

# A Short Survey of the Dominion's Penal System

cooks—men who would take a pride in their job under the supervision of a prison officer—and the meal which *The Listener* was served by the prison staff at Wi Tako was certainly of a high standard. Mr. Sleeman mentioned also that mugs and plates have generally been replaced by tableware of better quality.

Here are menus for two days from a sample week's menus at Wi Tako:

**Breakfast:** Porridge, Liver and Bacon, Fried Potatoes, Bread and Butter, Tea. **Lunch:** Soup, Bread and Butter, Jam, Cheese, Cocoa. **Dinner:** Stew, Carrots, Parsnips, Mashed Potatoes, Silver Beet, Rice Custard, Tea.

**Breakfast:** Porridge, Cottage Pie, Bread, Butter, Tea. **Lunch:** Soup, Bread, Butter, Honey, Cheese, Cocoa. **Dinner:** Stuffed Steak, Silver Beet, Potatoes, Carrots, Parsnips, Rice Custard, Tea.

ALONG with better food, better tableware and better table behaviour—which a man can hardly learn locked in his cell—have gone an intense drive for personal hygiene. Daily shaving is compulsory and one of the points checked at the 8 a.m. parade. Showers are compulsory twice weekly and may be had daily. Attention is also given to dress at the labour parade; and care is taken that a man does not stay about in wet clothes if he has been caught in the rain. In the women's prison adjoining Mt. Eden and the women's borstal at Arohata, near Wellington, the inmates have been given brighter clothes for a change in the evening. Prisoners are responsible for keeping their own cells clean and tidy and are encouraged to take some pride in this. At both Wi Tako and Mt. Eden *The Listener* found that many prisoners had decorated their cells extensively, building around them a small domestic world to take the place of the one they had left behind—or perhaps had never known. At Wi Tako neat little cupboards for personal effects have replaced the old food safes.

All this is part of a system of discipline wider than many people recognise. Mr. Sleeman had used the word several times, and when he was asked to define it as applied to the prison system he put it this way: "By discipline we understand a right attitude in the individual and in the community to society, to work, to authority, to decency and order, to life. Good discipline embraces diligence, conduct, cleanliness, deportment. It means far more than the mere prevention of misconduct or negligence. It is positive and constructive. It means creating and maintaining good standards, implanting and confirming the power to distinguish right from wrong and the will to pursue the right. The aim and object of all those whose task it is to fit the young or the weak to stand on their own feet in a free community must be to build them up to the attainment and practice of true self-discipline. Any good discipline in a training establishment cannot be realised until the whole staff subscribe to the ideals of their service

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and work as members of a team for the end desired."

A PRISON administration which takes that view of the ends of imprisonment isn't likely to maintain a regime of pointless and soul-destroying labour; and the first principle that applied here, Mr. Sleeman said, was that every man should do and be taught to do a full, productive and constructive day's work. "It's no use giving a man a pick and shovel for a job a grader will do," he said, "and so we aim to use tools and equipment no less efficient than those used outside." As far as possible, work done by prisoners is related to what they would like to do when discharged, and since prisoners—a bank clerk imprisoned for theft, for example—cannot always return to their old jobs, much occupational training is done in prisons. None of the men working as joiners at Wi Tako during *The Listener's* visit had done this work before.

There is a constant effort to find better and more varied and productive work for prisoners, and to increase the number of tradesmen-officers able to give trade training. This may not go past the elementary stage, but even so the Apprenticeship Board has been asked to make allowance for training given in prisons and has already reported favourably on the working of the scheme in Invercargill Borstal.

Mr. Sleeman mentioned among the prison operations offering healthy and useful work the large prison farms at Invercargill, Paparua, Wellington, Wi Tako, Tongariro and Waikeria, and a smaller farm at National Park. These, he said, embraced all branches of farming. There were large piggeries, orch-

ards, and vegetable gardens—vegetable surpluses went to institutions which could not grow their own—and even the tobacco used in prisons was grown at Waikeria and processed at Mt. Eden. At Paparua and Wanganui there were large poultry farms, and a poultry-instruction unit was to be introduced at Arohata, where some girls were already getting horticultural instruction.

Other operations mentioned by Mr. Sleeman were mechanised quarries at Paparua and Mt. Eden, with a roadside quarry and much road maintenance work at Waikune, which also had a large garage where a big fleet of heavy vehicles was maintained. Footwear and clothing for prisoners and officers and for other departments was made in factories at Mt. Eden. This prison also was just completing a large carpentry shop, and a large mechanised laundry was being installed. Among training units Mr. Sleeman referred to the carpentry shop at Wi Tako and a trade training scheme for Waikeria, and shorthand and typing instruction for selected girls at Arohata. He said that machine sewing and dress-making was done at both the women's prison and borstal.

BOTH women's and men's borstals and the women's prison share the longer hours of unlock. In the borstals, of course, more time is given to training than in prisons, and the borstal inmate gets more individual attention than the older prisoner. This long-standing emphasis is continued in current policy; but education and cultural pursuits now get even more attention, and—depending on classification—the individual gets more freedom of movement when experience has shown he can be trusted.

Affiliations with the community have also increased. Football teams, for example, go out from borstals more frequently than in the past, and at Invercargill, particularly, quite regularly.

The aim of current prison policy, it will be seen, is to make a prison a community within a community, a place to which an offender is sent as a punishment not to be punished—unless, of course, he offends against the prison-community rules. To encourage responsibility and reduce the amount of mere dependence, prison pay has been increased from a flat rate of 1d. per mark to from 1½d. to 3¾d. a mark. At the same time the tobacco ration of one ounce per man a week has been stopped, and tobacco and some other items which all prisoners need may be bought from a canteen within the prison. Pay marks depend on such factors as conduct, industry and general effort; and in Paparua, for example, the average is 2¼d. to 2½d. a mark. The maximum number of marks is eight per man per day five days a week unless a man is also working on Saturday. A sick man gets the minimum marks unless his sickness is due to neglect or misconduct.

Up to 40 per cent. of this prison pay of from 5/- to 12/6 a week may be spent in the prison canteen. Here a prisoner may buy tobacco or other smoking requisites, shaving gear, toothpaste, hair oil, condiments, a well-known brand of sandwich spread, newspapers and sweets. Of a turnover of more than £2000 at the Mt. Eden canteen last year, £981 was spent on tobacco, etc., £664 on confectionery, £284 on toilet articles, £38/15/- on sandwich spread, £123 on newspapers, and £17 on condiments.

(To be concluded)



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