RESOLUTION (66) 26

(Adopted by the Ministers' Deputies on 30th April 1966)

STATUS, RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF PRISON STAFF

The Committee of Ministers,

Having regard to points 1 and 2 of Recommendation 195 (1959) of the Consultative Assembly;

Recognising that it is the aim of central prison administrations not only to provide in their establishments for the safe custody of prisoners but also to promote their social re-adaptation;

Considering that the provision of effective prison regimes requires the employment and use of a suitably qualified prison staff,

I. Recommends that Governments accord to prison staff a status commensurate with the nature of their social function;

II. Recommends that prison staff be recruited, selected and trained in accordance with the principles attached;

III. Invites the Governments of member States to send reports every five years to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe giving information on the steps taken to improve the status, selection and training of prison staff.

APPENDIX

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. The enforcement of penalties involving the deprivation of liberty should be the responsibility of a special branch of the public service.

2. The selection and training of prison staff is one of the most important tasks of any prison administration. Officials concerned with these matters should have the benefit of studying the various selection and training schemes operated in other countries in order to examine in detail to what extent their own national systems could thus be improved. They should participate, as far as possible, in such arrangements for the exchange of prison staff as those administered by the Council of Europe.

3. The efficiency of selection procedures should be the subject of continuous scrutiny, information being collected as a routine; systematic studies should also be made of the results of recruitment programmes and the satisfactoriness of training methods.

RECRUITMENT OF BASIC GRADE CUSTODIAL STAFF

4. The essential task of the basic grade custodial staff has been, and is, to ensure safe custody and good order. However, it is apparent that basic grade prison officers can and should moreover be actively associated with modern methods of treatment of prisoners.

5. An increase in the scope of the work required from the custodial staff clearly means that prison administrations cannot be satisfied with recruits who have only minimal personal qualities and educational attainments. Since, however, men are being asked to come forward who are better qualified than their predecessors, they should receive appropriate remuneration and conditions of service. In particular, men are required of reasonable intelligence and education, of integrity and balanced character, who possess the capacity to accept prisoners and to manage them.

6. Because many European prison administrations consider that they need more staff and one of better quality, public attention should be drawn to the needs of prison services in order that a sufficient number of recruits is forthcoming. The public should also be informed about the social importance of the work undertaken in order that appropriate pay and conditions of service may be provided.

STATUS OF BASIC GRADE CUSTODIAL STAFF

7. Since modern penal methods require an enlargement of their function so that they may be closely associated with the task of the rehabilitation of offenders in an important State service, prison officers should always be civil servants.

8. The minimum age of entry into full-time work should, in general, be not less than 21. However, younger candidates should not be excluded provided they are exceptionally mature and have the qualities required for the job.

9. The maximum age of entry should in principle not exceed 40, although experience in some countries has shown that a good job can be done by some men recruited when they have reached a mature age.

10. Since the tasks undertaken by prison officers in some countries are becoming increasingly important and arduous, the relevance of this for retirement should be carefully examined. In general, custodial staff should be able to retire before they have reached too advanced an age, provided they do not suffer financial disadvantages thereby, i.e. through retiring before the normal age-limits set for other civil servants in their country. The possibility, however, of (suitable) officers continuing to serve should they so desire, beyond the normal retirement age set for the prison service, in roles appropriate to their age, should not be excluded, but should also be studied further.

SELECTION OF BASIC GRADE STAFF

11. All selection systems should take into account qualities of personality as well as intelligence and educational attainments. The aim should be to select staff with the stability and balance of personality, the integrity, the power of empathy and capacity for good relationships which would enable them to manage inmates successfully in the difficult and artificial milieu of a penal establishment.

It is highly desirable that an experienced psychologist, or similarly trained specialist, fully informed about the requirements of the prison officer's work, should contribute to the making of the necessary assessments.

12. Intensive initial selection procedures sometimes are undertaken concurrently with training. There are serious disadvantages in this if they result in high rejection rates. Intensive selection processes inevitably make recruits anxious about possible rejection. This state of mind is not conducive to effective learning. Furthermore, the role of the selecting and training staff - especially where these also include members of the custodial staff - becomes confused, and undue emphasis tends to be put on selection to the detriment of training, or *vice versa*. In consequence it is desirable to make any intensive initial selection procedures as speedy and efficient as possible without prejudice to the right of an administration to reject an unsuitable candidate at any time.

13. Selection procedures should be used not only to distinguish between the suitable and unsuitable recruit. They should also be used to obtain information which will enable the prison administration to decide in which kind of establishments the recruit's capabilities are most likely to be effectively used and developed.

