

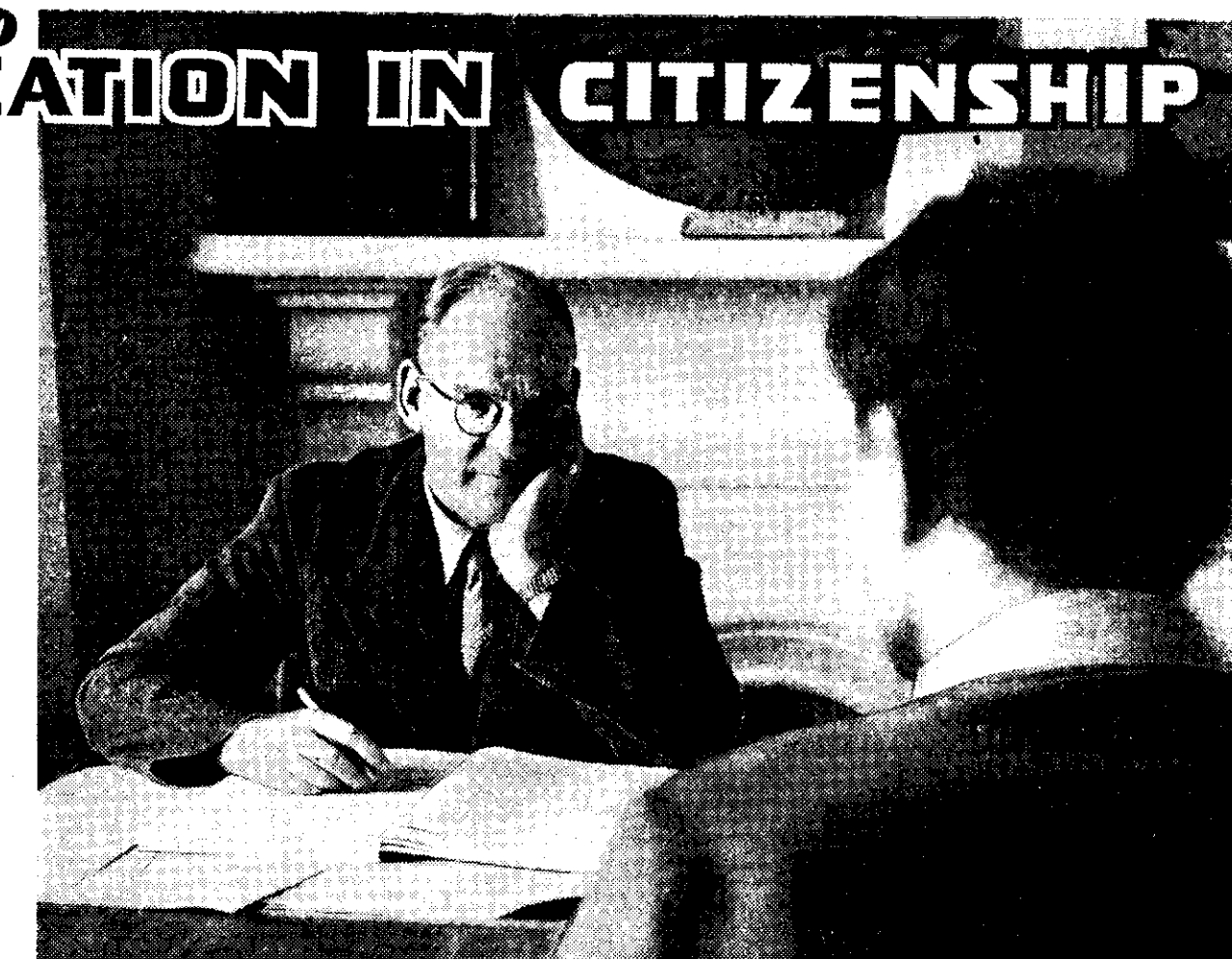
# RE-EDUCATION IN CITIZENSHIP

**A**BOUT three years ago, soon after he became Supervisor of Prison Education, A. F. McMurtrie, former Assistant Director of Education, outlined a plan for prison education in New Zealand. The aim was "to awaken in as many inmates as possible the will to be a better citizen." Mr. McMurtrie divided education into four sections: vocational education (including primary education for those needing it); education that disciplines the emotions (including drama, music and art); education for leisure; and physical education.

Much progress has been made in putting this into effect. Vocational training was mentioned in last week's article. Mr. McMurtrie told *The Listener* that both Technical Colleges and the Education Department's Correspondence Schools were used for a wide variety of courses. A very recent development was the establishment of classes either in the prisons or at local technical colleges for inmates from Mt. Eden, New Plymouth, Waikeria, Arohata, Paparua and Invercargill. Subjects included dressmaking, typewriting and shorthand, music, art, current affairs, wood and metal working, machine-shop practice and physical education.

