

# Regimes for Long Termers

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## Introduction

I must state at the outset these are my personal views and not necessarily those of the Department.

I am delighted to be here with Bill Perrie at the first Perrie Lecture.

I am not sure which gives me the greatest pleasure, returning to Long Lartin as Director or attending such an occasion as this. I think it has to be the latter and I want to say how honoured I am to have been asked to give this inaugural lecture.

Bill Perrie and I share the dubious but stimulating distinction of being asked to run two dispersals consecutively. I have worked with him as a friend and a valued colleague.

It was with him that I learned a lot about the importance of caring, of creativity and of building teams. \*

It goes without saying that he was an outstanding governor and I am delighted that it has been seen appropriate to set up a series of lectures which will commemorate the contribution he made to the Prison Service. But I am aware of the terrible danger of producing a lecture which is full of anecdotes, so I will resist that temptation; of more importance is to explore ideas and concepts.

## The Complexities

1 The whole area of running regimes for long-term prisoners is an extensive field of enormous complexity and difficulty. I think we must realise at the outset that no matter how we organise regimes for long-termers there will always be problems; some of them major.

Because of all the pressures which are impinging upon us, I see a danger of losing much of value from the past. Hence, with Bill Perrie very much in the audience, I will look back in this inaugural lecture at the beliefs which came alive when we first opened Long Lartin on 11 January, 1971. What I propose to do is to look at guidelines,

at staff, at violence and then conclude on inmates.

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## Beliefs and Hope

We started off with the belief that it is possible to run a dispersal prison without disturbances of a major kind. We started off by ensuring that there was hope at the end of the tunnel; we asked ourselves the kind of activities and regimes that we would need if we were a Swiss village, cut off for many years without any contact with the outside world; we wanted to understand whether the behaviour which ensued was because of the individual prisoner and his past or because of the imprisonment.

Both of us were aware of the importance of dialogue not only by senior management with staff but also staff with prisoners and this became one of the by-words for all of us who were working here at that time.

We were aware that to governors and to staff the loss of control is a far greater fear than the loss of a prisoner by escape. No matter how important and serious the latter may be, a major preoccupation for all of us within dispersal had to be "keeping the roof on" and preventing major disturbance. Because of this we set out with a conscious effort to plan the regime to reduce tensions.

Bill Perrie projected confidence to all staff and a belief system about how to deal with prisoners and problems; how staff were organised influenced their effectiveness in securing and controlling the inmate. He believed it was important that at all times all of us as staff had our heads above the water and he was able to exemplify this to an amazing degree no matter what problems faced him.

For example, when anyone presented him with a problem, no matter how large, he said, "That's good. That's what we are here to resolve." When staff reported they had solved

problems using their own initiative he was even better satisfied and said so, and at times even went on to say, "Couldn't you have kept the incident going until I arrived?". He had a confidence that it is possible to hold a situation without being overwhelmed by it. He knew how to use staff to be good.

This is what gave staff confidence and they knew that he trusted them and for this reason Long Lartin got off to a good start.

At the same time we taught staff that they had to have the ability to absorb the aggression that some of the most dangerous men in the country could provide and that you did this not by acting as individuals but by acting as a team.

We were also aware that staff needed support and that this could come by using our personnel sensitively and by good management.

- a) By thinking positively.
- b) By maximising everyone's potential.
- c) That no matter what job—we are only as strong as the weakest link whether that be the governor, the deputy, the senior probation officer or the principal officer. All of us had to work as a member of the team and, believe me, it was survival. But it worked.
- d) Security—this was the backcloth against which we operated. We decided what we wanted to do and then we ensured that the security was able to cope with it.
- e) We knew what the Radzinowicz' aim was: to have a secure perimeter and an open regime inside and it was this that we strove to achieve and, indeed, I believe we did so.

We learned also that not entirely satisfactory buildings can be made to work.

Treatment we defined as anything any member of staff or the environment did to a prisoner.

