

supplied to some artisans who have obtained employment in their particular trade

The Association's services are essentially short term and immediate. It is not a reform organisation.

During the current year 6,286 cases were dealt with. The Association found employment for 547 discharged men and women, and supplied 1,396 articles of clothing to the value of \$2,100. Tools of trade were made available to eleven artisans who had followed a trade during their term of imprisonment, and had work to go to on release.

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#### GROUP ACTIVITIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES PENAL INSTITUTIONS

Since 1969 a Group Liaison Officer, Mr. J. Brophy, who was formerly of the United Kingdom Prison Administration, has been organising group activities at Parramatta Gaol, Goulburn and Berrima Training Centres. Mr Brophy reported at the end of 1970 that he thought group activities at the respective Institutions had helped, to some degree, towards the treatment and training aspect of imprisonment.

Whilst it is not possible for the majority of prisoners due for release to have a psychological preparation that may be helpful to them, it is possible, with the assistance of experts from the outside community, to provide the prisoner, to a limited degree, with the opportunity to have explained to him some of the conditions he will have to face up to on his release from imprisonment.

This is probably of more importance to the prisoner who has served a term of some years' imprisonment, e.g. the prisoner committed to prison prior to 1966 has had little or no experience of the decimal coinage system of currency.

The arrangement at the Goulburn Training Centre, with the approval and support of the Superintendent, is to invite experts in their respective fields of interest to visit the Training Centre to talk to the pre-release group, and encourage discussion. Whilst it is not suggested that these discussions bring about any fundamental change in the prisoner's attitude, it does enable him to ask some of the questions on a specific subject prior to his release from imprisonment.

The group usually starts with a number of about 18 men who are likely to be released, or due for consideration for release, in the next four to six months. The number is usually reduced to about 12 by the end of the six weeks' course, due to release or transfer to open camp conditions.

At the onset it is clearly indicated to the men in the group that there is no suggestion that the group is other than to provide information

that may benefit some of the members. It is entirely up to the group to put forward questions related to the subject of the talk that they may have to ask, at that time, or after their release.

After each course an evaluation session is held, and from the attitude of most of the group, it is a reasonable assumption that the majority of the men in the group have derived some benefit from the guest speaker's talk, and the subsequent discussion.

The subjects of the speakers covering a Course of six weeks are:-

1. Commonwealth Employment Service and the National Service - by the Commonwealth Employment Officer, Goulburn.
2. Medicare - full explanation of the medical benefits schemes, e.g. how to join; how to claim - with an application form completed in the group; stressing the importance of having medical benefits cover, particularly so far as the man with family responsibilities.
3. Some aspects of household budgeting and the advantages and disadvantages of purchase by Hire Purchase Agreement. This talk by a Credit Manager of a Department Store is, in my opinion, one of the more helpful of the discussions held at the Centre.
4. A Senior Officer from the Ambulance Service outlines the functioning of the Service with an introduction to elementary first-aid, with advice relative to car accidents, snake and spider bites, etc.
5. N.R.M.A.- To explain the part played by the Motoring Organisations towards good motoring.
6. Evaluation Seesion. - Nothing exceptional in the subjects outlined above, but I believe that the course covers some of the fundamental problems that most of the men have to face after release from imprisonment.

The Berrima Training Centre is a well organised institution geared for Educational Training, and the discussion sessions held bi-weekly are giving additional variety to the tight schedule of Educational Training.

The group sessions have in the past year a great deal of support from the Moss Vale Rotary Club, and other members of the community in the Bowral, Moss Vale and Berrima area. In all aspects of group work the support and encouragement by the Superintendent and officers has been at all times helpful.

At Parramatta the Resurgents Group is unique in my experience of prison administration. Many of the factors assessed in assembling such a group would indicate extreme caution in supervision, and yet for the past five years, despite its many trials and tribulations, it has survived. The interesting question is why, and how? Obviously a paragraph will make little impact towards answering the many questions posed in this particular group activity.

It may be that self-preservation of the interest of the individual members of the Group whereby they have, within the overall authority of the prison administration, some autonomy. It is the manner in which they manoeuvre to extend the area of this autonomy that is interesting and requires close observation.

Probably a reply to a question put to a prisoner who had been to Parramatta Gaol, but had not been a member of the Resurgents' Group gives a clue. Although he had not been a member he was exercising some interest, if not pride, in that this group had existed within a gaol where he served some of his sentence of imprisonment.

The fact that this and several other group activities were available for these prisoners who were prepared to make themselves acceptable to a group of their particular interest, may have had a side effect on the general atmosphere of the gaol.

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LETTER TO "THE AUSTRALIAN"

In November last year the national newspaper "The Australian" published a series of articles on the prison system. In reply to an article which said that "the Council met every two years to discuss all the items under its title, but presses nobody" our President wrote the following letter which was published in "The Australian".

Dear Sir,

May I commend your recent series on the prison system and necessary reforms therein. As I now proceed to comment upon one aspect of the series I wish to make clear my view that articles such as these can only do good, the more public discussion the better.

However, one article in the series did seem to suggest that the Australian Crime Prevention, Correction and After-Care Council is somewhat ineffective and with this suggestion I wish to take issue. The objects of the Council are.-

- (a) To assist and promote the work of crime prevention, correction and the after-care of offenders.
- (b) To co-ordinate the activities of all persons and bodies interested in such work.
- (c) To provide a forum for the free discussion of all matters of interest amongst those concerned with crime prevention, correction and after-care.

In furtherance of these objects the Council has in the past arranged bi-ennial conferences for workers in the criminal justice field and has brought to Australia distinguished foreign experts to impart some of their knowledge to these conferences. A similar conference is being arranged for