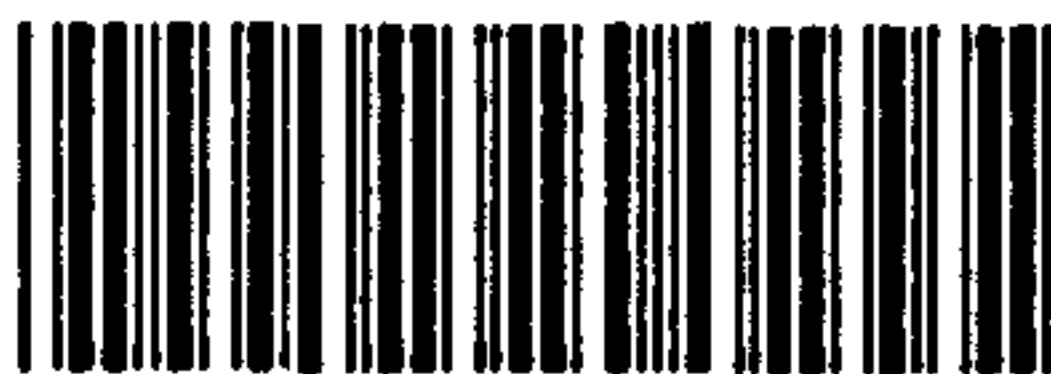
Today's changes in youth custody will put more youngsters

**Sinn Fein  
mediation  
offer at  
Albany is  
rejected**

**More young 'may be  
held' under new Act**

**Riot jail  
team set  
to storm  
rooftop**





# PSJ

## prison service journal

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*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.*

# Comment

It is only right to start this piece with an apology to our readers for the late publication of our recent issues. We have been bedevilled by numerous difficulties in our scheduling and I am indebted to those people in the process who have worked so hard to catch up. The future of the Journal itself is never a clear one in these days of necessary cost consciousness and as I write the Editorial Board are again considering how costs and revenue can be brought more closely together; it seems inevitable that there will have to be some price increase in the near future. Whenever we discuss these difficulties we are always heartened to receive letters of support and appreciation from within and outside the Service; any proselytizing on our behalf to improve sales will also be much appreciated. The way to keep a journal alive is for those interested to contribute articles and to work to improve circulation figures.

Turning to this edition, we are pleased to publish a piece from Robert Kilroy-Silk which will be followed by a second part in the next edition. These are both the text of lectures he had planned to give at the Prison Service College earlier this year. He makes a strong plea for a continuing development of "openness" with the media and the public and in this context Barry Sutcliffe's and Vivienne Dews' piece bring us up to date with what the policy has meant in practice. It is encouraging to read the plea for members of the Service to ensure that their

Members of Parliament are well informed on penal issues and perhaps most interesting to read how his own views on the prison building programme were changed by his contact with the Service. It was surprising, however, that there was no reference to the "atrophy" school of thought on the building programme that holds that the only way to effect a reduction in the prison population is to allow the prison estate to reduce by deliberate failure to maintain it. Whilst it might effect the population reduction it appears to be a policy of despair to those of us who would have to work in it.

On the population front there is little change in the figures as I write although the Home Secretary has now declared his intention to clear the police cells in the South East Region. There remains a good deal of interest in sentencing matters reflected through media attention both in relation to longer sentences for particular violent crimes and at the other end for shorter sentences for less serious offenders. We hope to develop this theme in an issue in the spring of 1984 by which time policy may be clearer. The other consideration in this area of matching population to accommodation is, of course, the threshold for the minimum qualifying period for parole. All of these matters are watched with great interest by everyone concerned with the Service and we hope to carry relevant articles including also the operation of the youth custody and the impact that will have had over its first year.



# PARLIAMENT AND PENAL REFORM

Robert Kilroy-Silk MP

*Robert Kilroy-Silk is Member of Parliament for Ormskirk and chairman of the Parliamentary All Party Penal Affairs Group. He was due to give two lectures at the Prison Service College during the spring of 1983, but his Parliamentary commitments prevented him from attending. In this, the first of two articles, he develops some of the concepts he had intended to examine at the College.*

The accountability to Parliament of the penal system in general and the prison service in particular has a constitutional basis which is quite simple: the Home Secretary is responsible for the penal system and, like all Government Ministers, he is accountable to Parliament for the exercise of that responsibility. The penal system is in no sense unique in this accountability to Parliament through the relevant Minister—to take just two examples, our school system is subject to scrutiny by Parliament because the Secretary of State for Education is accountable to Parliament, and our hospitals are subject to Parliamentary scrutiny because the Secretary of State for Social Services is accountable to Parliament. However, it is especially important that prisons should be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny for three reasons at least.

First, even acknowledging the welcome moves towards greater openness which have taken place since the May Report, the prison system is nevertheless, basically, a closed one. During his sentence a prisoner is subject to its rigours behind closed doors twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. Potentially, this places prisoners in a particularly vulnerable position, and the importance of outside scrutiny is demonstrated very clearly by the salutary experience of other countries where the power which prison systems have over prisoners is seriously abused.

Secondly, there are fewer natural checks on the operation of the prison system as a result of the widespread involvement of people from all sections of the community than is the case with, for example, hospitals and schools. All our children go to schools and we have all either been in hospitals as patients or visited friends of relatives in hospitals. In contrast, prisons are

for the few, and it is particularly important that democratically elected representatives of the community should be concerned about what is being done to the few in the name of the many.

Thirdly, people are sent to prison as a punishment and not *for* punishment—and this means that the normal democratic rights of individual prisoners must be protected as far as is compatible with the basic requirements of security and order within the prison system. These rights include every citizen's right to communicate with Members of Parliament and have MPs pursue grievances.

I fully appreciate that many within the service may, regard scrutiny and intervention by Members of Parliament as something of a nuisance, especially when it concerns a complaint which is totally unfounded or when you suspect that a particular MP has chosen to "shoot his mouth off" about

some aspect of the prison system on the basis of little or no knowledge of the facts. But it is essential to realise that the Parliamentary accountability of the prison service is a constitutional fact; that, for the reasons I have outlined, it is something which is both desirable and necessary. It is vital for the health of the prison system that those in the prison service should make this parliamentary accountability work, as far as possible, for the benefit of the prison service, of those who work within it and of those who are in your charge. If MPs' scrutiny is an informed one it can work to the benefit of the common aim which I hope we all share—to achieve a better prison system catering for a smaller number of prisoners. If uninformed it will, at best, waste everyone's time and at worst, could result in real damage to the prospects for constructive change in the penal system. The Parliamentary accountability of the prison service should not be regarded by prison staff merely as an irksome fact of life, but as something which, if used properly, holds out opportunities to the prison service.

Of the 650 MPs in the House of Commons, only a small proportion have an active interest in penal affairs. I do not complain about this or criticise them for it—there are many issues competing for a MP's attention and an individual MP cannot be a specialist in everything. But this makes it all the more important that penal establishments should take the initiative in culti-



vating a relationship with their local MPs and making them aware of and interested in the problems of the prison service. When major reports of importance to the prison service (such as the May Report or the report of the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on the prison service) are published, prison staff should contact their MP and ask him to meet a small deputation to discuss them. If members of the Board of Visitors and members of the prison's probation department can be involved in this exercise, so much the better. A number of MPs with prisons in their constituencies have become very much better informed as a result of meeting with those from their local prisons—and the biggest divide in Parliament on these issues is not along party lines: it is between the small minority of MPs who have some knowledge of the penal system and the vast majority who know little or nothing about it. Prisons should try to ensure that as many MPs as possible who belong to the latter group are transferred to the former group through contact with staff and prisons.

If a debate is due in Parliament on some aspect of penal affairs, or a Bill is before Parliament which has implications for the prison service, again staff should make sure that they meet their MP to discuss the issues with him. As well as meetings on specific topics of this sort, the MP might be invited to visit the prison regularly to keep abreast of current concerns; and, if he is to appreciate the realities of the situation, there should be no cosmetic cleaning-up operations before he arrives. In a local prison, for example, the governor should try to get him there in the early morning to see prisoners slopping out and get him into the yards before the parcels of excrement which prisoners have thrown out of their cell windows during the night are cleared up. This will help to give MPs a realistic picture of what is good and what is bad about the conditions in establishments.

Staff should never underestimate the effect which reasoned argument can have on all but the most obdurate and unthinking politicians. For example, the representations which I have had from members of the Prison Department, from individual governors and staff, and in particular from the Prison and Borstal Governors' Branch of the Society of Civil and Public Servants, together with the knowledge which I have gained in the course of visits to penal establishments, have shifted my own views

on the question of the need for a substantial prison building programme. Many MPs who should be the natural allies of those working for a better prison service, MPs who have a genuine sympathy for penal reform, have in the past sometimes swallowed the simplistic line put forward by some penal reform organisations that, since many people in prison would better be dealt with by alternative measures or shorter sentences, the only requirement is to reduce the prison population and this will obviate the need for a prison building programme. It was hearing arguments and being supplied with information by those in the prison service which has convinced me, and other MPs to my knowledge, that even if the Government adopted the measures to reduce the prison population which we would all like to see, the physical conditions in so many prisons are so appalling that a substantial building programme would still be needed to achieve conditions which would fulfil even the most basic requirements of human decency.

Further, staff should be aware of the activities of the two principal all-party committees in Parliament which are actively concerned with penal affairs. The first is the Select Committee on Home Affairs—this is one of the official Select Committees of the House of Commons, each of which is concerned with the operations of a particular Government department. The Committee's remit is very much wider than penal affairs—it also covers race relations and immigration, the police, broadcasting and all the other responsibilities of the Home Office. However, in its short life (it was first established in 1979) it has produced a number of reports of relevance to the criminal justice and penal systems, of which the most important was the report in 1981 on the prison service.