### Guidelines

Control situations will vary according to their individual ingredients, the emotions and attitudes of the staff involved, and those of the inmates involved. It is therefore difficult to lay down hard and fast rules for all circumstances. This does not, however, preclude the laying down of guidelines of a general nature.

- a) *Overstaffing* is as unhelpful from a *control* point of view as understaffing. Each wing or landing should have just enough staff to do the jobs the wing or landing requires. However, staff in the face-to-face situation should not feel isolated or exposed. You will work as a team. You will be told what we want. Feelings are facts. You will tell us what you *want and feel*.
- b) Train yourself to observe and interpret behaviour. If something is going on and there is no danger to personnel or security you can afford time to look carefully at what is happening and consider it.
- c) Build up a comprehensive store of information and knowledge about your inmates and, if possible, others. Learn to read moods.
- d) Cultivate an ability to absorb inmate critical and grievance-orientated attitudes; don't react instinctively. However, there is a limit to what you are expected to absorb and you are entitled to support when that limit is reached. But if you make an effort to absorb inmate reaction, you will be respected for it.
- e) In the face-to-face situation always leave the inmate and yourself an escape route from confrontation. Avoid getting into the "Do as I say or else"—or "If you do (or don't do) this I will do that" postures. It limits the flexibility of your response.
- f) Learn to listen interestedly to all that is said by inmates. It helps the inmate and if you listen properly you will gain valuable information, even insight.
- g) Learn the art of saying "No" in an unprovocative but nevertheless firm way.
- h) When you do make a decision, observe the following rules: (i) think through the problem closely and consider all the alternative solutions; (ii) if you can manage it, test your conclusions with a colleague;

(iii) communicate it simply and clearly giving such explanation as necessary; (iv) satisfy yourself your decision is clearly understood by those it involves;

(v) having followed the foregoing, stick to your decision—if you have made a mess of it get a senior to overrule you. This way the decision can be changed with the minimum loss of face, i)

Remember, if you and inmates are talking to each other any situation is potentially controllable. It is only when staff and inmates fail to communicate, for whatever reason, that tension began to rise, j) An emotional approach to control problems is not a professional approach. Learn to make a detached appraisal of a control situation. Consider the facts, not how you feel about it all.

k) When reaching a decision ensure you have the resources to implement what you have decided. Don't waste time bemoaning the paucity of your resources. Match your ideals with your resources. l) Work hard at cultivating a relaxed approach—this will defuse many difficult situations, m) Ensure the appropriate departments of the prison provide you with support, be it material aids, counselling support, or the support of a management or a project group. If there's no danger to life and limb, if there's no danger to security and there's an incident, we've got time to think. There's no danger, don't do something, stand there and think. They, used to say at Long Lartin "We never did anything; we never solved any problems but what we did was we kept the problems at a manageable level—they were always at a manageable level and they never exploded to the point where they were beyond control and it escalated." And it was because people thought about what they were doing, questioned it, discussed it with others and were encouraged to do so by management, n) If the foregoing skills are practiced and mastered, your performance will command respect—respect of your seniors, respect of your peers and perhaps most of all, respect of inmates. But most important, you will never really lose the initiative in the control game.

### Staff Involvement

Treatment in dispersal circumstances should have the aim of permitting men to live as normal a life as circumstances will permit. Confidence in the security defences and control skills will free staff to deal positively with treatment problems.

Training for relationships must be on-going and training should have a priority allocated to it.

Because of the stresses and strains of a dispersal prison, the only form of management which has any hope of success we believe is collective management. This means consultative management.

Staff must not be asked to carry impossible loads or fulfil well-nigh impossible tasks.

By involving staff in consultative management there is a greater chance of matching aims with resources and promoting a realistic regime.

Everyone is aware of treatment vehicles e.g. work, welfare, education, hobbies, PE, recreational facilities, etc.

The object of treatment is to build a number of disparate elements together to form a regime which meets the requirements laid on us by the Prison Department.

