

PSYCHIATRY

Therapy for Crime

Aim of new penology is to get the prisoner ready to go out and stay out by returning him to society as a useful, law-abiding, self-supporting citizen.

By MARJORIE VAN DE WATER

► **BLAME AND PUNISHMENT** are going out of fashion in America's prisons.

Just as insane asylums have become mental hospitals, the "new penology" being developed promises to make our prisons truly correctional institutions.

Someday diagnosis and therapy promise to replace blame and punishment in the management of law violators. The "know-how" is being developed in scientific studies.

The glaring facts are that much more than half of those who serve time return to prison.

Dr. James V. Bennett, director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, finds that "at least 55% to 60% of the prisoners leaving prison today will return within five years." J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, points out that 70% of the fingerprints of arrested persons received by the FBI are of persons who have records of previous arrests.

New Goals Set

What is the goal of the new penology?

It is explained by Dr. Alfred C. Schnur, formerly associate warden of Minnesota State Prison and now teaching in the School of Police Administration and Public Safety, Michigan State University.

The aim is to get the men ready to go out and stay out by returning them to society as useful, law-abiding, self-supporting and independent citizens who will not only obey the law themselves but refrain from contributing to crime by others.

The new penology has an average of about 22 months to accomplish this task. Half the law violators who enter prison will be back on the street before this time has passed. Unfortunately, the time a man spends in prison is largely wasted.

There are 26,938 persons employed full time in state and Federal prisons and reformatories to concern themselves with 161,587 inmates. That amounts to one prison employee to every six inmates. But the great majority, 17,280, of these employees are concerned with just keeping the prisoners in prison. Others are hired to keep the men busy, keep them fed and keep them reasonably well. Only a few, 1,337, are there to prepare them to go out.

Many of the 161,587 need the help of a psychiatrist. Few people would claim that all the persons who commit crimes are psychotic. More than 100,000, according to Dr. Bennett, are twisted, queer, handicapped, defeated, embittered or seriously neurotic.

Confinement alone can only make their plight worse. Punitive measures can only make them more warped and incapable of taking a responsible part in the community as a useful citizen when they are permitted to leave prison.

"The true story of prisons lies not in charts and statistics," Dr. Bennett has said, "but in the tragedy and heartbreak they represent; to the prisoner, the wasted years that can never be recaptured; and to society, the loss of precious human resources and talent."

"Each year, the courts send thousands of people to prison. They come from all walks of life and are of all types."

"Some are professional, calculating criminals against whom must be marshalled the full force of society's organized authority; many are hostile, impulsive, and psychopathic who must be confined for the safety of others; but mostly, those who enter prison are confused, frustrated, resentful people caught in the blind alley of some deed or unfortunate circumstance. These

need re-direction, training, understanding and guidance."

But how many psychiatrists are employed to treat the 161,587 prisoners? Dr. Schnur gives us the answer. There are exactly 23 full-time psychiatrists. That amounts to one psychiatrist for each 7,026 inmates.

If each psychiatrist put in an eight-hour day and a 160-hour month with no time off for illness or emergencies, coffee breaks or staff conferences, it would mean that there is not more than one minute and 22 seconds of psychiatric help available for each inmate during a whole month.

That is not enough.

And even that fragment of time is not focused on life after prison. Instead, it is focused on keeping things reasonably orderly for the prison administration and on readying some men for transfer to a mental institution.

Defective Criminals

Many of the prisoners got into prison because they are lacking in intelligence. Their judgment is faulty; they could not get along in school or learn a trade. The prisons have 67 psychologists and psychometrists. If they distributed their time evenly, each prisoner would have about four minutes of their time monthly for individual attention.

The 96 institutional parole officers could give about six minutes to each man each month.

Not even the chaplain has time for heart-to-heart talks with the prisoners. The whole group of 155 chaplains could give less than ten minutes a month to each man.

Many prisoners got into trouble the first time merely because they never were trained to get and hold a good job that would support them and their families.

The prisons have 739 academic, vocational and trade teachers, but altogether they would have not over 45 minutes available for each prisoner in a month.

The average prisoner spends some 15,840 hours within those grim walls before he is back on the streets again. But in that time a total of only 30 hours will have been devoted to making him fit and safe to return to society.

Despite the experts, despite modern knowledge of penology, such rehabilitation as may take place during the prison term must be largely the result of the prisoner's own do-it-yourself project.

"It should come as no surprise," comments Dr. Schnur, "that so many men return to crime following such 'lavish' treatment programs. It is, indeed, remarkable that there are not more recidivists."

"The new penology has not yet really been drafted into the war against crime," he said.

What treatment personnel is available is not evenly distributed among the institu-



FREE—FOR HOW LONG?—Lighting a cigarette with his first breath of free air, this man leaves the grim prison walls behind. But is he ready to take a responsible place in society or was his time behind bars largely wasted? The man shown is a photographer's model, not a prisoner.

tions. Institutions where they are concentrated serve as beacon lights to those who feel the new penology should be tried. They shine as an indication that someday diagnosis and therapy will supplant blame and punishment in the management of law violators.

Science News Letter, December 6, 1958

MEDICINE

Study Faculty Needs For Rheumatic Diseases

► THE AMERICAN Rheumatism Association has established a committee for the exchange of information concerning faculty appointees and fellows. There is a need for information about available personnel to staff the numerous new units that are being established in medical schools in this country and abroad for the study of rheumatic diseases.

The committee will be pleased to receive information about fellowships and traineeship opportunities and faculty and other staff vacancies as well as inquiries regarding available personnel. Address Dr. Currier McEwen, New York University College of Medicine, 550 First Avenue, New York 16, N.Y.

Science News Letter, December 6, 1958

ENGINEERING

Dedicate New Reactor on A-Energy Anniversary

See Front Cover

► THE ARGONNE Low Power Reactor (ALPR), was dedicated on Tuesday, Dec. 2 at the Argonne National Laboratory's Idaho site at the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission's National Reactor Testing Station near Idaho Falls.

The date is the sixteenth anniversary of the birth of atomic energy.

The photograph on the cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER is a view of the reactor and support facilities building looking northeast from an access road.

The ALPR is a direct-cycle boiling water reactor of 3,000-kilowatt gross reactor heat, moderated and cooled by the natural circulation of ordinary water. Designed to produce 200 kilowatts of electricity and 400 kilowatts of space heat, it can be transported by air, uses gravel at the site for biological shielding and can operate for three years on a single fuel loading.

Science News Letter, December 6, 1958

Questions

ASTRONOMY—How large are the masses of some planetary nebulae? p. 360.

CYTOLOGY—Which part of the mitochondrion appears to be the cell "power plant"? p. 359.

MEDICINE—What would be the advantages in administering a live polio virus vaccine? p. 355.

Photographs: Cover, Argonne National Laboratory; p. 355, U.S. Navy; p. 357, Lockheed Missiles Systems; p. 362, Fremont Davis; p. 368, Bell and Howell.

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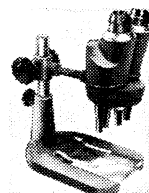
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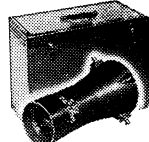
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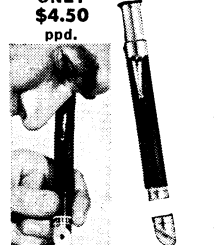
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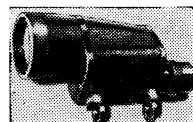
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