The second group is the Parliamentary All-Party Penal Affairs Group, of which I am Chairman. This is an unofficial committee of back-bench MPs and peers who are interested in penal affairs. The membership is nominally over 80 although the number of reasonably active members is more like 25. Its aims are to inform its members more fully about penal affairs and to campaign through Parliamentary methods for penal reform. There is a plethora of back-bench all-party groups in Parliament, ranging over a wide range of subjects, but the Penal Affairs Group is generally recognised to be by far the most active. It produces regular

reports, prepared with some thoroughness, on different aspects of penal affairs; corresponds with Ministers; uses written and oral Parliamentary questions and debates to press its viewpoint; takes deputations to see Ministers and invites Ministers to meetings to discuss issues of concern to the Group; and works to amend Government legislation, particularly the Criminal Justice Bills which come before Parliament about once every five years.

It is important to appreciate that informed pressure from MPs can assist the prison service. It is only in the last couple of years that the penal reform lobby in Parliament has become reasonably well organised—yet even the relatively unco-ordinated efforts of sympathetic MPs in the past decade has had the effect of preventing the prison population from attaining even more extreme heights than the present levels. For example:

1. In the 1972 Criminal Justice Act, the efforts of penal reformers and sympathetic Parliamentarians materialised in the form of community service orders. The use of CSOs has steadily increased to the present level of around 28,000 a year. It is true that the Home Office Research Unit has estimated that only 40 to 50 per cent of orders are imposed on offenders who would otherwise have gone to prison; but that still means that around 10,000 people who would otherwise have been jailed are being kept out of prison by this reform.

2. As a result of work by penal reformers, academics and concerned politicians on both sides of the House, the improvements in bail procedures brought about by the Home Office circular of 1975 and the Bail Act 1976 led to a fall in the numbers remanded in custody from 63,388 in 1975 to 55,668 in 1979. The Bail Act itself was considerably strengthened during its passage through Parliament as a result of the efforts of interested MPs and peers. Far too many people are still remanded in custody for too long and the number of remand prisoners has been increasing again over the last two or three years; but we should not overlook the advances which were made in the mid-1970s.

3. Many are familiar with the campaign to end the remanding of juveniles to prison department establishments. No-one can be happy with the painfully slow progress which successive Governments have made in response to our campaign on this point; but equally it would be wrong to



overlook the progress which there has been. The remanding of girls under 17 to prison department custody has been ended, as has the remanding of 14 year old boys, and the remanding in custody of 15 and 16 year old boys is governed by much tighter criteria than before. In consequence the number of juveniles remanded in custody has dropped from 4,812 in 1976 to 3,433 in 1981.

4. As a result of pressure by MPs on both sides of the House over the imprisonment of fine defaulters, the Criminal Law Bill 1977 was amended to shorten the sentences of imprisonment which can be imposed for fine default. The result was a reduction in the average daily number of fine defaulters in prison from around 1,100 in 1977 to 900 in 1980.

These are just examples and others could be quoted. None of these are earth-shattering gains; but without them even more of our fellow citizens would be suffering the rigours of imprisonment.

The above examples are all concerned with prison numbers; but there are other cases in which action by interested Parliamentarians has helped the prisons in other ways. For example, pressure by interested MPs and peers, including those in the parliamentary All-Party Penal Affairs Group, combined recently together with efforts by some of those in the prison service to prevent the closure of the Annex at Wormwood Scrubs, whose constructive work with drug dependents, alcoholics and those with personality disorders constitutes one of the few therapeutic pockets within the prison system. Similarly, strong and consistent pressure on Home Office and DHSS Ministers has led over the last few years to a reduction in the number of prisoners who fall within the Mental Health Act criteria for mental illness—though the number is still far too high.

Following recommendations by the parliamentary All-Party Penal Affairs Group in its report "Too Many Prisoners" (1980) and the Home Affairs Committee in its report "The Prison Service" (1981), the Government has legislated in the 1982 Criminal Justice Act to enable defendants who are legally represented and who agree to waive their right to appear in court at weekly remand hearings to do so, which should help to reduce the burden of unnecessary escort duties on the local prisons and remand centres.

It is perhaps worth emphasising that when the Prison Department sends out new or amended circular instructions, these are often at least partly as a result

of pressure from people like myself and colleagues in the Parliamentary All-Party Penal Affairs Group. For example:

(i) Just over a year ago prisons received a circular instruction stipulating that use of force reports must always be completed by hospital officers, as well as other prison officers, if force has to be used on a prisoner. That instruction is in part a result of the Barry Prosser case, the comments made by the coroner at the inquest and the representations made by such bodies as the Parliamentary All-Party Penal Affairs Group.

(ii) Another recent circular instruction amended the previous instructions about prisoners who are suicide risks. Once again, that is partly a result of concern among Members of Parliament about certain recent cases of suicide by prisoners.

(iii) Four years ago, prisons were asked to compile statistics on a regular basis concerning the dosages of drugs given to prisoners. This arose from concern about the alleged misuse of drugs in certain prisons—concern which was expressed by a wide range of people including present and former prison staff; members of Boards of Visitors; prison medical officers who gave evidence to the House of Commons Expenditure Committee concerning the highly drugged state in which they received inmates from certain other prisons; and also members of both Houses of Parliament.

The 1982 Act was the first Criminal Justice Bill which has met sustained and well organised all party pressure through the Parliamentary All-Party Penal Affairs Group. The Group's efforts resulted in a series of useful amendments to the Bill. For example:

(a) Soliciting and vagrancy offences have been made non-imprisonable.

(b) The Act now contains stricter statutory criteria for imposing custodial sentences on young people than ever before.

(c) An offer of legal representation will be mandatory before any custodial sentence can be imposed on an offender under 21.

(d) Courts will normally be required to consider a social enquiry report before imposing a custodial sentence on someone under 21 or an offender of any age who has not served a previous custodial sentence.

(e) The courts and the Home Secretary have been empowered to release on conditions similar to bail conditions offenders who have been recommended for deportation.

(f) The Government has been empowered to make shorter-term prisoners eligible for parole.

(g) The periods for which Crown Courts can imprison offenders for fine default have been reduced to the same level as those available to magistrates' courts.

(h) A legally aided right of application for bail to the Crown Court has been made available to those remanded in custody by magistrates' courts.

(i) The courts have been empowered to include a condition of attendance at a day centre in a probation order.

(j) Courts will be able to impose attendance centre orders in certain circumstances on those who have served a previous custodial sentence.

(k) Crown Court judges will be able to grant bail pending appeal.

In addition, in response to amendments proposing the introduction of statutory minimum standards for penal establishments, the Government has agreed as a first step to produce a draft code of standards for discussion later this year. A number of other amendments were successful including some in the area of supervision and care orders for young offenders.

Although we therefore obtained a considerable number of useful minor reforms, our biggest disappointment was our failure to obtain any measure which will substantially reduce the prison population, such as the supervised release scheme which the Home Office canvassed in 1981 but was dropped following the hostile reaction which the former Home Secretary received at that year's Conservative Party Conference.

It would be easy to be cynical and depressed about the prospects for penal reform when so much campaigning effort often seems to achieve so little; but we should remember that all the great social reforms in history—ranging from the abolition of slavery to the establishment of the welfare state to the abolition of capital punishment—have only been won gradually and after long, bitter struggles. We have inherited a penal system without the crank, the treadmill and bread-and-water punishment diets because penal reformers in the past did not grow discouraged and give up. In the same way, those working in the prisons of the future will only inherit a decent penal system if sympathetic Parliamentarians work closely together with those working in the prisons and redouble the efforts to achieve reform. ■



# OPEN VERDICT

## *An assessment of Prisons PR Policy*

Barry Sutlieff

*Head of Prisons Public Relations Branch*

*"The process of opening up the prison system to the media cannot be reversed. There is no going back to the days when our penal institutions were inscrutable fortresses, occasionally lit up by scandal or disturbance, or by the memoirs of ex-inmates."*

Not an axiom from some manual of prisons public relations, but the words of Rex Bloomstein, producer of the Strangeways and Lifers television programmes.

Some will see Bloomstein's comment as a truism. No doubt that is right. But the fact that we accept this as a fairly obvious point is significant in itself. For openness has now become an accepted part of the prison ethos, a way of life for many parts of the service. We acknowledge we are accountable to, and a part of society, and that there is a need to share our problems. Who could have expressed Bloomstein's sentiments twenty years ago? The attitude of secrecy summed up by one governor who, when asked by a local reporter for a facility visit, demanded to know the statutory basis for the journalist's request, has long since disappeared.

To many of those media pundits who follow Home Office Affairs, Lord Justice May takes much of the credit for sweeping away these attitudes. And as a newcomer to the service, I find it hard to believe that life actually

existed before May. The Committee's report marks such a watershed in prison history that everything before it seems to pale into insignificance.

What is often forgotten, however, is that the greater openness with the media pre-dates May by some years. Well before then, for example, the Strangeways series had been embarked upon.

What I think May did was not only to focus attention on the need for better communication, both internally and externally, but to give an added impetus to those who were advocating a stronger and more visible public relations policy. It removed any last remaining doubts about the need for such a policy.

Not unreasonably, therefore, we tend to use the Committee's report as a yardstick for measuring progress. Although short in firm recommendations the 'grain of May' placed a high premium on public relations -

- 'public interest in penal matters seems to remain a fitful affair'
- 'closed institutions above all require open, well informed, discussion'
- 'prison services need support from an informed and interested public'
- 'management must be characterised by openness of approach and mind'
- 'the need for a greater degree of unity and identity, a greater corporate sense'
- 'public sentiment requires that as aspects of government, which includes the prison service, should be opened up to as wide an audience as possible'
- 'the case for a house journal seems unassailable'
- 'it would be an advantage if day to day press relations were brought more within the Prison Department itself'



After five years in advertising agencies, Barry Sutlieff joined the (then) Board of Trade export promotion unit in 1966. Following spells in the Departments of Transport, Environment and the Price Commission, he ran the housing desk of the DOE, before becoming Chief Press Officer, Department of Trade. He joined the Home Office in January of this year as Head of the Prisons Public Relations Branch.