Mr. McMurtrie said there were full-time teachers at Mt. Eden and Invercargill and part-time teachers at three other prisons. These took classes and individuals in primary education. Elsewhere help was given by the Correspondence School and voluntary helpers. "Help with educational and other work in prisons is given by an amazing variety of individuals and organisations," Mr. McMurtrie said. "Prison officers also are becoming much more education conscious, and some with special abilities take extra classes, giving their time voluntarily in most cases." Mr. McMurtrie thinks that the effect of education in prisons in satisfying inmates, helping them to settle down and making them more susceptible to the other good influences at work is possibly more important than any use they make of it afterwards. "But of course," he said, "it's good to see them carrying on with educational studies begun in prison, as I know some do." Mr. McMurtrie visits all institutions about twice a year, and we were told at Wi Tako that he not only takes a general interest in educational facilities but gives help and advice to individual inmates.

*The Listener* found at both Wi Tako and Mt. Eden that recreational or cultural activity was going on almost every night. This included string and brass instrument playing, drama, concerts, chess, draughts, bridge, debating, cards, table tennis, basketball and bowls. Films are screened regularly, radio installations have been improved, newspapers for inmates are no longer censored, and prisoners are now allowed to keep a collection of books in their cells. Prison library books are changed three times a year by the National Library Service, and the request service is becoming widely used. Sports grounds have been impro-



S. R. BANYARD, Prison Welfare Officer at Mt. Eden, interviews a new arrival at the prison

vised, and engagements are played with outside teams—sometimes outside the prisons.

There is a steadily growing programme of psychological treatment for prisoners who need it—many of them the product of wrecked homes or insecurity in childhood. Last September J. G. Caughley, until then Supervisor of Psychological Services in the Education Department, transferred to the Justice Department to do full-time the sort of work he had been doing there part-time since 1948. As a psychologist he tries to visit Mt. Crawford, Wi Tako and Arohata weekly and to interview all prisoners committed for six months or more, as well as unusual cases referred by the Welfare Officer or Prison Superintendent. "I select those cases I think will respond for treatment by myself or part-time workers employed by the department," Mr. Caughley told *The Listener*. "Most of these cases are young first offenders. Others are referred by Magistrates, who make greater use now of this service. A few prisoners who seem to need just a little help are seen over a short period. Of course a psychotic—as distinct from a neurotic—prisoner is referred to a psychiatrist." Mr. Caughley said he was trying to work out through a pilot scheme in the Wellington district (though he also visits Waikeria and Christchurch occasionally) the best way of using a psychologist in prisons.

At Auckland and Waikeria the department employs almost full-time a consulting psychiatrist, Dr. H. M. Buchanan,

former Medical Superintendent of Avondale Mental Hospital. Elsewhere similar help is given by the Mental Hygiene Division.

In recent years restrictions on prison visiting have been slightly relaxed, and at Wi Tako, for instance, prisoners and visitors are no longer divided by a table but sit around a visitors' room or on a lawn outside—though still with an officer present. Visitors are allowed to bring in parcels which include toilet requisites, stationery, pipes, hobby materials, books and periodicals, photographs, fruit and up to three ounces of tobacco a week, but a prisoner receiving gifts of tobacco cannot also buy it in the canteen. Restrictions on letter-writing have also been relaxed.

When *The Listener* visited Mt. Eden it met the Prison Welfare Officer, S. R. Banyard, and noting the relaxed attitude of prisoners towards him asked what changes he had seen in their attitude in the four years since he went there. He told us for a start that they were more natural in their speech, their attitude to authority, their dealings with each other and their demeanour with their own and outside visitors. Officers were also more natural in their attitude to inmates. In the second place the inmates were more open about their personal, domestic, and prison-life difficulties, which they would discuss not only with him but with the Superintendent and some officers. The work of the Classification Board, the

psychologist and others had greatly helped in creating this attitude.

"On the whole there has been a very good response to amenities," Mr. Banyard said. "The system of Inmates Council, committees and prefects has encouraged inmates to accept responsibility and make individual decisions. This keeps them mentally alert and gives them an insight into the difficulties of running the prison when some inmates are obstructive or set themselves against authority." The Inmates Council was established experimentally, with strictly limited powers, about three years ago to act as liaison between inmates and the Superintendent. Minutes of its fortnightly meetings which are pinned in each wing for all prisoners to see show that it discusses a variety of questions which, if unsettled, might lead to dissatisfaction among prisoners.

Mr. Banyard, who has worked in English prisons, told us that in Mt. Eden last year he averaged 130 interviews a month, with prisoners arriving or about to be discharged, and on domestic and personal problems. He also sees prisoners' families, at the prison, in their homes or in his own home.

Those who speak sometimes of "softness" and "more concern for the criminal than for his victim" in New Zealand prisons need not fear that the swing towards a more humane attitude has gone too far. Prisoners, after all, are still deprived of the greater part of their freedom, and all welfare amenities are privileges which they enjoy only if they

The second and concluding part of a short survey of New Zealand's penal system