In this situation treatment staff are the catalysts. How well they coordinate, direct and generate treatment activities will decide the quality of the regime.

It is far better to individualise relationships with inmates than to provide them with unifying issues; we can do without mass protests against uninspiring food, new mattresses, shortage of kit, limited entertainment and restricted parole.

Respect of prisoners and taking one's time pays greater dividends than rushing, abusing or using force—before it is absolutely necessary to limit injury or serious damage.

Consistency and continuity of staff together make for an easier normality. A history of understanding and previous successful working through of issues gives everyone confidence that it's worth trying again. We have enjoyed a warmth and involvement that the report on the Hull riot valued (Fowler, 1977)<sup>2</sup> and which Gordon Fowler remembered in his recent evidence to the Parliamentary All Party Penal Affairs Group (1986)<sup>3</sup>:

"He has been alarmed in most of the dispersal prisons by the withdrawal of staff from involvement in the community life of the Wing

because of the fear of being assaulted or taken hostage. Most of the escapes he had investigated had started with threats to the staff that hostages would be taken. Real security and control meant knowing what someone was going to do before he did it which implied forming a relationship."

Thus security and control are distinguishable but complementary to each other; but they cannot be reasonably expected without trust, relationships, justice, respect, hope and reward.

### **Teamwork—the Whole Community**

Long Lartin was built on the ideas,"

the aspirations of a whole range of people, security POs, POA officials, new deputy governors, experienced governors and many officers with varied experience. Specialists and doctors all joined in, so it was not based on any theory other than the theory that if a group of people are thrown together, given the overall task and permitted to develop their ideas and ideals then what would evolve would be something which all could subscribe to and which would have the in-built safeguard that no extreme views would go unchallenged. These were the things that we taught; they were not comfortable either to those of us who were involved or to Headquarters who had to cope with us. If you asked Bill Perrie what was the worst mistake he made at Long Lartin, he would say it was not understanding and realising the need to communicate with Headquarters and Region as openly as he communicated with staff and prisoners in Long Lartin itself. Tensions within the prison were used creatively but this was not true of our upward communications. He failed to influence the people that he wished and needed to influence most. It may be that that is one of the reasons why we are still wondering about how to develop our new dispersal prisons and it is a matter of much regret that all the work that went into understanding the development of Long Lartin was not used in the development of Frankland or Full Sutton.

There is a tendency in all of us to revert to simple policing or supervisory functions; to counteract this tendency we need to use anything at hand to help our understanding of prisoners and their behaviour. From the literature we know about body buffer

Techniques of listening are well written-up.

No-go areas must be prevented by regular, normal involvement of staff—which reinforces their confidence.

Prisoners fear deterioration in prison and we need to challenge this fear through dialogue, involvement and activity.

Alistair Thompson (1983)<sup>4</sup>, Director, Scottish Prison Service, wrote very helpfully about staff; this and other literature is available to inform and encourage staff involvement, officers and specialists together.

However modern and well-equipped its buildings, however progressive and enlightened its regimes, it is an inescapable fact that the efficiency and effectiveness of a prison service is ultimately dependent upon the quality and commitment of its staff. By their attitudes they can ensure that friction between themselves and prisoners is minimised and thus make it difficult for troublemakers among prisoners to undermine management's purposes. It is incumbent on us to make the most effective use of staff.

The criterion of selection lies in paragraph II of Resolution 66 (26) of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers:

"All selection systems should take into account qualities of personality as well as intelligence and education 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."

Custodial staff of such potential need to play their part in the process of social re-adaptation; they must be expanded, not eroded, by the increased deployment of specialists.

### **Threats to Good Practice**

Over the past five years the Prison Department has recognised the dangers of increasing the use of specialists and relegating uniformed staff to more basic, less prestigious roles. This leads to a lack of job satisfaction, a tendency to create resentment on the part of the uniform staff against the "usurpers", and makes much more difficult the attainment of management's objectives. The aim has

Some other developments since 1966<sup>5</sup> have militated against basic grade staff playing their proper part in the rehabilitative process. Electronic means of locking and unlocking inmates' accommodation have tended to restrict the contact between officer and prisoners; as relationships become less automatic, those members of staff who are content to act simply as custodians have a convenient excuse.