The immediate effect of the Report was to bring about the setting up of a prisons public relations branch to work alongside the service. Hitherto, press, facility arrangements and paid and promotional publicity had been handled by four different groups. In 1981 these were brought together under one head. Such a grouping was entirely logical. It helped to give a more cohesive service both to the media and to the Prison Department. And it established a sense of belonging to, and working for, a distinct organisation.

How far we have met May's hopes and aspirations is difficult to judge and opinions will obviously differ in various parts of the service. In my view notable progress has been made in three particular respects.

First, by regarding 'openness' as an objective in its own right, for example by the facilities and briefings we arrange, and by being prepared to be frank and open in our approach, relationships with the media—journalists, editors and producers—have become generally good. There is a much better understanding of our problems, and many of the journalists with whom we deal are more knowledgeable now than perhaps they have been before. Whether this will lead to a calmer and more rational approach to prison matters remains to be seen, but educating the communicators is a pre-requisite to the ultimate objective of educating the general public.

Second, the fact that we have been prepared to seek the support from an informed and interested public, for instance in raising the debate on overcrowding and the physical state of prisons has, in my view helped to support Ministers in their quest for more resources.

Third, the undoubted success has been at local level. The efforts of individual establishments to cultivate their local media, to promote the positive, and to be prepared to explain the less palatable, has in many areas been quite remarkable.

My overriding impression, however, is that the service as a whole is still reactive rather than promotional; that a great deal of our publicity arises out of the media approaching us first.

This is not necessarily bad in that it could be said to be the direct result of the media responding to our more open policy. And in our response, we can still be positive. But it does mean we are being projected on the media's own terms—not ours. The reasons for this are varied.

First, in spite of all the good, positive, activities around the country, the Service still suffers from an overdose of siege mentality. We still tend to be somewhat defensive, to be preoccupied with fighting the daily tactical battle. Burdened down with day to day overcrowding and resource problems, it is worth asking how far management actually has moved towards the more creative and initiatory role envisaged by May. And how much more potential good publicity could we be achieving if the constant pressure were eased?

Second, and more fundamentally, although May placed high store on giving the service a greater corporate sense, it is not always fully recognised that at the end of the day we are still a department of the Home Office. We are not therefore analogous to bodies like the Manpower Services Commission or the Health and Safety Executive.

Peter Evans, the *Times* Home Affairs Correspondent commented to me recently that the Prison Department appeared to be constantly 'looking over its shoulder'. By this he meant we were paying too much regard for our Home Office and Ministerial masters, instead of projecting an independent more forceful, prison service viewpoint.

It is always very difficult to decide how far public servants can go in this direction, and it is very debatable as to what benefits would be gained by entering into a political confrontation with elected members. But great strides have been taken in recent years to advance the service's point of view—for example, by way of the Annual report. And many governors have attracted widespread attention by their views on overcrowding, the purpose of imprisonment, and so forth. This can only be beneficial, particularly in stimulating public debate on the difficult issues we face.

Although, therefore, there are a number of measures that we should be considering to develop a greater corporate sense—such as a more definitive house style for the service—we have to accept that we are subject to the same constraints as many other in the public service.

Third, we should acknowledge that openness is a relatively new concept. Two hundred years of secrecy are not easily swept aside. It is a novelty not just for the service, but for the media as well. Both sides are learning how to use this new found freedom. We are not yet fully competent nor confident, and there has

therefore been a tendency to be slightly cautious. Some, smaller establishments, I have found, are unsure as to whether to pursue an active public relations policy and if they do where will it lead them. A central objective of Public Relations Branch's policy is to encourage this activity, to help to instill confidence, and to produce a service increasingly well equipped to speak for itself. But it will take time.

Fourth, to the public at large prisons have traditionally been secret and mysterious institutions holding some of the most compelling people in society. There is a natural fascination with the notorious, many of whom are the very substance of folk-lore. And we have to accept the press pander to that fascination. As one of the early press barons said, ninety eight per cent of readers gained comfort by reading of the misdeeds and misfortunes of the remaining two per cent. The problem for us is that this morbidity tends to act as some form of invisible barrier. And we have to penetrate this barrier before we can get the media to treat prisons in a more sensible way. We will never, of course eliminate the sensational stories—the nature of many of the people on the establishments prevent that. In any case, such stories sell newspapers.

But Strangeways pushed the barrier back to a marked degree; the programmes on Styal, Robert Maudsley and Lifers did so even more. The question now is, how much further can we go down this track? We have drawn the line at allowing well-known notorious prisoners—including IRA prisoners—from being interviewed. But do programmes such as Lifer help to improve public knowledge of the prison service and its problems, bearing in mind that interest is centred on the inmates?

I suspect that these programmes do have a subliminal-type effect on viewers, in that, although they may not have been conscious of receiving an image of prisons, an impression is in fact registered. Hopefully the message received will prove to be another step on the road to demystifying prison and dispelling misconceptions.

But is there a need to stand back a little and try and see where we are going? Is there any further mileage in the Bloomstein approach? How much more 'open' can we be?

Finally, we have to accept that the public attitude to prisons is deeply ingrained and will not be changed overnight. Alan Hedges, a sociological researcher, in an attitude survey for



Assistant Governor Recruitment, Concluded that the image was almost universally bad. It was, he said, almost entirely dominated by the simple picture of locking people up, and there was very little expectation of a more caring relationship between staff and inmates, much less of a serious attempt at rehabilitation. So we have an uphill struggle. There are no magic solutions to image changing, no quick answers. Public relations is a slow drip exercise, something we have to keep working at. At any one point in time, PRB have in the region of 40 requests for facilities or briefings on the stocks. So the media interest is there. Paradoxically, what we have to beware of is over exposure, of overselling. As the *Guardian* commented recently on overcrowding —“the trouble is that we have heard it all too many times already. It no longer has the impact it should have.”

In his message to the Service, Rex Bloomstein said that it was probably naive to suggest that the relationship between the Service and the media would ever be less than tense.

“But my plea is for mutual openness and understanding. Give the programme makers and journalists the opportunity to explore what is happening, the chance to assess the pressures, tensions, and occasional tragedies of prison life, for the treatment of convicted criminals is the responsibility of society. You act in the name of society. Don't let the public escape its responsibility.”

The plea for mutual openness and understanding will bring a wry smile to the faces of a number of governors, particularly those who dealt with the independent television company who carried with them rubbish to strew around a prison cell to illustrate the poor conditions. Others will remember the journalist who was told to add sarcastic, knocking comments to her articles because they were insufficiently contentious.

Three fabricated stories in one national Sunday newspaper virtually in successive weeks gave great credibility to the belief that journalists say a thing that they know isn't true in the hope that if they keep on saying it long enough it will be true.

We will continue to receive these knocks and bruises. The story of our life is that we seem to be constantly taking one step forward and two back.

The sex and booze stories do harm us. We live in an age of cheque book journalism when comparatively large sums are paid to ex-inmates whose only interest is in maligning the Service.

That is why we need a positive policy with a willingness to co-operate with the media, even though at times that may be hard to stomach. And that is why it is particularly important that where we feel there is an injustice made against us, we should respond vigorously and speedily. To this purpose it is helpful that locally as well as nationally we have a pool of ‘front runners’ who can explain operational matters when (or before) difficulties arise.

In the past, I think, the Service has tended to be slow in coming forward. Not only this, it is also largely invisible. Apart from the recruitment literature and material produced by the individual establishments, there is virtually nothing in the way of material for the general public. And we have not presented the various elements of the Service in a particularly cohesive form. In a roundabout way, Stephen Shaw, Director of the Prison Reform Trust, put his finger on the problem in a letter to the *Times*. Where greater public awareness of the state of our local prisons could be used to support the demand for more resources, he said, it had been exploited to the full.

“But in areas where the Home Office is less obviously the ‘victim’—for example, the continuing controversy over the standards of health care provided by the prison medical service—openness has been notably absent.”

In fact there is nothing sinister in this. It is really a reflection of the

fact that we have rarely presented the medical services in a positive way, and has little to do with lack of openness. For some time it has seemed to me that we should develop a number of broad themes and bring these into sharper focus than we are doing at present. The medical service is obviously one of these, as are the building, improvement and maintenance programme, education, industrial relations, management efficiency, to name the more obvious ones.

There is a great deal that needs to be done.

But for an organisation that started late in the field of ‘openness’, the Prison Service has made rapid and courageous progress. How many other organisations have allowed themselves to be the subject of television scrutiny of Strangeways, Brass Tacks, Styal and Lifer? And how many others have started with the same inherent disadvantages?

In my view, the service around the country is one of great quality and this quality shines through, often in the most adverse of conditions.

Its main enemies are those bred by years of inwardness and secrecy—a sense of inferiority and lack of confidence. Only time and practice at communication will dispel these, but when one notable journalist applauds us for being in many ways the most open of all departments, perhaps we are on the right track. ■

## THE CIVIL SERVICE BENEVOLENT FUND

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# PRISON LIBRARIES STUDY SCHOOL 1983

Ray Eaton

*Publicity Officer  
The Library Association.*

*The scope of what can be done in library provision and the benefits that can accrue from the input made is of such magnitude that we must take every opportunity to work together now in laying the foundations for realistic library provision in the next century. With each of these Study Schools the impetus and the understanding between Officers and Librarians is growing towards that end.*

The name itself is enough to daunt anyone who does not already know the tradition of this annual concentration of Prison Library Officers, Education Officers and Librarians. They come together to work collectively to improve and encourage use of library facilities in penal establishments. This fifth Study School at Brunel University lived up to the now established pattern of providing insight, incentive and support to the 165 attending. The theme this year was User Education and we learnt many ways of helping users to get the best out of what we had to offer.

