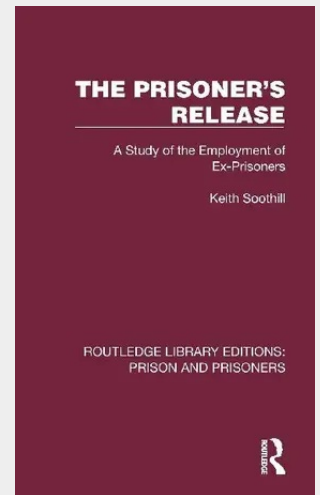


The Prisoner's Release

A Study of the Employment of Ex-Prisoners

For well over one hundred years society had considered ways of helping prisoners on their release from prison, but there had been no serious attempt to assess in a scientific manner the value of such efforts. Originally published in 1974, this book broke with this tradition and was the first full-scale work published in this country evaluating carefully whether an active policy of finding suitable employment for men immediately on their release from prison had beneficial results. The first part of the book discusses the historical development of prison after-care from its early origins in the nineteenth century and indicates how, up to the Second World War, the primary object of after-care had been regarded as the reinstatement of the ex-prisoners in employment. Gradually the specific task of finding jobs for ex-prisoners had become a peripheral activity considered as the responsibility of the Department of Employment. The effectiveness of the Department's pre-release procedure for prisoners is discussed. The rest of the book considers the fascinating Apex project set up to examine the effectiveness of finding work for ex-prisoners. The work of Apex continued to develop and expand, but the present study considers the first five years when over four hundred men were randomly selected from two London prisons and offered the services of a specialist employment agency. The outcome for these men is compared with a control group of over three hundred men randomly selected from the same prisons. This study is concerned with the general run of the prison population and interestingly shows how some prisoners accept and others reject the offer of an employment service. It further indicates the enormous efforts sometimes needed to find suitable employment for prisoners on release. The outcome of the job interviews, arranged in terms of the proportions attending the interviews, starting the jobs and the length of time men stayed in the jobs arranged, is vital reading for anyone involved in after-care. An important part of the work is the examination of the subsequent reconviction rates for the various groups of offenders and the implication that it seems possible to predict men who are unlikely to be helped by the simple provision of employment on release. The final chapter considers critically some of the assumptions upon which the Apex project was based, and the possible use of computer techniques in the individualization of treatment is briefly discussed. The author was particularly well qualified to discuss this subject, for, apart from his work over a number of years with several after-care organizations, the present project involved working in prisons for over three years as well as interviewing and talking to men after their release. The findings of this study will interest the wide variety of people concerned with prison after-care. Criminologists, sociologists, probation officers and all others working in prisons and after-care will recognize the important implications of the material presented in this book.



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