

REPORTS AND PAMPHLETS

Prisons in a State—Annual Report of the Howard League for Penal Reform 1976/77

The year 1977 was a landmark year for the Howard League for Penal Reform. It was the bicentenary of John Howard's book *The State of the Prisons*, and the League marked the occasion by, among other things, an international conference at Canterbury and the publication of an extended Annual Report. The report should be compulsory reading for any sensitive citizen, as it sets out for us some of the issues involved in locking away as prisoners some 75 persons per 100,000 of our population. It is encouraging to note that we are only 27th in the league table of nations who will give figures, being soundly beaten by such freedom-loving countries as Israel, with 137/100,000, the USA with 189/100,000, and by a breathtaking 441/100,000 in South Africa. It is discouraging, however, to see how far in front of some other European countries we are, e.g. the Netherlands who lock up only 21/100,000 and Spain with 40/100,000. Psychiatrists may wonder where the Soviet Union would appear in this analysis if it dared to give us accurate figures.

A Howard League solution is proposed to the long-running debate on whether offenders should be punished or rehabilitated. The answer, we are told, is to require offenders to do something constructive to make up for the harm they have caused. The League proposes that the basic principle should be reparation. 'In some cases, personal restitution is possible. Otherwise the community should take over assistance to the victim, and the offender should make reparation to the community. If he is socially disadvantaged he can also make amends by making use of education, training, counselling, therapy, or other help which is offered. Only in the most serious cases, or when a person was totally uncooperative, would the work have to be done in prison.' No taxpayer could argue with such a low-cost scheme, but the idea that the 'community', presumably Local Authority social workers, will care for the victims of crime will bring a wry smile to the lips of medical practitioners.

The big surprise about this report from the College member's point of view is the small amount of attention paid to psychiatry. It is difficult to know whether this is to be welcomed or regretted. It could be that the League has no unrealistic notions about the powers and virtues of psychiatry in criminology. On the other hand, with the disregarded Butler Report collecting dust, the impotence of DHSS to persuade psychiatrists to provide services for offenders,

regular comments about the depth of the forensic psychiatry crisis appearing in the newspapers, and the number of mentally sick people being sent to prison going up annually, it is surprising that the League is not yet more alarmed. They do, however, pass on a prisoner's relatives' complaint that Grendon uses only 189 of its theoretical 300 places, and they do promise us the published proceedings of an interesting conference on 'Medical Services for Offenders' held at the King's Fund Centre on 22 October 1976. This report, which seems unduly delayed, should give the substance of a valuable dialogue between NHS psychiatrists and senior prison doctors and could make a contribution to our own College's deliberations about forensic problems.

Other League developments which may be of interest to psychiatrists are the establishment of a committee to pursue the problems of dealing with juveniles, and the setting up of a working party under the chairmanship of Mrs Floud to examine the problems of the dangerous offender.

The Report is obtainable from the League office, 125 Kennington Park Road, London SE11, price 50p.

JOHN GUNN

Day Services for Mentally Handicapped Adults. National Development Group for the Mentally Handicapped. Pamphlet No. 5, July 1977.

The emphasis throughout this pamphlet is on the educational aspects of the work of the day services, and it is suggested that adult training centres, while still remaining with Social Services Departments, should in future be known as Social Education Centres and those attending known as students.

A centre at the upper end of the 50–150 places recommended in *DHSS Local Authority Building Note No. 5* is suggested, sited so as to enable students and staff to form part of the local community.

The centre is envisaged as consisting of four sections: Admission and Assessment Section (AAS), Development and Activity Section (DAS), Special Care Section (SCS) and Advanced Work Section (AWS), but it is emphasized that flexibility is the essential ingredient if the structure is to work effectively, and that no placement or programme for a mentally handicapped person within the centre should be regarded as permanent. Everyone should first go through the Admission and Assessment Section, whatever their age or background and