

by the Schoolmaster at the Waikeria Borstal Institution, and the agricultural experimental work carried on by Mr. Matthews at Invercargill, tend to make the practical work on the farms of greater interest to the inmates. Similar classes at all farm institutions would result in correlating theoretical instruction with practical work, and would be of considerable value to inmates who show aptitude in agricultural pursuits.

Requests for assistance in obtaining employment on release are frequently made by prisoners when the date of their discharge draws near. It is satisfactory to find from the reports of Superintendents of institutions that an increasing interest is being taken by active social workers in the welfare of ex-inmates of prisons, but the problem of finding suitable employment for discharged men is a difficult one. The rehabilitation of ex-prisoners is a work which provides many opportunities for those who are anxious to do some useful social service. It is considered that if social workers, who are at present working independently of each other, were to co-ordinate their efforts somewhat on the lines adopted by the Voluntary Probation Committees ex-prison inmates could be more expeditiously and systematically assisted. The success attained at Dunedin and other centres is an indication of what can be done by a body of social workers representative of the principal religious denominations acting together under the guidance of experienced Probation Officers. In this work a greater measure of success attends the efforts of the social worker who obtains the assistance and co-operation of the prison management. Disappointment and waste of time and energy would be frequently avoided were the views of the Controlling Officers first obtained. Prisoners with lengthy criminal careers should not be dealt with by inexperienced social workers, except with the advice of the officials. The inexperienced worker who prefers to base his opinion of prisoners' characters entirely on his own observations, with no regard to their past histories, wastes much time which could be more profitably used on other and more hopeful cases. Those experienced in dealing with hardened offenders realize that it is unsafe to place too much reliance on the statements and promises of prisoners made whilst in detention, nor should good behaviour and industry be regarded entirely as indications of true reform. Dr. James Devon, Medical Officer to the Glasgow Prison institutions, in "The Criminal and the Community" sounds a note of reserve in his reference to the question of social work amongst prisoners in the following terms, viz.:—

"Very likely he (the prisoner) will talk freely to any person who is of an inquiring turn of mind. . . . He learns to take advantage of every opening that offers any chance of increased comfort to himself, and he may readily make a general confession of sin and promise of amendment if thereby he can gain sympathy and obtain privileges. It is not surprising that he should behave in this manner—the principle of making friends with the mammon of unrighteousness is not unknown outside prison—but it is strange that people who might be supposed to know the conditions in which he is placed should talk as though the criminal were usually a stupid kind of person."

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