Arthur Pearson, Deputy Chief Education Officer, Home Office Prison Department gave an impressive introduction to Lord Elton who presented the Keynote Address, and rightly so. It was clear from the introduction and from Lord Elton himself that this Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, The Home Office, has broad based interests, is a person who accepts reality and is prepared to try to improve matters within that framework and, most importantly, is anxious to learn from whatever those working at grass roots can tell him. For this reason he left time in his 45 minute slot not only to receive questions but also to receive information. This was a unique opportunity for most of those attending for such a direct link and full advantage was taken to tell him of, or re-emphasise to him, the staffing problems which exist and frustrate the provision of a

good library service in many institutions. Such was his interest that discussion continued at tea and only came to an end when he stood on a table to thank everyone for the work they do and for making his visit worthwhile.

These Study Schools are an opportunity for those interested in furthering the provision of a library service to prisoners to talk together. We talk to other disciplines, to our own colleagues

from further afield, we discover how others tackle the problems we have and we nobble the people who we hope can improve our lot.

Each lecture session was important and we were fortunate to have such good speakers but credit must also be given to the work which is done in small groups throughout the campus, including the bar, where overheard conversations reflected the real dedication of everyone at the school.

The tour of the University library widened horizons for many, giving an opportunity to see a large library—all four floors of it—and the wide range and types of material available. This was not demoralising when compared with what we have to offer, but rather suggested new avenues of provision and was an indication of the sort of

*continued on page 10*



Ray Eaton is Divisional Librarian with Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service. His territory includes Leicester and Gartree prisons and Glen Parva Y.C.C. and has been involved in library provision to prisons since 1971. He is a committee member of The Library Association Prison Libraries Subject Group.



# Prisoners' Access to the Media

Vivienne Dews

Until December 1981 prisoners were not allowed any direct contact with the media. Correspondence which might, even remotely, be intended for publication or any letter to a journalist which could possibly prompt his professional interest was prohibited. Journalists were also not allowed to visit individual prisoners unless they were personal friends or relations and undertook not to use in their professional capacity any material which they might gain from a visit. The ban did not in practice operate totally as prisoners' families were of course able to contact the media and thus could pass on material provided by prisoners particularly during visits. This generally meant that prisoners were restricted to very limited oral contact with the media but sometimes they managed to smuggle out written material. Occasionally articles appeared which suggested that a journalist had effectively succeeded in interviewing a prisoner. Such occurrences were not, however, very common and the basic principle that prisoners should not be allowed to publish their views was preserved.

This was completely changed as part of the general revision of correspondence arrangements in the new Standing Order 5. Changes were drawn up in the light of a test case before the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Four of the letters at issue in the case were directly concerned with prisoners' access to the media and the new provisions reflect the outcome. They involve a complete reversal of presumption; whereas before any correspondence with the media was prohibited now the presumption is that all correspondence with the media is allowed provided it does not contravene certain conditions, which are deliberately more strict than those which apply to the generality of correspondence. In

its report on the Prisoners' Correspondence Case the European Commission commented that there seemed to be legitimate conflicting interests and said "On the one hand access to the media is an important element in a democratic society. On the other hand, the difficult task of prison administration may be affected by the exploitation of scurrilous material in the 'gutter press'. It is conceivable that prison staff morale may be undermined thereby although, of course, the normal protection of the civil law of defamation and prison disciplinary proceedings is available to them." The new provisions seek to balance these considerations. Thus in addition to satisfying the general rules on the contents of correspondence a letter to the media must not be intended for publication in return for payment (unless the prisoner is unconvicted); be destined for a publication associated with a person or organisation which is believed to threaten security; be about crimes committed by the prisoner himself or others, unless it is serious representations about conviction or sentence or serious comment on crime and the criminal justice system; or identify individual members of staff or other prisoners.

The reasons for these restrictions are various. For example, because it is a normal consequence of imprisonment that all professional activities should cease convicted prisoners are not allowed

to engage in business matters. It would be inconsistent if convicted prisoners were nevertheless effectively allowed to work as journalists by being paid for material they provided for publication. The restriction on material about crime is intended to prevent a criminal from publicising and thus perhaps benefitting even if not financially from his wrongdoing. I think it would generally be accepted that the prison service has a duty to try to prevent the "Beast tells all" type story from emerging from prison. On the other hand it seems reasonable that prisoners should be able to offer serious public comment about matters which may be of immediate and direct concern to them either individually or as a group. The prohibition on the identification of other members of the prison community preserves the rights of other prisoners to privacy and provides some protection for prison staff whose duties can make them particularly vulnerable to unfair and misleading publicity which it could be difficult to challenge through the normal civil law processes and which staff are often unable to answer publicly.

Although the introduction of the new correspondence provisions in late 1981 represented a very substantial change from complete prohibition to fairly extensive freedom of contact with the media, the effects have perhaps not been as significant as might have



Vivienne Dews joined the Home Office straight from university in 1974 and worked in various departments before being posted to the Private Office where she served as Private Secretary to Lord Boston and later to Lord Belstead who had junior ministerial responsibility for prisons. She then moved to P3 division and remained there until May 1983.



been expected. No central record is kept of prisoners' letter writing activity because this would serve no particular purpose other than the satisfaction of curiosity. An analysis of the effects of the changes is therefore necessarily subjective but the impression from Headquarters was that at least some prisoners were not slow to take advantage of the new freedom and were soon writing letters either directly intended for publication or attempting to interest a journalist in a particular grievance. From time to time letters and even articles by prisoners have appeared in the press, mainly in the more serious newspapers, or have been read on radio letters programmes. These have been generally concerned with prison and other criminal justice matters; for example an article appeared praising the work of the hospital annex at Wormwood Scrubs and calling for similar units to be established elsewhere and there have been letters arguing for the reduction of the qualifying period for parole and, perhaps most intriguingly in this context, against the making of a television programme in prisons about life sentence prisoners.

Nevertheless, comparatively few such contributions have appeared and they have not been greeted with any great interest; the general public may well not even have noticed that there has been any change and that these letters come from prisoners at all.

In view of the media's persistent pressure for a greater openness on prison matters it is interesting to reflect on why such a fundamental move in this direction should have created so few ripples. There are various possible explanations. Undoubtedly the great majority of prisoners simply wish to complete their sentences quietly and most have no desire to publicise the fact of their imprisonment or to draw attention to themselves in any way. Nevertheless there are a significant number of prisoners who desire publicity for themselves or for their particular grievance but they do not seem to have been very successful in interesting the press. Maybe the press is only really interested in those few prisoners whose particular crimes have made them into household names. The issues raised by most prisoners have probably proved to be rather mundane and not the basis of great news stories; moreover many readers, listeners and viewers are probably rather unsympathetic to the publication of complaints, particularly about imprisonment, by prisoners. There may before have

been some interest in obtaining stories which were prohibited by official as exclusive pieces of investigative journalism but now that these are freely available they probably do not have the same attraction. The opening up of prison matters to the media has undoubtedly removed much of the interest which used to be generated by what was seen as a veil of secrecy. The restrictions on contact with the media which have been retained probably also have a considerable part to play. There can be few prisoners with good journalistic skills and as visits to individual prisoners by journalists are not allowed the press has to rely on the prisoner's own written contribution although "reconstruction" is of course possible. But perhaps most importantly although prisoners are potentially a source of crime stories which are one of the three types of material said to sell the most newspapers these are effectively banned presumably minimising the interest of most of the popular press.

This is not to deny that the changes have produced some important benefits, for the prison service as well as for prisoners and the media. Previously many people outside the service believed that the ban on prisoners' access to the media was necessary to ensure that public attention could not be directed at some great scandal in prisons. This belief was quite unfair but probably inevitable. The removal of the ban has destroyed such myths to the benefit of all concerned. The change can also be seen as part of a process of normalisation which helps reduce the tensions with those prisoners who resent what they see as unjustified restrictions imposed by the prison system. Their resentment may however now be transferred to those outside who fail to respond to them. There have probably also been benefits for our own relations with the media as we can no longer fairly be accused of attempting to hide something.

Looking to the future it is difficult to imagine that there will be any further significant relaxation of the restrictions which remain on prisoners' access to the media. These restrictions serve an important function and in many instances are necessary to protect the rights of others. We must thus look to the media themselves for developments. They now have the opportunity and freedom to take a responsible interest in a wide range of prison matters and it is for them to decide if they wish to take greater advantage of it. ■

PRISON LIBRARIES STUDY SCHOOL 1983  
*continued from page 8*  
resource which can be borrowed for use in our libraries and that, however humble our library, it is a link into a vast national network.

The speakers gave us a great amount to take back with us. We were reminded that we are dispensing packages of freedom from surroundings, packages of information and of knowledge. We should also be preparing our readers to use libraries when they leave our establishments, for the great benefits which these packages can continue to give to them. Roger Matthews, Prison Officer Librarian from HMB Portland, introduced us to Billy Towrag—a cartoon character, created by him and likely to be taken up in a national campaign, to tell all offenders of the great value of using a library.

The importance of user surveys was stressed as a way of finding out what our clients needs really are, of finding out their reaction to what is provided, and of finding out who the users of our libraries really are. A whole morning was given to this with five speakers telling us what has been done in this field why and how to conduct a survey and what changes can be implemented because of them. The part played by library schools in educating the educators was also clearly explained.

With fourteen speakers and contributions from many others there was enough covered in this School to last everyone for at least a year.

Maggie Currie attended the Study School for the first time this year. She is Prison Officer Librarian at HMBI Bullwood Hall and her comment was "I came here with apprehension, but already I have learnt hundreds of useful tips." This echoed the enthusiasm which was apparent throughout the three days.

