

# A Provincial Prison Farm

By S. H. PRINCE

FOR a long time county court judges and other officials of the Province of Nova Scotia have deplored the necessity of sending young offenders and first offenders to the penitentiary for lack of a suitable alternative, and many of them have voiced from time to time, both as individuals and through their Provincial association, the need for an "intermediate" centre for commitment. The recent announcement by the Honourable J. H. MacQuarrie, Attorney-General of Nova Scotia, that early efforts are to be directed towards the development of a farm or forestry project to meet this widely acknowledged need makes the discussion of prison farm procedure timely at this juncture.

It is safe to say that citizens generally who are aware of the unwholesome features of the common jail system will receive with gratification the news of the coming of this long overdue reform. While there is room, perhaps, for a diversity of viewpoint as to the efficacy of one or another of the various types of intermediate prisons, and their suitability to Nova Scotian conditions, there are certain underlying principles which have a bearing upon public policy.

In the first place there is the principle of *economical concentration*. It was this which led to the closing of the local prisons and county jails of England and to the development of large "committal areas". This principle would indicate the wisdom of a central institution for Nova Scotia to serve all sections of the Province. Authorities consider that a minimum of 200 inmates is necessary to admit of proper discipline, economy of management, occupational diversity and educational services. An examination of the statistics of the penal population of

the Province reveals that after deducting the 30-day group, the mental defectives, the infirm, the old and those unfit for work, the prospective number of employable inmates would vary between 200 and 250. Thus only by the concentration of the entire prison population in a central institution would there be a group of prisoners sufficiently large to secure the best results.

The *prevention of contamination* is another principle at the root of the modern penal system, and this is only practicable where the institution is large enough for proper classification—a feature of first importance in modern reformatory work, and indeed the foundation upon which the success of the English prison system is based.

Again *purposeful occupation* is indispensable to reformation. Experienced penologists are agreed that the farm colony with outside labour and outside industries is the finest type of prison. Even were this not an accepted principle, the vital place which agriculture plays in the Province would naturally suggest the industrial farm as the type of reformatory most suited to Nova Scotia. The unique value of agricultural reformatories lies in the fact that they meet all the requirements of successful prison employment. The work is productive, reducing the cost of maintenance; it is also healthful, improving the physical condition of the prisoner and thus laying the foundation for moral improvement. The farm further admits of much diversity of work which in itself is a valuable auxiliary to reformation. Farm duties bring men to their beds at night filled with wholesome reactions which come from good hard work in the open air.

It is the standard practice to select a large undeveloped tract of land. It should be a rough, rocky and wooded area of perhaps 500 acres, and of such

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a nature as would require long years of reclamation work to clear, to grade and to develop. Ample timberland for lumber supplies and for instruction in forestry is also an important consideration. A quarry on the site would be desirable in order to produce crushed limestone which might be made available to the farmers of the Province for soil improvement, or crushed rock for the surfacing of highways.

To provide occupation for all weathers and all seasons, and employment for those not adapted to rural work, there should be a set of shops where the men could be encouraged to learn carpentry, masonry, bricklaying, plumbing, electrical work and other useful trades. At the outset the industrial section might well be limited to laundries, canneries, box-mills and other mechanical facilities which could be made available at little cost.

Again a modern penal institution should be either of the kind known as the *open prison* or at least of the *medium secur-*

atory which is, in many respects, the leading example in the country. Located within easy distance of Guelph, it consists of 945 acres of farm, forest and quarry. Provision is made for an extensive array of industrial activities. There are kitchens, bake houses, wool mills, tailor shops, machine sheds, a bed factory, a reed-work department, a laundry, a paint shop, a tannery, a planing mill, an abattoir and a creamery. There are in addition, school, hospital, gymnasium and chapel features. The buildings themselves, built largely by the inmates, will house 800 men, and have an average population of 568.

Most of the other nine prison farms of Canada are constructed on the Guelph model although they vary greatly in size and capacity. One will be found to specialize in live stock and dairy cattle; another in lumbering operations and in diversified farming; in still another brick-making is given a large place. The institutions are as follows:

Provincial Prison Farms	Acreage	Average Population	Value of Farm Production
Guelph, Ont.....	945	568	\$35,055.78
Minico, Ont.....	125	208	13,653.63
Burwash, Ont.....	35,000	461	70,145.63
Langstaff, Ont.....	940	270	27,253.34
Headingley, Man.....	560	345	8,382.24
Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.....	1,406	220	15,066.36
Lethbridge, Alta.....	1,141	133	18,342.89
Prince Albert, Sask.....	1,200	179	5,193.09
Regina, Sask.....	.....	940	5,248.81
Oakalla, B. C.....	185	419	5,909.80

*ity* type. A measure of freedom is a vital feature in the treatment of reformable prisoners. This the agricultural prison permits. Constant surveillance may be largely done away with. Work in open fields without armed guards provides the environment most favorable to the rehabilitation of the men. For some offenders such as pyromaniacs, special areas may have to be enclosed and guarded. But in many places penal institutions are successfully conducted without walls or bars.

These important features of a model prison farm have been successfully incorporated in most of the provincial prison farms in Canada. Special reference may be made to the Guelph Reform-

The conviction one receives from an examination of prison farms in actual operation is that they are in no sense costly to establish. Indeed the chief and only preliminaries are the purchase of a site and the appointment of an experienced prison farm construction superintendent. With a place available and an appropriation for the superintendent's salary, for a sawmill and some minor equipment, the work can well begin at once. The procedure is exceedingly simple. A group of healthy young prisoners with some aptitudes for construction are selected from various centres. They go out on a truck with a good farm construction superintendent. Some rough board barracks are thrown togethe



as temporary quarters until the men are trained and the materials secured for more permanent construction.

