

# Resocialising reduces prison returns

## Prisoners

Fewer ex-prisoners are reported to be returning to crime and to prison as a result of "resocializing" measures in the federal prison at Drumheller, Alberta. The Canadian national average for prisoners returning behind bars after being released from prison is between 40 and 50 per cent: at Drumheller, the figure has gone down to between 10 and 12 per cent.

Drumheller prisoners are encouraged to take employment outside the prison walls by day, returning to the prison or to community correctional centres in Edmonton or Calgary at night. They can also apply for temporary leave from prison, where it is reported that abuse of this privilege is "rare".

The man behind this "resocializing" programme is Pierre Jutras, the prison warden, now at the age of 60 retiring from office. When his reforms were first instituted in 1967, other prison officials described them as "radical". But since that time many of them have followed the example of Drumheller.

Mr. Jutras, commenting on his reforms, said recently, "It's about time society learned you can't just lock a person up for punishment and keep him in a dark hole away from society and expect to make a useful citizen of him."

Pierre Jutras is also known in Canada as a writer of popular songs: his compositions have been placed second and third in the annual song competition organized by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He is by no means a theoretical idealist where the prison service is concerned. He has worked in the Canadian penitentiary service since the 1930s, when the prison guards put in 12 hours a day on duty and prisoners were locked up for 18 hours out of 24. Approaching reform from this angle, he is more an evolutionary than a revolutionary. His reforms follow on a lifetime's experience in every facet of prison administration, for with the exception of three years army service he has worked in the prison service for the past 37 years.

Today, prisoners entering Drumheller may take a job outside the prison or they may undertake a course of study. They are given a choice of programmes to follow. They can even choose whether to sleep late or get up for breakfast.

The prison is equipped with recreational facilities, including a cinder track for athletics and a pitch and putt golf course,

built by the prisoners. Members of the public frequently criticize these "frills" but Mr. Jutras shrugs off these criticisms quite cheerfully, saying that they do not concern him because he believes citizens to be poorly informed about the question of correction. He feels strongly that prisoners have a duty to train their inmates to go out and meet society's increasing demands on release.

He has handed over the office of warden to Ernest Noel, the 46-year-old former warden of Collins Bay Penitentiary in Kingston, Ontario. The Canadian Penitentiary Service has asked him to stand by for special assignments in areas where they feel he may be helpful.

## Reforms

The more general pattern of prison organization throughout Canada is moving in directions similar to Drumheller, although progress is inevitably slower — partly due to a dramatically sudden increase in the prison population in 1972, the year after implementation of a new policy under the solicitor-general of the day, Jean-Pierre Goyer.

The new policy aims at switching from great piles of bricks for incarcerations to a more progressive system, in which prisoners will be housed in smaller "living units". It would all have got under way much quicker but for the overcrowding of the prisons that took everybody by surprise in 1972.

At first no one could explain it. Then investigation showed that there were a number of reasons for it, the main one being a considerable reduction in paroles and an increase in parole revocations. The rate of population growth in the prisons had risen to 14.73 per cent in September 1972, compared with the prevailing rate of four per cent which had been fairly constant for a number of years. It has now gone down again to roughly nine per cent — still considerably higher than it was before 1972, but not so high as to jam the progress of prison reform.

In charge of the federal plan is Commissioner Paul Faguy, who was brought into the penitentiary service from the postal service in 1971, shortly before the change was inaugurated. One of his first steps was to halt a building programme for the old, high-walled type of concrete buildings.

However, overcrowding has forced the federal authorities to resume building in order to house the overflow of prisoners.

Mr. Faguy's hope is that in due course the building of institutions can stop altogether and that more concentration can be given to community corrective institutions. He feels, along with many others involved in "correction" of prisoners, that too many people are behind bars who should be receiving treatment in the community.

But at the moment he is forced to build if the problem is to be contained. He is therefore working on a new building programme which will pave the way in bricks and mortar for a more enlightened way of dealing with prisoners.

Details of the new programme had not been announced at this writing, but it is expected to call for the replacement of some of the maximum security prisons and addition of others. There will also be more medium security facilities and community correctional institutions (the so-called "half-way houses"). Even in maximum security prisons, the new programme is expected to dispense with high walls: escapes will be prevented by wire fences, guards and electronic devices.

Whether the new institutions are maximum or medium security, they will be built in a pattern to facilitate the new "living unit concept" that is starting to spread through the service. Under this concept, prisoners and correction officers work together in the same unit day after day in an intimate association that was impossible in the old penitentiaries. A prison in the new style invariably consists of a series of buildings, each containing about 36 convicts, rather than one mammoth structure.

## Jobs

A hopeful mellowing of attitudes *outside* prison seems to be indicated by a recent report by the Chairman of the National Parole Board of Canada, Mr. T. George Street.

Commenting on an increase in employment for parolees and offenders released from prison on mandatory supervision, he said "This . . . supports our belief that there is a definite tendency towards a fairly stable employment of ex-offenders. As a result, there is an increasing likelihood of rehabilitation and a decreasing chance of a return to crime."

He said that figures taken in June of last year showed that 81 per cent of inmates on parole that month were employed — an increase of four per cent on the previous June. And more than 61 per cent of offenders on mandatory supervision were employed, which was "a very significant rise of 11 per cent from the previous year".

Parolees earnings had also increased by 11 per cent over the figures of the previous year.