

THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF WELFARE OFFICERS

"The Challenge of Working in the Welfare Field"; was the theme of the first Seminar of the Institute; held at St. John's College, University of Sydney, from 21st to 23rd August, 1970.

The Hon. F. M. Hewitt, M.L.C., officially opened the Seminar, and speakers representing local government, voluntary organisations, government bodies, and industry addressed delegates.

Mr. M. Farquhar S.M., who spoke at the conclusion of the Seminar said he was convinced that putting a person in prison hindered rather than assisted rehabilitation. "The Courts have an educative function and we should hope for the time when the demand for retribution alone is lessened by enlightenment" Mr. Farquhar said. He also favoured Probation and Parole, because they had an economic advantage over imprisonment.

Ninety-one delegates from New South Wales, Western Australia and Victoria, were present during the week-end, and it is anticipated that the findings of the workshop groups will act as guidelines for future activities of the Institute.

The object of the Institute is to promote education and training for those desirous of undertaking welfare work as a career. The Examinations Board is at present working on a syllabus appropriate to the needs of welfare officers, and it is hoped a course of study will commence early in the new year

Provision will also be made for the training of voluntary workers, and a series of lectures will be held, in the near future, covering the various aspects of welfare work carried out on a voluntary basis.

Those interested are invited to contact the President, G.P.O. Box 1953, Sydney.

THE PRISONERS' AID ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

The Prisoners' Aid Association in New South Wales is subsidized by the New South Wales Government; its employees are public servants. It is a voluntary organization and money spent on cases must be obtained by public subscriptions and appeals. A State grant is allotted to the Association to assist in the pursuit of its objectives.

The Association pioneered the work of prisoner's aid and rehabilitation in this State. The New South Wales Association for Assisting Discharged Prisoners came into existence at a Public Meeting held in Sydney Town Hall on 9th December, 1901. The meeting was presided over by the then Chief Justice, Sir Frederick Darley.

In the first year of its life the Association dealt with 420 cases. It found employment for 92 discharged persons, and spent an amount of \$234 on general assistance. In 1968/69, 7377 cases were dealt with, employment found for 561 released men and women, and \$8,445 spent on assistance

To enable the work of the Association to be extended to gaol inmates as well as released persons, a new constitution was drawn up in 1904 and the name altered to The Prisoners' Aid Association of New South Wales. Officers of the Association paid occasional visits to all prisons in New South Wales.

Until 1951 The Prisoners' Aid Association was the only specialized agency in the field of prisoner welfare and after-care. It handled every type of offender, both in and out of prison, and looked to the needs of their wives and children.

From 1951 to 1963 the Association's activities were mainly concerned with recidivists and their dependants, and gaol visits were confined to maximum security institution.

The Association was re-constructed in 1964. Its Constitution was again altered. Welfare Officers were appointed to deal with short term and remand prisoners in the State Penitentiary and Parramatta Gaol, concentrating on the metropolitan area.

The Association maintains regular visits to the State Penitentiary Complex and Parramatta Gaol. Our Welfare Officers have concentrated on those about to be released. Remand cases are also seen by them.

The visiting Welfare Officers work in close co-operation with the Prison Chaplains, members of the Prison Field Service and other organizations. They are available to interview any prisoner who requests help. In short, the policy of the Association is to provide a speedy and well-directed form of aid to prisoners, discharged men and their families.

Services available to prisoners committed to gaol for twelve months or less, include collecting and caring for their property - communicating with their relatives - attending to Bail for those on remand and providing suitable attire for their appearance in Court - supplying educational materials and other essential personal items such as dentures, spectacles, hearing aid accessories, and generally helping with the immediate problems a prisoner must face. In special cases, where families are involved, rent, electricity and gas accounts may be paid, and food orders provided. Long term prisoners are seen when referred by the Prison Field Service.

Released prisoners -

Men and women released from prison are given employment, financial aid, accommodation and meals, clothing and counsel. Tools are also

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.

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