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PERSONNEL

SELECTION AND TRAINING OF PRISON PERSONNEL
IN NEW SOUTH WALES (AUSTRALIA)

by L. C. J. Nott,
Comptroller-General of Prisons of the
State of New South Wales, Sydney



UNITED NATIONS

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In accordance with the tradition of past Congresses, it has been possible to secure the co-operation of certain national prison administrations for the printing of documentation for the First United Nations Congress on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, which is from an historical point of view the Thirteenth International Penal and Penitentiary Congress. Thus the present report has been generously printed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons of the United States of America, in the prison printing plant at Leavenworth, Kansas.

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Categories of personnel

The staff employed by the Department of Prisons, New South Wales, falls into the following categories:

1. administrative,
2. clerical,
3. professional,
4. industrial, and
5. custodial.

1. The administrative staff comprises governors and deputy governors of the penal institutions as well as the top echelon of the staff at central headquarters (Comptroller-General's office).
2. The clerical staff comprises the clerical staff of the prisons—they are employed only at the larger prisons, i.e. those that have accommodation for more than 150 prisoners—and the remainder of the staff at headquarters.
3. The professional staff comprises the medical officers, the consultant psychiatrist, the dental officer, the psychologist, the educational staff and the parole officers.
4. The industrial staff consists of those officers who are directly engaged in the instruction of prisoners at work and the supervision of work performed. Although not strictly industrial officers, the stores staff is generally in this branch.
5. Finally, the custodial staff comprises not only the sentries but the officers in charge of cell blocks and other fixed positions and the supervisory officers of the prison below the rank of deputy governor.

Method of selection

All prison officers are public servants and the great majority of them are employed permanently with the pension rights of any other public servant. They are in this sense "career" officers. They are selected in the same way as other public servants, i.e. by public advertisements and by application to the central employing authority for the whole of the public service (Public Service Board).

Officers of the custodial branch are required to be between the ages of 23 and 29 at first appointment except in the case of ex-servicemen who may be 34 years. They are required to be 5' 9" in height and of proportionate build.

Officers of the other branches are also selected for employment by the Public Service Board, but the essential qualifications in their cases are skill and experience in the particular task which they will be performing, e.g. while the qualifications required of medical officers and dental officers are obvious, the industrial officers in charge of cabinet-making shops have to acquire the qualifications of skilled cabinet-makers, as well as capacity to impart their knowledge, and so on.

Training before and during employment

Training is not given by the Department before employment except to a very limited extent in highly specialised work. Officers are not selected for appointment to the positions requiring skilled knowledge unless they have, in fact, that knowledge.

Training during employment is at present being altered. In the past, this has been based solely "on-the-job training" during which senior officers instructed and supervised junior men while they were actually carrying out the duties of the more important positions.

A training school has now been established and the first course is on the point of commencing. It is designed to provide residential quarters for officers for a period of three weeks during which the whole of their working time will be devoted to the theoretical and practical study of the operation of the prisons. Tuition on the historical development of penal institutions, the principles underlying existing routines and a detailed knowledge of the work at each level as well as its

place in the total scheme of prison administration, is to be given. At the same time, officers will be instructed in such ancillary duties as fire-fighting, first aid to the injured and the use of arms. They will, moreover, be taught the attitude of command and the tactful exercise of authority. The school is designed primarily for custodial officers but will also include industrial officers.

Tasks assigned

The *Governor* is charged with the total responsibility for the functioning of the institution of which he is the chief officer. He must follow the lines of policy laid down by the government of the day through the Comptroller-General of Prisons while, however, exercising his discretion within the limits prescribed by policy, legislation and rules.

The *Deputy-Governor* is, as the title implies, the deputy of the governor, to whom are assigned particular responsibilities for staff, rostering and the movement of prisoners outside the prison.

The *Principal and Chief Warders* are supervisory custodial positions and the officers occupying them are required to be the "eyes and ears" of the prison.

The *Senior Warden* on day duty is the senior supervisory officer. On night duty, the Senior Warden is in charge of the watch and is responsible for the prison during the period of his watch. During such times, the prisoners are all locked in their cells and the Governor and Deputy Governor, both of whom are residential officers, are available for reference in unusual circumstances.

First Class Warders are assigned the responsibility of being in charge of cell blocks or ranges, kitchen, main gates and other fixed positions which require experience and skill.

Other *Warders* are used for the supervision of prisoners in exercise yards, as sentries—armed and unarmed—and for the general supervision of the prison and of the prisoners. They are all fixed (not moveable) positions.

Officers of the *Industrial Branch* are headed by the Chief Overseer who is responsible to the Governor for the function-

ing of the workshops and the allocation of prisoners to labour as well as the maintenance of the physical fabric of the prison.

Senior Overseers and Overseers are assigned the charge of workshops or sections of workshops and are responsible for the instruction of prisoners, the production of workshops and the general operation of their particular sections.

The *Engineer* is responsible for the heating, lighting and mechanical service of the prison.

The *Storekeeper and Stores Assistants* are responsible for the procurement and distribution of stores to the prison and to the workshops.

The responsibility of *Medical Officers, Dental Officer and Consultant Psychiatrist* are sufficiently designed by their titles.

The *Psychology workers* are responsible for the preparation of material for the Classification Committee, to which committee one acts as secretary.

The *Supervisor of Education* is responsible for the organisation of the curriculum of education within the prison. In the performance of this task he is assisted by part-time teachers drawn from the schools within the locality.

The *Parole Officers* are responsible primarily for the after-care of prisoners of the remediable type.

General

New South Wales provides a multiplicity of institutions for the better classification of its prisoners. The institutions range from maximum security prisons holding up to 700 prisoners to open establishments of about 60 prisoners. Obviously, the duties and responsibilities vary with the type of institution and so, too, of course, does the ratio of staff to prisoners. It might be said as a general statement that the ratio of staff to prisoners in a maximum security institution is one officer to five prisoners while at the open institution the ratio is one officer to nine prisoners. These ratios, however, are gross ratios and make allowance for leave of various kinds and provide for the three shifts necessary in 24 hours as well.

In the day time, i.e. when the prisoners are out of their cells, the ratio in maximum security institutions is one officer to

eight prisoners and at the open institutions one officer to ten prisoners.

The system operates efficiently in this State, and it is believed that it will be even more efficient as the new training programme becomes more general.

This archiving project is a collaborative effort between United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and American Society of Criminology, Division of International Criminology. Any comments or questions should be directed to Cindy J. Smith at CJSmithphd@comcast.net or Emil Wandzilak at emil.wandzilak@unodc.org.