It is of interest to note that in nearly every case the development of prison farms has been begun on a small scale. Bordentown was started with 39 men. Lorton was begun with 27. The Guelph builders set out with two officers and 14 prisoners who quartered themselves in an old farm house. Then roads were made, land drained, trees cleared and within a year temporary structures were housing 150 men. Fort William began in the summer with an encampment of tents. An entire prison farm in the State of Massachusetts did not cost as much as was expended on one jail built in recent years in a Nova Scotia town. The wonder is that so great a reformation of penal institutions can be accomplished at so little public cost.

As to the responsibility for development and maintenance, central reformatories are from first to last provincial or state responsibilities. The Indiana plan has much to commend it. In this section the counties pay transportation to and from the prison farm, but the state is responsible for maintenance. The counties continue to support a few district jails to serve their original and primary purpose of detention lockups. Since most inmates will be committed for the violation of province-wide laws, it is logical that the province should become responsible for the care, custody and treatment of offenders. But more important than the logical reason is the fact that the province can perform these services better. And if the province is to manage the institution, and to profit from the labour of some 200 men, the municipalities can hardly be asked for more than transportation costs in addition to the upkeep of their district lockups. In British Columbia and elsewhere, the transportation problem has been solved by the R.C.M.P. As to administration the industrial farms in Saskatchewan and Alberta are under the Department of Public Works; in British Columbia, under the Department of the Attorney-General; in Ontario, under the Department of

the Provincial Secretary. In Regina all the farm work is under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture.

Experience all goes to show that once under way the new prison community will become largely self-supporting. All necessary tasks will be performed, all produce will be grown and supplies manufactured by the inmates themselves. As the institution develops and industries are started, it will be found possible to install the "public use system" whereby prison-made goods can be used to supply furnishings and other needs for provincial hospitals, county homes, and public institutions. One of the outputs of prison farms is not infrequently license plates for automobiles.

The dual principle in modern prison treatment is *deterrence and reformation*, the first to protect society and the second to benefit man. But as the protection of society is best assured by the reformation of the offender, all efforts are directed to this end. Once a prison farm is established the doors will be open to almost every type of activity which possesses reformatory value. Adult education classes will naturally be given a prominent place. There will be occupational training and instruction in geography, mathematics and civics. Literature, art and religion will be presented in a way so as to be of real service upon release. But quite apart from what it may mean in the future, systematic teaching is needed to counteract the mental deterioration of prison life. In addition the prisoners should be encouraged to engage in such recreational and leisure time activities as orchestras, plays and other aesthetic arts. With a few accomplishments their self-respect will be more easily regained when they come to move again among their fellows in the outside world. Libraries should contain not only literature useful for educational purposes but magazines and fiction readable for pleasure also. In most cases, pleasures are to be regarded as privileges which only become available as the prisoner advances "in stage." Outdoor as well as indoor games should be featured as a necessary adjunct to



reformatory effort. Perhaps the thing which embitters the prisoner against society most is long periods of inactivity. This should be overcome on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays by supervised community events, as well as by provision for reading, drawing, hobbies and ear-phone radio broadcasts.

But this modern type of prison care will not succeed unless the human element has been wisely selected and as wisely trained. That the officials should be qualified for farm management and trade instruction goes without saying. It is particularly important that they should be men who have not only an acquaintance with the newer penology but who in addition have had some practical experience in handling the misfits of society. To a wide knowledge of human nature, they should add a keen interest in the welfare of those committed to their care. Firmness to secure discipline, and kindness and understanding in dealing with individuals, are further essential characteristics. Punishment there must be, especially with the incorrigible types, but prisoners should be led to better things by rewards and privileges rather than be terrorized by severity.

Perhaps the greatest aid to constructive discipline is the development of a *classification system* based on the "Triple Division" model as used in England. The youthful and young prisoners, those not over 23 years of age are set apart as "star" class offenders. Those under 30 who have been previously convicted, and who are therefore ineligible for the "star" class, are grouped as "specials", and all others as "ordinary". With this foundation, a grades and merit system properly carried out will furnish the most effective motive towards improvement. Provision whereby satisfactory conduct may earn remission is fundamental in modern prison discipline.

All these are not new ideals in the treatment of delinquency in Nova Scotia. They are on the other hand well-tested principles already in effect in the successful institutions for children, youths and women offenders, as exemplified at Truro, Coverdale and Halifax. The new prison farm means merely an extension of the same general practices to the treatment of men, particularly of first offenders, thus bringing all the correctional institutions in harmony with modern principles of penal reform.

## The Care of Crippled Children

By D. E. ROBERTSON.

THE care of crippled children is a problem that calls for an intelligent understanding of the individual case. It demands a knowledge of the physical disability as well as a true appraisal of the mentality present. Before treatment of any sort is initiated there must be some hope, based upon critical studies of similar cases, of improvement. It is not justifiable in these days casually to accept advice from ignorant and untrained and inexperienced sources, to

initiate a treatment, frequently expensive, and to find it after some time useless. Too often this occurs, and the parents in some cases impoverish themselves in moving from place to place in search of a physician who can cure their child, as if the first honest well trained physician they had seen had not suggested to them a temporal court of last medical appeal where they could get for a relatively small fee, or for no fee at all, an expert opinion as to the probability of reasonable results from any treatment. In this day when "news" is assumed to be a primary demand of the public, and

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