One of the themes frequently referred to was that we should make our libraries like 'ordinary public libraries'. At the final session there was an overwhelming motion from the School that legislation be amended to permit Prison Officers to use these libraries. If this is successful then it will surely be a major contribution towards making our libraries like those outside and create a wider interest in what we can provide. The more smoothly Schools like this run the less one tends to think of planning behind them. The fact is that they do not 'just happen' and we all must be indebted to Mrs. Cogdell and her helpers on the Library Association Prison Libraries Group Committee for sending us back to our libraries with such renewed determination. ■



# OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT IN THE SOUTH EAST REGION:

*a fresh approach to the  
management of institutions*

Hugh Marriage and Michael Selby\*

The story of operational assessment begins with the May Committee's recommendation that "there should be a system of inspection of the prison service distanced as far as may be practicable from the Prison Department (5.61). In depth inspections of particular establishments should in future be carried out by the regional directors (5.62)". It is these "in depth inspections" which have become known as operational assessments.

The May Committee gave little detail about how regional directors might "inspect either a whole or a part of an establishment as frequently as they thought necessary as part of their normal operational management duties". It must have been clear, however, that it was devolving to regional offices a task of major proportions. In the south east, the requirement framed by the then Deputy Director General, Gordon Fowler, to "thoroughly assess" 36 penal establishments every two years handed the regional director an inspectorial load almost equal to that performed by the entire former prison inspectorate. That inspectorate had a large and senior full-time staff but regional directors were to receive no increase in resources. A different way had to be found in the south east region and this paper describes how an alternative approach to operational assessment was conceived, developed and implemented.

The first stage was to recognise that whilst the regional director has a large and experienced staff at his disposal, only a tiny proportion are actually in regional office. Most are, of course, distributed around the estab-

lishments in the region. One way of fulfilling the new task of operational assessment would be not to confine the work to regional office but to spread the load across the whole region.

We had to decide what this increased inspecting was meant to achieve. There are so many problems in prisons—most of which seem intractable—was there really any point in listing all these yet again? Instead, might one concentrate on a widespread difficulty which could be amenable to improvement? We chose cooperation—between individuals, groups of staff, establishments, regional offices and headquarters—as our prime target because many managerial and even technical problems in a wide range of organisations are known to arise directly from the frictions between various sections of staff. Only if staff can work better together can establishments begin to be able to change.

The second objective was to reinforce the role and status of the Governor. There was a growing feeling amongst governors that local discretion for decision-making was being eroded by an increasing requirement to refer even the smallest matters to regional office or headquarters. Thus governors

were losing managerial control: some establishments no longer had the ability to change as they seemed to have been on automatic pilot for so long. It was important for operational assessment to underline the discretions governors have for running their own establishments and so, in restoring to the establishment the capacity for change, giving the governor the power to direct it.

The third major objective was for operational assessment to monitor the real work of the establishment—in effect, everything for which people are paid. It is a relatively easy matter to "thoroughly assess" well-defined concrete activities like escorts procedure but rather more difficult to "thoroughly assess" race relations or the quality of a regime in a unit for young offenders. But as the Department justifies and spends money on these too, they must equally be open to review and improvement. If possible, this must be done without imposing the same kind of uniform template on a dispersal prison as, say, an open borstal.

The solution was to centre operational assessment on the establishments themselves. Its form would then naturally adapt itself to each establishment, the resources be spread across the region and governors retain a major say in its operation. Each

\*Based on a paper presented to the London Conference of the British Psychological Society; 20 December 1982.



establishment was required to divide its work into 50 or so activity areas of about equal size and the way in which this was done should reflect different local conditions. In order to keep within the two-year cycle, one of these areas had to be assessed every fortnight. Examples of such activity areas might be the reception of prisoners, or the operation of the gate or parole procedures.

The term "activity area" is not merely a trendy description for a "department". The traditional method of inspecting organisations is to tackle them department-by-department: but this tends to overlook the interaction between departments—the very co-operation, or lack of it, between sections of the organisation which frequently gives rise to problems. It is relatively easy to run a department in isolation: the difficulties arise in interlinking with other parts of the organisation which have conflicting priorities.

The novel elements of the scheme are the procedures by which the assessments are conducted and the regional director's accountability ensured. The governor instructs a line manager principally responsible for each activity area to write a specification of all relevant procedures. This is based on, and derives its authority from, Circular Instructions, Standing Orders and the various manuals for financial and other matters. All this is collated and documented authoritatively for management, sometimes for the first time. It is a paradox of inspection that, invariably, more can be achieved in an examination by concentrating on close detail and specific topics than by wrestling with the great imponderables of broader, vaguer issues. At this preparation stage, it is not surprising that a number of deficiencies become apparent and are promptly rectified: operational assessment is already beginning to work. The specification—called a "module"—is agreed with the governor and becomes the basis upon which the assessment is made. This ensures that the module will be seen as legitimate and sound since the staff responsible have contributed so much towards it.

The governor then selects—normally—two assessors to carry out the examination and the procedures for this will vary from establishment to establishment depending on the availability of staff. Assessors should have no direct involvement with the area being examined and, as the line manager has prepared a detailed module, they

should require no prior knowledge. There will often be members of staff who have previous experience of that area of work and one assessor can be found from them. Given that there is a detailed specification of the activity area and one assessor who is familiar with the area, the governor has an even wider choice for the second assessor. It might be another officer, governor grade, psychologist, medical officer, probation officer, member of the Board of Visitors or even someone with little connection with the establishment—all these have been involved in operational assessments in different establishments. Even staff from regional office and headquarters have taken part.

The instructions to examiners are clear and simple: they have to ask just three basic questions:

What is meant to happen?

Does it happen?

Is this really the best way of going about it?

This stops the examinations becoming bogged down by technical details and examiners can then concentrate on taking a critical overall look at the activity area. Operational assessment examiners seldom pull their punches and enjoy tackling their establishments with a refreshing frankness. Whoever the assessor is, the region defends his right to say whatever he wants about what he sees or feels as a result of his assessment. This has encouraged governors to appoint examiners regardless of rank or title: basic grade officers have assessed sensitive areas like staff detailing, probation officers examined adjudication procedures, Board of Visitors members assessed the kitchens, chaplains have been into the clothing and exchange stores.

The examiners' report is passed to the governor, with their recommendations. The governor can now review how one part of the establishment is operating, whether what should be going on actually happens and what improvements should be made. This avoids the loss of information which occurs when inspectors come into establishments and leave their findings in their briefcases. In this version of operational assessment, the examiners remain available to the governor for discussion about the follow-up to the examination.

*Because examiners are encouraged to suggest a solution at the moment a problem is found, the governor is provided with the foundation for a locally-produced agenda for change, with the*

*spotlight of operational assessment moving systematically round the whole establishment. A small group of people has been specifically created in his establishment to give well-informed and detailed advice and a built-in mechanism for follow-up has been set up. It is this mixture of thoroughness and friendliness which gives operational assessment its power for change in institutions.*

The governor is required to make the decisions on the examiners' recommendations before all the papers—module, examination and governors comments—are sent to the regional director. This way of meeting the original May Report's requirement has the effect of reinforcing the authority of region. For not only do the regional director and his staff come to have a far more detailed insight into the workings of establishments than could be achieved purely by visiting, but senior regional staff now have specific information to add real purpose to their operational visits. It is remarkable that, in the remoteness of regional office, it is easy to tell whether operational assessments are effective, sharp and frank.

Has this form of operational assessment achieved the objectives set it? Its effectiveness stems from penetrating an establishment's natural immunological system. A visiting inspector may be kept at arms length: it is more difficult to maintain the same defence with a colleague from the same institution who probably knows all too well what is likely to be amiss. If the task of assessment is the improvement of performance rather than the exposure of fault, it becomes welcomed as a way of revealing problems and seeking help. Operational assessment can, moreover, be a very effective complement to the work of H.M. Chief Inspector of Prisons, whose purpose and methods are, of course, quite different from those of operational assessment.

As an exercise in cooperation, the scheme has clearly worked. In one establishment a particular wing Principal Officer was known to be antipathetic to the industrial workshops and the staff who ran them. He was no doubt dismayed to find himself assigned to take part in an examination which involved having to spend a day or so studying the work of the shops, its staff and prisoners. At the end of the time he emerged saying that he had learned a great deal about the difficulties of the shop instructor, whose



problems were exacerbated by unhelpful wing staff not always releasing prisoners at exactly the right time—and the industrial staff expressed a reciprocal understanding of the work of wing Principal Officers. There are many similar tales from across the region.

The other side of cooperation is that staff enjoy working on operational assessments: they are being involved in management and are helping to make sensible improvements from which all can benefit. There is no doubting that the assessment expertise required of staff is central to their own competence and professionalism and local branches of staff associations have appreciated this and encouraged their members to take part. In short, it is good quality work.

The scheme has indeed reinforced the role and status of the governor. It is in the nature of inspections of any kind that some recommendations can be produced which cannot be implemented because of shortage of resources. There was a danger that operational assessment would raise the expectations of staff, only to dash them as lack of follow-up failed to bring results but, in general, this has not

happened. As about two-thirds of the recommendations under this form of operational assessment can be implemented by the governor without the need for additional resources nor having to refer to regional office and headquarters, this is beginning to have a major effect on some establishments and the impact governors can have on them. Moreover, the documentation of the entire work of the establishment which is a central feature of operational assessment, greatly strengthens a governor's ability to govern and has become a significant part of the hand-over process when a new governor takes office.

The third major objective was to assess the total work of establishments and not confine operational assessment to the more easily assessed concrete aspects. It is gratifying to see that, amongst the assessments of emergency control room procedures, gates, the issue of uniform and victualling, there are assessments on less tangible topics like race relations, wing review procedures, the role of the governor and the contribution of the chaplaincy.