Drugs and overcrowding also raised threats to control and safe custody; accordingly staff anxiety rose. As a result staff were more inhibited in their relationships with inmates and overcrowding by its very nature acted as a barrier to the right kind of contacts between staff and prisoners. So much time was taken up with the sheer logistics of handling much larger numbers of prisoners than the establishment was designed to accommodate that little time was left for more productive contacts.

Staff were now subjected to public scrutiny in a manner never before experienced; access to the European Commission was increasingly used by prisoners to challenge staff actions and Departmental rules. The Inspectorate of Prisons has become more public and significant; the media have also in recent years begun to take a great deal more interest in the Prison Service and questioned its effectiveness. These developments have implications for the development of staff if they are to be equipped to cope with the challenges and changes which now confront them. If a wider role than simply that of control and custody is to be adopted, staff will require to be properly prepared for it both in their initial training and by way of in-service development courses. It is simply not enough to recruit good staff and provide them with training. Unless staff believe in what they are doing, management's aims will remain unachieved. **Support**

It should be understood that staff felt—and indeed were—vulnerable to public criticism and complaints from prisoners. Every effort should be made by management to give them adequate support and appropriate opportunities to express their views on prison matters, particularly in formulating policies for the establishments in which they were working. Hence, whilst security is an implicit constant in all that one does, the day-to-day management input and concern is with main-

It is here that staff become of crucial importance—they will either be able to manage—or they won't! In such a community it is the fear of failure and its consequences—thoroughly understandable—which will dictate the attitudes which are adopted to prisoners. This, more than any other single factor will determine the stability of the overall regime. Staff confidence and the way this confidence is expressed are paramount. Once their confidence has been lost it is exceptionally difficult and costly to restore.

Control in a prison can be achieved in many different ways but the only successful control is when there is a true understanding between staff and prisoners and where, to some extent, there is a ready level of give-and-take, when the boundaries are clearly understood and where there can develop—dare I say—a certain amount of mutual respect. It is not just a matter of staff being professional but being able to relax with their charges and develop a dialogue and meaningful relationships.

### **Polarisation**

When control has broken down underlying feelings come to the fore and are often acted out, stimulated by fear. Complex reactions follow but staff will not want ever to be in the same situation again: they demand safeguards. The danger for management is changing drastically the crucial nature of the relationship between officer and prisoner. Polarisation can occur and the very control so urgently sought can be more elusive than ever (causing relationships to deteriorate) which, if steps are not taken to correct it, can lead to further serious incidents. The reason is not difficult to identify. If the ratio of staff to prisoners is at a certain level, control is maintained by the officer using his personality to influence the prisoner, which, as a by-product, maintains a reasonable atmosphere within the prison. Raise staffing levels and contact between staff and prisoner can decrease as quickly as contact between officer and officer increases. If this happens not only can 'no-go' areas develop but staff virtually become guards who have minimal contact with individual prisoners; both sides become more insecure, stereotypes build up, the subtleties of relationships between the two vanish and contempt grows as

.Any meaningful concept of community breaks down and the atmosphere becomes tense, prisoners sullen, staff defensive and threatened.

Perhaps the most important attribute that the governor of such an establishment must have is the ability to organise and project himself as someone who can run a 'safe' regime for staff and prisoners. This means listening, supporting, involving staff and attending to prisoners' requests and controlling those prisoners who subvert the freedom and activity of others, by dealing with them firmly and fairly. It means supporting staff in the intensely difficult job of getting to know the prisoner, likewise to listen, be firm and fair.

In this 'ideal' regime, with minimum polarisation, prisoners will warn staff of possible trouble so that action can be taken to prevent it arising.