INITIAL TRAINING OF BASIC GRADE CUSTODIAL STAFF

14. Initial training of non-specialist custodial staff is essential. Its content will depend on the functions which such staff are called upon to perform. Since, however, it is the object of every modern prison system to pay due respect to the human dignity of inmates, while contributing to their resocialisation, the training of staff should be based on two general principles.

15. First, the training should be theoretical and practical, both in content and in the way it is given. That is to say, the training should combine theoretical information about the way a prison is run and about the personality and background of the prisoners with practical

experience of working in a prison and of dealing with prisoners. Due attention should be given here to physical training, including instruction in the art of self-defence.

16. Second, the process of training should always be combined with some observation of the trainees so that it is still possible to exclude the unsuitable, not only if they perform badly in examinations but also if they are unable to manage practical situations in establishments.

17. In providing for initial training it must be remembered that a trainee cannot be prepared for every eventuality. Lacking experience, he does not always have points of reference to enable him to understand all that he is taught.

18. At all stages of training every effort should be made to develop methods of teaching which involve the trainee in active participation. Wherever possible, trainees should be dealt with in small groups.

19. The content of training should be devised to provide an elementary understanding of the skills listed below :

- Basic custodial skills (i.e. security of buildings, checking numbers and searching prisoners, self-defence, and general supervision).

- Organising skills (i.e. the ability to plan for the efficient accomplishment of necessary tasks and undertake the effective leadership of prisoners).

- Observational skills (i.e. the ability to observe inmate behaviour objectively, its verbal and non-verbal content, and to assess in some degree the meaning of the behaviour observed).

- Communication skills (i.e. the ability to communicate orally and in writing what is observed to other members of the staff team).

- Skill in human relationships (i.e. the ability on the part of a prison officer to use his own personality as a positive instrument in the management and treatment of prisoners).

IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR BASIC GRADE CUSTODIAL STAFF

20. Since not everything can be learned initially, in-service training for further development is essential.

The content of such training should increasingly seek to give the officer an understanding of the growth of human personality, social deviation, and of group work and other treatment methods as well as of the formal requirements of regulations. Programmes can be constructed along these lines which are appropriate to the degree of treatment involvement which national administrations regard as desirable for their custodial staffs.

21. In-service training should be provided for all ranks of basic grade custodial staff. Such training should not consist of lectures only but should allow for a good deal of discussion. Where possible, in-service training and staff discussions should take place both in individual prisons and at a training centre.

22. Where in-service training (either initially or in the later stages) takes place in individual prisons, it is essential that special training officers should be appointed for this purpose.

In-service training should, however, not be envisaged as taking place only in individual prisons. A period in the different atmosphere of a training centre or external course, and the possibility of meetings and discussions with staff, at all levels, from other prisons, are desirable.

TECHNICAL BASIC GRADE STAFF

23. Technical basic grade staff (trade assistants, instructors etc.), even though they enter prison service with the qualifications and experience necessary for their specialised tasks, should, nevertheless, to the extent to which they have comparable responsibilities for the control and treatment of prisoners working with them, undergo the same kind of basic training described above for ordinary custodial staff.

GENERAL ORGANISATION

24. As the custodial staff increasingly accept their new responsibilities, certain organisational problems can be expected to arise. If, for example, they are to take special responsibility for a group of prisoners, that group of prisoners has to be selected and brought together. But, with the effort currently being made to provide and maintain a full work and education programme, prisoners are less easily available than formerly. Much of this means that the prisoners' day becomes a longer one and custodial staff are needed in the evenings and at the week-ends. This means that flexible shift systems are essential if an adequate number of staff are to be on duty at these times. More staff will probably be needed under these circumstances. The increase in staff necessary can and should be kept to a minimum by the most efficient and economical organisation which can be devised.

COMMUNICATION

25. In order that custodial staff may understand and accept the developing role which is emerging for them, certain misunderstandings must be dealt with. Some of these relate to an inadequate understanding of the aims of the central prison administration or an inadequate understanding on the part of the latter of problems faced by custodial staff. Yet other misunderstandings, about aims, difficulties and methods of work, exist within individual establishments between different levels or sections of staff. Much misunderstanding is due not to objective considerations, but to irrational beliefs and ideas. Complete lists of difficulties cannot therefore be given; they have to be discovered and then dealt with. For this, "two-way communication" is essential. Joint consultation with custodial staff is important both about the treatment for individual prisoners and about general administration. Such consultation is useful in revealing problems and promoting suggestions for improved working.

26. Many custodial staff feel that prison administrations are greatly concerned for the welfare of the prisoner but markedly less so for the welfare of the staff. The social needs and circumstances of work of the staff require the positive attention of all prison administrations and steps should be taken to remove the grounds for this feeling, e.g. by the appointment of Staff Welfare Officers, and resolution of difficulties relating to messing facilities, housing, education and family circumstances arising from the nature of the work.