But the most important thing of all is that operational assessment seems to have been able to provide

establishments with their own basis for learning and development. It is their own because, for instance, the problems of management in London locals and provincial detention centres must be entirely different but operational assessment has been able to adapt to each extreme. It is learning because the scheme generates valuable training material—for new staff, for staff changing jobs within the establishment, for quite junior staff being involved in an assessment outside their normal area of work. Staff can learn not only from their own examinations and adjust their procedures if, for instance, a particular assessment goes wrong but also from other establishments where best practice is used as an example to all. It is development because operational assessment has a built-in follow-up procedure, both locally and through the interchange with regional office. Staff doing assessments know that recommendations will not lie collecting dust on a shelf and, of course, the scheme itself has the capacity to develop into the future. That is why the south east region operational assessment scheme may have brought a fresh approach to the management of institutions. ■

# Letter

THE EDITOR  
*Prison Service Journal*

Dear Editor

As a retired probation officer, I was particularly interested in your "January" issue received a few days ago, with its articles looking back at Borstal training and forward to Youth Custody.

Two of the articles mention the importance of probation officers maintaining contact with their clients in custody, by visits and letters—and I would add that it is also helpful to befriend the prisoner's family while he is away. If this is done, then there is a far greater likelihood of the prisoner making a good response to after-care (statutory or voluntary) following his release. Otherwise, the man or boy is apt to think, "Why should I go and see someone who didn't bother to visit me when I was inside?" A failure to make these visits, and to work constructively with the Borstal or Prison authorities, inevitably gives the prisoner

the impression that his probation officer does not care about him.

I found that all delinquents, including the mentally retarded, were most astute in distinguishing between genuine concern and sentimental "caring" (which has become a jargon word). And they appreciate, far more than some professional "carers" realise, that genuine concern must sometimes be expressed in stern measures. I have never forgotten the words of one young man, the first time I met him: "My last probation officer didn't care a bit about me—I didn't keep appointments with him, and I left my address without telling him, and he never took out a warrant for my arrest, he didn't care if I went back into crime".

Concerning further offences after a Borstal or Prison sentence, one point was not brought out in the Journal. Many delinquents, in my experience, do not rehabilitate at one stroke after a lengthy criminal career. The first sign of a response to supervision and/or

Borstal training is a change to a milder form of offence: for example, a change from housebreaking to minor shoplifting. Then these milder offences are committed at widening intervals until they cease altogether. This change is not fully reflected in the sentencing: if a man has fifteen previous, he is likely to be sentenced more heavily than a man who commits the same crime as a first offence. Therefore I suggest that statistics on recidivism need far closer scrutiny than they usually receive. If a lad on after-care Licence commits further offences, but those offences are less aggressive than his former crimes, then he HAS benefited from Borstal training and is probably well on the way towards rehabilitation. Of course there are a few who actually do "Go, and sin no more"—but should we really be surprised that only a minority can achieve instant reformation?

Yours sincerely  
BARBARA HUMAN



# BOOK REVIEWS

## Books for review to be sent to:

THE REVIEWS EDITOR, Prison Service Journal  
Prison Service College, Love Lane  
Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 9AQ

## Understanding Crime Rates

GOWER

It is important to stress at the outset that this is a sociologist's book, written from the perspective of a social scientist. Statisticians, psychologists, etc be warned!

The authors begin by tracing some of the main themes regarding the growth of criminal statistics over the past 150 years. It is soon clear they intend to explore broad, socio-political themes in the selection and interpretation of crime figures. Unfortunately, I found their style rather abstruse: "...we shall focus on the underlying tension that seems to have existed in the past between the demands of a positivist criminology and those of the practical politics of penal affairs, and assess the current state of this relationship in a changing academic context—but where the politics of crime control are similar to what they have ever been." The book does however raise useful questions about the blind acceptance of official rates without understanding pressures and prejudices which influence them, the subjectivity of recording crime.

The radical "moral statisticians" view of official crime rates is expressed in terms of providing an extremely limited, but useful, socialist analysis of the "development" of contradictions and conflict in a propertied society and as reflecting class struggles, with an implication that "street crime is massively over-represented" and, presumably, white-collar crimes under-represented. The authors summarise the range of interpreters of crime rates as being handmaidens to policy makers through debunkers and demystifiers to those who would replace the existing economic and political arrangements.

Subsequent chapters discuss possible police collusion in distorting or under-estimating crime rates (referred to as "cuffing") a process where reported crimes weren't recorded, especially where solutions appeared unlikely, thus saving paper work and improving official clear-up rates (Chapter 2); an interesting consideration of the bias to official crimes produced via public involvement, store detectives and private industrial police (Chapter 3) and the changes in community attitudes which influence the actions of victims and witnesses (Chapter 4).

Chapter 4 also considers ways in which reported crimes become "No crimes" or are written off as a result of insufficient evidence, changes in local police policy or by complainers withdrawing their claims.

Chapter 5 highlights the individual differences between police officers and how these affect their selection of the appropriate classification of crimes and how to interpret different clear-up rates between different types of offences.

The discussion in Chapter 6 of the topical issue of suspicion, or "sus" could have been even more illuminating, but for a persistent reluctance to write simply and avoid jargon. Chapter 7 concludes that being known to the police is the "operative criterion in the bureaucratic method" of detection by which I think they mean these are the ones who are automatic

suspects.

In summary, the authors develop their arguments with considerable reference to other work and quotations from official police and Home Office records. They raise a number of pertinent questions and reservations about official crime figures, ranging from the wider issues of political influence, through the pressures on police to present the best possible "success" rate to the use and misuse to which these figures are frequently put by the media, pressure groups, politicians and, I might add with some justification, social scientists. While I could appreciate many of the flaws they uncovered, I was left no wiser as to how they could be rectified.

ERIC CULLEN

Senior Psychologist

Aylesbury Youth Custody Centre

## Self Defence

SYD HOARE

An extremely comprehensive book on the art of self-defence. Syd Hoare is obviously eminently qualified to give such instruction but tends to go into each method of attack and defence to such a level as would confuse an absolute novice.

After a general introduction in which he sensibly states that the methods taught and recommended by the book will be drawn from many martial disciplines rather than any particular one. He goes on to cover the statistics of attack by type and the need for awareness of and readiness to participate in physical violence as a first step in becoming prepared to defend oneself. This theme is repeated throughout the book almost to the point of including a vague feeling of paranoia in the reader who could be persuaded that virtually everyone is out to attack him or her!

There follows in the chapter headed "General Principles of Self Defence" a very helpful exposition of the concept and practice of "fighting distance". This entails getting a novice defender to consider his immediate space and the possible effects both actual and psychological upon any would-be assailant. The general tone of the advice given here is aimed towards inducing a disciplined mental and physical state in the defender which will have a positive effect on the outcome of any violence in his favour.

The author is saying that preparedness for violence can reduce the chances of any taking place and failing that can sway the balance against an attacker.

The next chapter "Applied Self-Defence" leaves the advice and theory behind and gets down to practical details. Starting very properly with stance and balance. The author describes in detail and with the help of line drawings three types of stance:—Natural, Ready and Social. The latter is particularly interesting and is well worth learning because it is to be adopted when you are not sure whether violence will

occur or not. It allows for most of the advantages of a "ready" or fighting stance without looking ridiculous if the would-be assailant turns out to be someone who merely wants to ask the time of day. The chapter continues to expound the basic movements of evasion, parrying, blocking, punching, kicking etc., and concludes with a "target" picture of the human body and advice upon where best to strike it. At this point I felt that the author was giving a novice a lot of information to digest and eventually put into practice. I would surmise that if one is going to conclude that this book is just too technical and complicated then this is probably where you would put it aside.

Chapter four gives great detail on defences against punches and kicks, again well illustrated with line drawings of the movements involved. Chapter five gives similar treatment to the issue of "grapple attacks". Ground defences are covered in the next chapter and defences against weapon attacks in chapter 7. Again one is slightly overawed by the wealth of detail provided but there are general principles which shine through and may be remembered in the event of a real assault. One example of this may be Mr Hoare's most sensible advice in the case of an attack on the person by someone with a weapon. ie. A weapon confers an enormous advantage on any assailant and must not be treated lightly, therefore if as a defender you find that you must engage such an assailant then deal with the weapon first and the man later. One simply cannot afford to get stabbed even if one does manage to best the opponent at the time!

Following a rather strange chapter on "stick techniques" which I would advise the reader to miss unless he or she was prepared to walk around in daily life armed with a four foot long heavy cudgel; there is a chapter on "Offensive and Miscellaneous Techniques". This covers a series of techniques drawn from judo, karate etc., some of which must be regarded as dangerous in the extreme. eg. strangling holds which can result in the death of an opponent or permanent brain damage in a very short time. The author acknowledges the danger in employing some of these techniques and gives suitable warning about their use and possible consequences. This chapter is concluded with advice about how to deal with those trained in the martial arts and is indicative of the comprehensive nature of this book. A special chapter for "Women, Children and the Elderly" follows and the book finishes with a few pages of advice on training for the use of the techniques described in the preceding chapters.

A well written book which I feel most people will not finish reading unless they have real reason to believe that it is necessary for them in their work or social life to be able to adequately defend themselves and they are prepared to practice that which the author preaches. Even after reading the book, one may still feel that it may never happen.

JOHN ALLDRIDGE

Tutor

Prison Service College



## British Prisons

MIKE FITZGERALD and JOE SIM

2nd Edition, 1982. Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

In the preface to this book, we are left in no doubt that any inaccuracies or misrepresentations are due to "the obsessive secrecy of the prison departments"—the kind of fail-safe device that any researcher would welcome. As one who views with mixed feelings (i.e. appreciating the rationale whilst sometimes wishing I did not have to be involved) the current influx of media people and researchers into prisons, how could I not read on with pen poised to criticise?