### **Violence**

Incidents of violence have a profound effect on staff. Violence triggers further violence. Prisons in which hostility, distrust and fear are pronounced are more difficult to manage and less likely to modify the attitudes and activities of offenders. Aggressive behaviour can be regarded as functional for the prisoner in two ways:

- a) to obtain various rewards or incentives;
  - b) to deal with annoyance, frustration, mistreatment or provocation.
- The first includes image-building, muscling, threatening, bullying, challenging the inmates' social order, trafficking and baroning.

As the prison environment with overcrowding, lack of privacy, and noise stimulates annoyance and frustration, the second process can hardly surprise us. But reducing minor irritations and frustrations can be impulsive and explosive.

We need, therefore, to provide prison conditions which will make violence less necessary, useful and acceptable.

But some control measures will exacerbate annoyance, and punishment is minimally deterrent in a highly aroused prison.

This is when staff mediation and sensitivity are essential and more likely to succeed than punitive measures.

The danger is that the very measures which work best—dynamic security—are discarded for less subtle

A greater sensitivity to violence "cues" must be developed and we need to encourage those staff who are better at reducing tension and violence.

Prison staff require training in mediation and negotiation skills. Detecting conflict is of little value if the staff member doesn't have the skills to reduce the conflict and hostility. Successful negotiation and mediation of inmate conflict can leave inmates less bitter, less resentful and less bent on revenge. Negotiation, clarification, and skilled ways of calming upset individuals can prevent aggression directed at staff.

To encourage, reinforce and support constructive behaviour is a skill that can be learned and developed by everyone.

### **Inmates**

Some inmates appear to function well in response to authoritarian staff behaviour while others are provoked. Some inmates desire a structured milieu, others place greater importance on meaningful activity or reduced social support.

Younger inmates generally prefer sociability, while older inmates seek solitude. Older inmates and those serving lengthier sentences are annoyed by lack of privacy and by lack of structure or predictability in their environments. Inmates who have had prior psychotic breakdowns are particularly aggravated by high noise levels or danger cues. But at some point or other during the course of their imprisonment most inmates experience some form of personal crisis.

The involvement of custodial staff in human service delivery is particularly important. Prison officers are the main human resource of any prison setting. It has been shown that they can be the most liked or disliked of prison staff members and that those officers who behave in a fair and concerned fashion have a major positive influence on the attitudes and behaviour of offenders, (Glaser, 1964).<sup>6</sup> Most staff adopt a helping role, routinely offering inmates advice and assistance with institutional problems. But more support and training is needed.

We need to understand the importance different types of inmates attach to:

Privacy—from irritants such as noise and crowding;

Support—services that facilitate self-improvement;

Emotional feedback—being appreciated and cared for;

Activity—occupying one's time with meaningful involvement;

Freedom—maintaining some sense of autonomy.

We should remember the following points about violence in prison.

- a) It has been demonstrated that there is a negative correlation between age and the likelihood of behaving violently in prison.
- b) Transiency of the population generally increases the likelihood of violence (the proportion of relative strangers).
- c) The relationship between crowding and rates of violence is strongest in relatively large institutions.

The conclusion that can be drawn is clear. Correctional authorities should strive to avoid relatively large, crowded institutions, with populations that are highly transient; and contain a high proportion of young, rebellious inmates.

The prisoner involved in education or litigation is at least directing his energies in a more constructive way.

### Design and Safety

Significant reductions in violence might be achieved by appreciating and modifying those features of the prison environment that increase its likelihood. It is recognised that prison settings are not physically designed to prevent violence. Most prisons include a hodge-podge of buildings, dark corridors, backrooms, blind-spots and a variety of other architectural faults that lend themselves to violence. It is possible to enhance the effectiveness while reducing the obtrusiveness of surveillance by more thoughtful attention to the physical aspects of the prison environment. In the final analysis the reduction of violence will require major changes in the human as well as the physical environment of prisons. We need prison environments that foster a sense of community and emphasize mutuality of interests, rather than hinder coping.