27. Custodial staff may feel also that prison administrations do not make enough use of the knowledge and understanding which they have as a result of their personal contact with the prisoners. If their involvement in the treatment of prisoners is to be secured, they should be given opportunities for consultation about the treatment of prisoners by oral discussion, participation in staff meetings, and written report.

28. A closer personal relationship between the custodial officer and the prisoner should leave a certain area of discretion with the officer for defining its basis. This will mean that the officer may well be able to control the behaviour of prisoners by using his relationship with them, without having to resort to disciplinary sanctions. This should not be taken to mean, however, that he is to inflict punishment or be relieved of his duty to inform his superiors about what he is doing.

29. Regular staff discussions involving all grades of staff are a feature of many establishments. They provide an efficient means of defining for all staff, and subsequently for prisoners, what are the permitted limits and what are the treatment possibilities of different situations. In such meetings specialist staff, e.g. psychologists have an important part to play by revealing the dynamics of the situations under discussion.

30. The policy of involving the custodial staff in the treatment task should have the clear-stated authority of the central prison administration. In consequence, obsolete regulations and enactments which do not reflect the spirit of participation by the custodial staff in the treatment task should be replaced by others which do.

SELECTION OF DIRECTING STAFF

31. The administration of a penal institution with all its human problems, is an important social function involving directing staff in complex and often conflicting responsibilities. Governors and Assistant Governors require considerable qualities of personality which go beyond those required for basic personnel. These qualities cannot be judged by means of qualifying examinations only. Accordingly, those countries which do not already include within their selection process adequate methods of assessing personality should examine the possibility of doing so.

32. The previous paragraph should be read as applying equally to persons appointed as Assistant Governors or Governors who have formerly been administrative officials of the prison service or the civil service. In order to fit staff of this type for undertaking governing roles, they should be given also the same kind of training as is described below for directing staff recruited in other ways.

33. Directing staff (future Governors) require to know a good deal more than their colleagues in the basic grade not only about prison administration and about the laws and regulations governing this administration but also about criminal behaviour, modern treatment methods, man management and sometimes about such specific techniques as social casework and group work. Candidates for appointment to the directing staff, especially in those countries which do not make any kind of professional training a condition of recruitment, should therefore undergo some fairly prolonged training which would enable them to face their new duties efficiently and also help them to a better understanding of their often difficult charges. In countries where it does not exist, the possibilities of arranging some such training, which should cover a period of at least six months, should be considered.

34. Practical experience of the work of basic grade staff can also be of great value in the training of directing staff and where appropriate should be provided.

35. In-service training of directing staff at all levels should be encouraged. Where the aims and organisation of the prison system make it appropriate, emphasis should be laid on training methods which facilitate communication between junior and senior grades of directing staff, and between these grades and the basic grade staff.

SPECIALIST STAFF

36. In principle, full-time medical officers should be civil servants and should not be allowed to retain a private practice when it conflicts with their official medical duties. It should be recognised that experience in a private practice may be valuable both as a means of keeping up-to-date with developing techniques in their specialised fields and maintaining contact with patients in freedom.

37. In principle, full-time social workers in prison should have the appropriate professional qualifications.

38. In view of the important functions of those with a responsibility for the religious and moral care of prisoners, opportunities should be afforded for them to receive a training which will prepare them for the special problems to be found in prisons.

39. In principle, full-time specialist staff should have permanent career prospects of a kind which would ensure that such personnel are attracted and retained in sufficient quantity and quality.

40. It is considered extremely important that full-time specialist staff should have an initial in-service training. Various means of arranging this may be recommended - induction or reception courses for new staff, either in specialised or mixed groups, periods of attachment to senior specialist colleagues etc. In the case of part-time staff, they too should be given adequate and appropriate opportunities to make themselves fully familiar with prisons and prisoners, and to understand what other staff members do.

41. In the same way, further in-service training for specialist staff is also desirable. Mixed groups of specialist and non-specialist staff are particularly useful. This gives specialists a chance both to give and to receive information, and enables closer co-operation between staff members to be built up. Where such a system does not yet exist, the possibilities of introducing it should be studied.

FURTHER TRAINING (EXTERNAL)

42. Consideration should be given, especially in the case of directing staff and specialists, to the use which might be made of external training courses, conferences etc., to supplement any training facilities and to enable such personnel to maintain status and reputation at least the equal of corresponding staff in comparable work fields outside the prison service. In this connection, investigation should also be made of the possibilities of seconding specialists to work for periods in other related fields, such as probation, after-care, mental health services etc.