The book is well written, in journalistic style which renders it easy to read and probably attractive to those with a passing interest in the penal system. For those working within the system with its undoubted failings, the book may be an irritant at best, and at worst a serious threat to the blood pressure.

On the back cover, the publishers state that "the authors examine the role of prisons in theory, and provide a disturbingly vivid account of what they are like in practice". In fact there is little attempt to examine the role of a penal system within a society—that is, the constantly changing and interrelating aims of deterrence, punishment, retribution and rehabilitation that our society expects its prisons to achieve. The authors do provide a "disturbingly vivid account" of prisons, though a somewhat biased and dramatic one.

In one of their many wide generalisations the authors remark that "Uniformed staff are particularly hostile towards prison reformers, criminologists and other outside commentators on penal affairs". If the resultant package were always as uniformly lacking in positive commentary as this one, then such sentiments on the part of staff would hardly be surprising.

Fitzgerald and Sim indicate in their first chapter that much of the expressed concern by the prison service about overcrowding is related to fears about concomitant violence in establishments. They apparently overlook the possibility of concern based on compassion for those living and working in poor conditions. This first chapter is headed 'Crisis in British Prisons' which to the authors covers overcrowding, industrial action and "violence"—the newsworthy aspects of the system guaranteed to spur the reader on.

In Chapter 2 Fitzgerald and Sim go on to examine types of prisons, categorisation and classification, and in the course of this are particularly critical of the "obsession with security" and the failure of the rehabilitative ideal. They tell us that "the prison system has consistently and conspicuously failed to rehabilitate offenders. It is curious that the belief in prisons as places of treatment and training has been so widely accepted for so long". First, I wonder if they confuse 'belief' with 'hope'; there must be few who have believed in our success as reformers and rehabilitators, except when careful pre-selection was the norm (as in the early years of the Borstal system). Second, the prison system is not as isolated from prevalent ideas, trends and priorities of the society it serves as the authors would have us believe. Our rehabilitative efforts and any achievements must be related to what is happening outside prisons—and psychiatric hospitals, for instance, have no better record with their patients than we have with our 'clients'.

Fitzgerald and Sim seem to expect miracles of the system, e.g. "As with other 'specialised' establishments, prisoners are carefully selected for Coldingley, and removed if they fail to fit into the prison regime". Surely this is true of any institution having specific aims—schools, specialist hospitals, universities, etc.

They are particularly and continuously scathing on the service's emphasis on security [p.45: "This unquestioning acceptance (of the Mountbatten classification system) indicates how far security and control have subordinated the aims of treatment and training to a very

poor second"]. To counterbalance this, there is no mention of public (and media) reaction to breaches of security, and the basic fact that one of the prime tasks of the prison system is to keep people in custody on the sentence of the court.

Chapters 3 and 4 again have the obsession with security of which the authors accuse the prison authorities, whilst taking sideswipes at work and wages for inmates, medical officers, and education provision. "Education as a tool for living is also a weapon for control in the hands of the prison authorities" (p.69) surely only reflects the situation as it has been in the state since the onset of compulsory 'education' after 1870—it is widely acknowledged by sociologists that control of educational provision is a powerful means of social control.

In criticising the "logic which dictates that it is the people who do not fit in with and accept the regimes in prison who are the problems, rather than the regimes themselves" (p.107/8), they overlook the fact that many of these people are in prison because they have not fitted in with outside society and its rules, and at the same time they offer no alternatives to the system they are so ready to criticise.

Throughout this book the authors are repeatedly guilty of faulty logic, in order to prove controversial points of argument, ignoring alternative and equally valid explanations for aspects of the system. They often appear to be unaware, in their argument, of the necessary separation of the judiciary and the executive. Whilst the writers are careful to point out that prisoners are people and part of human society, they constantly overlook the fact that the prison system itself is part of a wider system and can only work within it—that prison authorities and staff are very well aware of the ethical contradictions endemic to that system, and do not live easily with them, and that much of what happens in prisons, and the rationale behind it, is a reflection of what people outside want of the prison system and of the priority that custodial facilities have in our societal scale of values. They would have done well to take note before they started, of the 1969 Home Office publication 'People in Prison' which, in discussing the aims of the prison service, stated "First, it is the task of the service, under the law, to hold those committed to custody and to provide conditions for their detention which are currently acceptable to society".

PAT MIDGLEY  
Deputy Governor  
Askham Grange

## Violence and The Violent Individual

HAYS, ROBERTS and SOLWAY

MTB Press Limited, Lancaster, England, 446pp

This book is a collection of papers which formed the proceedings of the 12th. annual national symposium at the Texas Research Institute of Mental Sciences. The book claims to have three major components: the causes of violent behaviour, measurement and prediction of violence, and the treatment of the violent individual. Unfortunately like many of these published proceedings it is very difficult to identify any common theme linking the papers consequently the contents appear disjointed and so diverse that it is difficult to determine who the book is aimed at. The chapters range from: Effects of television on violent behaviour, through Conjugal Violence: A comparative study in a psychiatric setting, to Medroxyprogesterone Acetate treatment for paraphiliac sex offenders.

For the uninitiated the chapter on television describes a study which will take place to assess the outcome of selective television viewing on institutionalised children. The diet of 'prosocial' television will be increased. I am not clear what programmes are a 'pro-social' but the thought of juvenile offenders watching only the Open University and Songs of Praise stretches credibility. The chapter on Conjugal Violence is a study of couples who exhibit marital violence

as the presenting symptom at an outpatient psychiatric clinic compared with non-violent couples. One of the most pointed comments of this chapter is "A therapist investigation of severity of violence—use of lethal weapons such as guns and knives and possibly child abuse—is essential and potentially life-saving. The attitude of many mental health professionals seems to reflect the battered wives tendency to discount the violence so that she may keep her family together" (p.240).

This statement highlights the way in which some professionals either collude with violence within marriages or cling to patriarchal views that either it is no more than the spouse deserves or that it is something that is part of marriage and should be accepted as a condition of keeping the marriage vows.

Paraphiliacs, a term I had never heard before, are apparently males who achieve erection and masturbation by deviant erotic fantasies. The researchers record "Many men are poor reporters of their cognitive experience during masturbation" (p.355). This phrase puts a quite different light on the commonly heard exhortation to "keep your mind on the job"!!

A number of the chapters of this book contain the worst excesses of the American behavioural schools of psychology some of which could have easily been cited in Jessica Mitford's critique called the "American Prison Business", for example, it is difficult to take seriously, from an English perspective with our knowledge of the strains on the prison system, chapters which include "Prediction of Dangerousness on the Basis of Erection Measures". (p.223) or "The dangerous and not-dangerous groups differed significantly in mean scores on four of the 22 scales of the Hotzman inkblot Technique... pathognomonic verbalization (p. = .05) (p.263). The disturbing thing about the book is that some of the contributors obviously find it difficult to take seriously as well. So that the final chapter on Prevention of Violence—is a radical sociological attack on the individualising of social problems. Far from drawing the threads of the book together, it throws caution to the wind and advances the generalisation that we suffer more from exploitation by the system and white-collar crime than we do from individual violent offenders.

Finally, the book is I suspect very much like the original conference on which it was based. Interesting in parts, confusing, thought provoking but leaves the reader wondering if after a lot of effort we have got any closer to understanding violence.

NORMAN TUTT  
Professor in Applied Social Studies  
University of Lancaster

## The Protection of Liberty

I.N.STEVENS and D.C.M.YARDLEY

Basil Blackwell 1982. 188pp.

This book, written expressly for the general reader, aims to survey the whole field of civil liberties and human rights in the United Kingdom. According to the publisher, it provides a legal background to civil liberties issues for the general reader, and manages to "cast off the dryness" of many legal studies.

Among the topics covered are Personal Liberty, including police powers, the Judges' Rules, and the abolition of the "sus" law; Public Order, with a detailed discussion of the Scarman Report on the Brixton disturbances of 1981; Discrimination and Minorities, including prisoners' rights; Freedom of Expression; Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy; and Human Rights: the European Model and a Bill of Rights.

It is fair to say that the authors, both law teachers at the independent University of Buckingham, have produced a clear, carefully-written guide to the legal background to these issues. Their book comes close to being what the publisher claims is a good, concise background work.



But any book which springs from academic concern with the problems of serious urban disorder should pass two tests. First, is it up-to-date? A major problem with material dealing with Civil Liberties is that it runs the risk of being out of date almost before it is printed. Thus the section on police powers has moved on rapidly in terms of decided cases, and of course, we have seen the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill come and go before this book has been read. Again, the authors devote four and-a-half pages to prisoners' rights, and while their material on the European Court of Human Rights is excellent, the book does not include any of the recent cases of *X v. The United Kingdom* (on the legal position of compulsorily detained mental patients), or of the Silver and Campbell cases, both of which are crucial to an understanding of the relationship between Strasbourg and the British penal system.

Secondly, given that such books will almost certainly be obsolete in some respects by the time they reach the bookshops, so we really need another one? The answer would seem to be that, although the reviewer's copy was not priced, if the book is twice as expensive as, say, the NCCL Guide to Civil Liberties, or Harry Street's *Freedom, the Individual and the Law*, then most general readers will have their minds made up for them by price alone.

Unfortunately, the book contains no bibliography, which would have been very useful to genuinely interested readers taking the subject further. The index, of only three and a-half pages, includes selected Cases and Statutes as well as the subjects covered by the book, is woefully inadequate: a law book for the layman needs a detailed index even more than a lawyers' textbook and it is sad that in this respect Stevens' & Yardley's ship has been spoiled for a ha'porth of tar.