### The Origins of Resistance

Two theories have been advanced; by the first, "prisonisation", the pains of imprisonment form the basis of the origin and maintenance of the inmate social system. "Criminalisation" is the alternative explanation of the origin and maintenance of an inmate

social system—it is a product of values and norms which are imported into the prison by the inmate.

Analysis of treatment-orientated and custody-orientated institutions adds support to the prisonisation model, because adherence to the inmate code is greater in the more custody-orientated institution where deprivations are greater.

But it is upon entrance to the institution that the inmate will rely upon his reference group to maintain self-esteem and research indicates more support for the criminalisation model than the prisonisation. In either case design should aim to decrease resistance.

### The Design of Prisons for Long Tenners: English and American

The dispersal system contains fundamental conceptual and practical weaknesses. When it was set up there was no adequate recognition of the differences between security and control. As to the policy of dispersal, we can see that, given the nature of the architecture then available, our predecessors may have had little choice but to resort to almost any expedient to avoid the concentration of security/control problems. The two prime requirements for the containment of this very difficult population are the capacity to separate groups and individuals who need to be kept apart, and the need for flexibility so that the different requirements of different groups can be addressed. Since the 1960s we have been constructing prisons on the large unit philosophy. Frankland and Full Sutton are examples of this, they are inflexible and staff intensive as well. In the Federal system, designs are characterised by units in which the living accommodation is arranged around communal areas. Over the years the British system has got things wrong and on the face of it two medium-sized prisons built on unit-planned concepts would provide us with all the security, separation capacity and flexibility that we need to accommodate Category 'A' and extreme control problem cases. The "new generation" style appears to:

- a) reduce tension;
  - b) improve surveillance;
  - c) encourage staff control through a communal, rather than confrontational, approach to prisoners;
- and

- d) enable many regimes to operate on the same site.

The evolution of these prisons • has been a consistent process over the last 15 years driven by an idea of functional unit management and the conscious aim of encouraging a participatory style of staff control. The Federal Bureau has deliberately turned its back on old cell ranges because they provide poor surveillance and set staff and inmates at a distance. The "new generation" design simultaneously improves surveillance and encourages staff/inmate involvement. The American designs are based on the idea that prisoners will be spending much of their time outside their cells and that they will be mixing with staff in a single community.

Our designs in the 1950s and '60s were poverty-stricken, claustrophobic and difficult to use. If we start from the proposition that inmates will be out of their cells for most of the time then living units will look not like Featherstone or Frankland but like Otisville or Oak Park Heights. Old style "linear surveillance" architecture inhibits the kind of security and control and living standards which we need.

### Conclusions

The report of the Control Review Committee<sup>7</sup> covers this area more thoroughly than one lecture can and has an agenda for change. It should stand the test of time and needs re-reading. The Prison Department's "Fresh Start" proposals emphasize group/team working and this is welcome support for the style of working that my reading and experience lead me to advocate. Regimes do need development, for short-termers as well as long; individualism, relationships and activities need development together as I have "argued in "A Sense of Direction". ' Such developments in regime, design and staffing have the support of the Research Advisory Group \* and give me confidence in a better way of working in the future. Some dispersals get themselves locked into a cycle of security, control and loss of confidence, of staff distance rather than involvement. Bill Perrie introduced me, at Long Lartin, to a better way of working with long-termers, a regime where staff had confidence in involvement—and I am grateful to him. I trust this lecture will be one means of recording the benefits of the work he pioneered. •

*continued on page 25*

contributors. The accounts are well written, readable and raise important issues both about institutional racism in toto and a rich harvest of strategies to combat particular forms of it across a wide spectrum of different organisations.

Who should read this book? Whilst the price of £25 may put it beyond the average private buyer it should be on the bookshelf of every organisation and read by every manager whose task is to eradicate racism in all its forms from within his company or organisation. The book would also be invaluable to those who wish to change the racial climate but are not sure how to go about it.

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