ROBERT SPICER  
Senior Lecturer in Law  
Bristol Polytechnic

## Criminal Behaviour

HERSCHEL PRINS

This book is the second edition of one published in 1973. It is intended as a guide and introduction to the complex world of the study of criminal behaviour. The book, written in 1982, has the same format as the original but has been updated and revised to incorporate recent literature, research findings and changes in the law and practise that have occurred during the intervening years.

The author has divided the book into four sections which each concentrate on different aspects of the field of study.

He begins by examining the problems of defining and measuring criminal behaviour. In particular, he looks at the nature of crime and criminal behaviour, the purposes of the criminal law, criminal responsibility and liability and the prevalence and seriousness of the crime. In addition, he writes about the scope of criminology which he describes as "an applied science" that is "heavily dependant upon and interconnected with other disciplines".

In the second section he outlines the attempts that have been made to explain criminal behaviour in the fields of sociological, constitutional and physical, and psychiatric and sociological studies. He concludes that the truth cannot lie within either personal or social influences but rather in various combinations of interactions of both.

The third and fourth sections in the book move from the study of the definition of criminal behaviour and the causes of crime (which Prins regards as being within the scope of criminology) to penology, which he defines as being concerned with its control and treatment.

In the section entitled "Methods of Disposal" he looks critically at the court system, the sentencing process and the penal measures which are available to the courts when they are dealing with offenders. This is followed by a

chapter on mentally-disordered offenders in which he pleads for more joint use of resources by the penal and health-care systems. He then goes on to write about the characteristics of female and sexual offenders and others who become involved in crimes as a result of alcoholism and drug-addiction.

He concludes by reviewing the penal measures which are currently available to the courts. In this he outlines the difficulties, of which we are all aware, in making objective assessments of the effectiveness of the different methods of treatment because of the variations in approach that have been used. He does, however, consider that in the management of any offender, regard must be paid for his need to be directed and controlled and that "care and control are both essential elements of the successful management of offenders". A worker in the penal setting must, he says, be assertive in his approach in that "he needs to act as an outside means of control when an offender is unable to effect control through his own unaided efforts". Disciples of the Justice model, please note.

This is an excellent book for use as an introduction to the study of the causes and extent of criminal behaviour and the appropriateness of measures chosen by society to control and punish crime. Each chapter in the book concludes with an extensive list of references and suggested further reading on the topics that have been covered. It is a book that I would recommend to anybody who expresses an interest in studying criminology and it is one which training officers would find a useful work of reference for inclusion in their libraries.

DAVID LONGLEY  
Governor  
Dorchester

## Organisational and Racial Conflict in Maximum-Security Prisons

JAMES G FOX  
Lexington Books 1982

I have a suspicion that I was asked to review this book as I appear to be one of very few writers and observers of racial conflict in the English Prison Service. However I must confess I have no knowledge of Maximum-Security Prisons, and for this reason alone Fox's book provided a fascinating glimpse of life and problems for those who try to control (ie. staff, but occasionally inmates) and for those who try to survive (ie. inmates, but occasionally staff) in 5 well known American maximum-security prisons.

Fox addresses a number of very complex issues and analyses management, staff and prisoners as they interact with each other in the organisational context. His ambitious research examines racism, sexism, inmate radicalism, female correctional officers, guard-inmate relations, make-believe families among female inmates, and the nature and composition of formal inmate organisations, and, not surprisingly, contains numerous tables and item/scale correlations. Nevertheless the arguments are clear and the results are interesting and useful to prison administrators or decision makers. English practitioners must identify for themselves the significant parallels and differences between 2 very different organisational and cultural systems that are facing crisis on so many fronts. In fact Fox, in addressing racial and organisational issues, recognises that prison life today is about conflict management and he seeks to outline a conflict reduction strategy.

Against a familiar back-cloth of overcrowding, a disproportionate use of imprisonment for young blacks, an American belief in greater use of imprisonment and longer sentences as a solution to the growing crime problem, union militancy, and a back-lash to prisoner rights, it seems to me that the quality of life in these prisons is determined by the systems obsession with order, security and control. According to Fox most prison guards are white and tend to be perceived by black inmates as symbols of

white authority and power—in prison and life generally. Such perceptions are shared by a minority of black inmates in England too, but it is disturbing to know that in these American prisons staff manipulate racial conflict to control people and resources, subscribing to a dubious divide and conquer philosophy, and Wardens and Superintendents rely heavily on coercive methods. As Fox warns:

"Without a willingness to modify rigid, control-orientated strategies, there is little reason to believe that management can formulate organisational change goals that will reduce (or limit) intra-organisational conflict".

And furthermore;

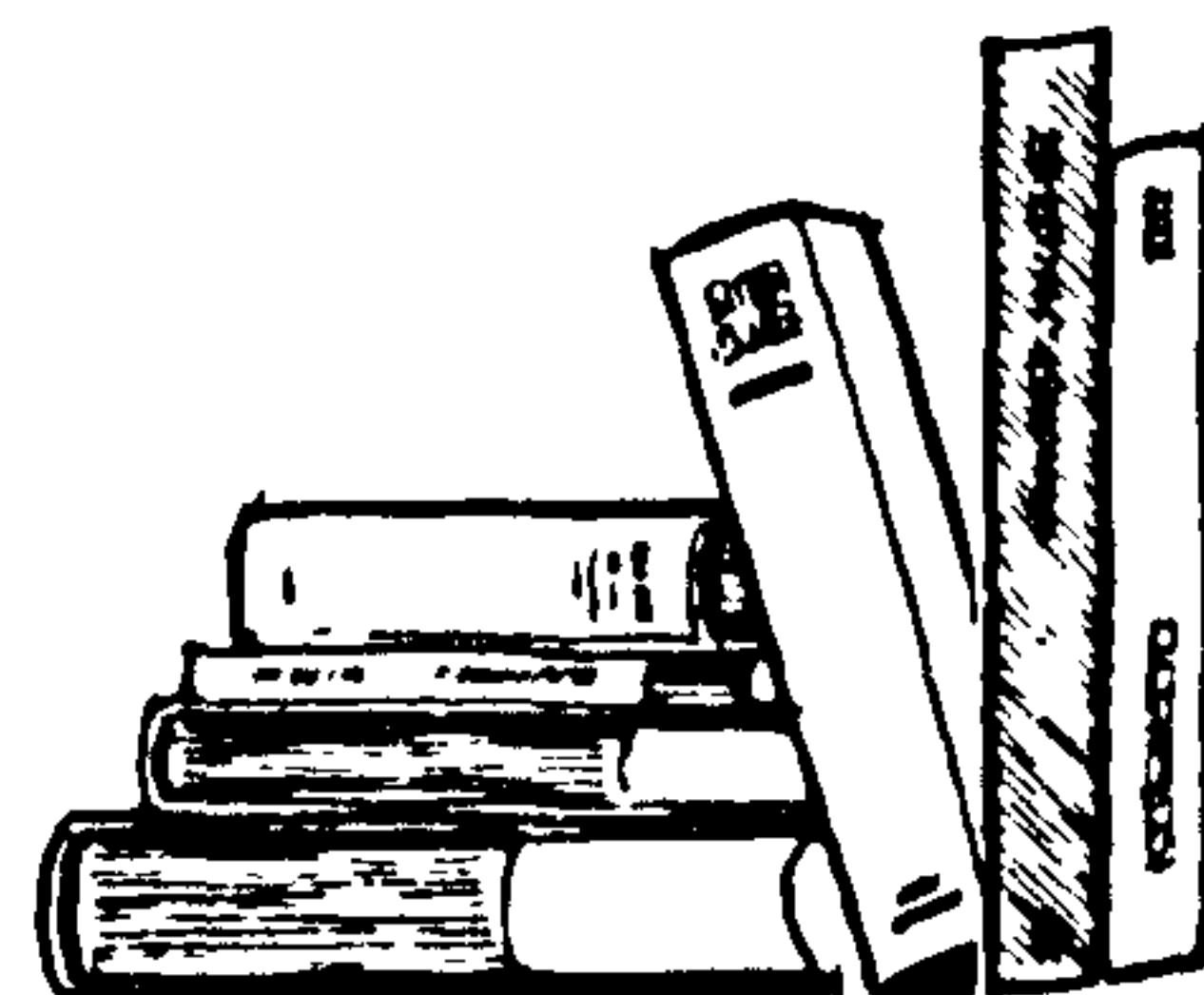
"Keeping the lid on is not only incompatible with contemporary management principles, but it may actually induce a greater amount of stress within the organisational structure".

Contemporary Prison Management in America appears to be as complex as any of its English counterparts, and decision making must take into account the goals of executive management, correctional officers, and formal prisoner organisations. Each group seeks change but their immediate goals are not really compatible. Management seeks more staff, more discretion and a larger budget. Guards seek more control over prisoners and more direct influence over their work. Prisoners seek a higher standard of institutional living and more opportunities to influence decisions that directly affect their lives. On the face of it such problems seem insoluble. Staff want power, control and safety, and with the backing of their unions are relatively free to pick and choose which management initiatives they will support or reject.

Fox does not provide the answers, but he makes some intelligent suggestions of alternative control strategies. Most importantly management must begin by identifying areas of agreement and compatibility between prisoner and correctional officer interests as well as areas of conflict, and racism, regardless of the purpose it serves in fulfilling control interests of custodial staff, must be strongly discouraged by management. In short race relations is the responsibility of *all* members of the prison organisation. The primary obstacle, according to Fox, is the unwillingness of prison management to develop and enforce policies specifically intended to reduce racism within staff ranks.

Anyone interested in prison group dynamics will find this a good read, and a fascinating study raising many fundamental issues about prison organisation. The English Prison Service has coped with one crisis after another, although the pressures are not as acute as in the American penal system. Perhaps we can learn from this American experience and be prepared for any similar difficulties that may lie ahead.

D W WICKHAM  
Deputy Governor  
Chelmsford





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