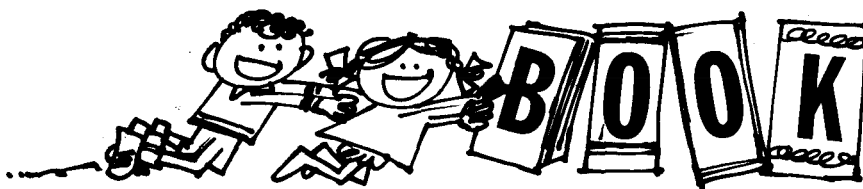


**Book Review Editor
Marie Campbell**



THE FAILURE OF IMPRISONMENT

**by Roman Tomasic &
Ian Dobinson 157 pages**

Publisher:

**The Law Foundation of N.S.W.
& George Allen & Unwin,
Australia 1979.**

One of the first considerations to be taken into account in such a study as "The Failure of Imprisonment", by Tomasic and Dobinson is that imprisonment as a practice has been with us for centuries and is likely to continue for a significant time to come. In such a real situation, it is regrettable that the authors saw fit to choose such a negative title, and even after that, devote only one-third of their book to the titled topic. The majority of the book seems devoted to other areas, such as the concept of dangerousness, community corrections, probation and parole, and other alternatives to imprisonment. Whilst this is consistent with the stated aim of the book, it is not necessarily consistent with the title.

Furthermore, in discussing the "failure" of imprisonment, one expects the authors to clearly state the objectives of imprisonment, as they perceive them, and the established measurable criteria used to evaluate such objectives. It is conceded that the authors have done this to some extent, by stating the objectives of rehabilitation, deterrence and reform, and they have quoted an array of research which certainly highlights the fact that prison cannot always achieve such objectives.

However, they have failed to consider the vast multiplicity of objectives of imprisonment, and the dissensus amongst prison administrators regarding them. In such a situation, it is hardly considered credible to entitle a book "The Failure of Imprisonment" when systems generally throughout Australia are still grappling with basic questions of roles, function, and responsibility, and the authors themselves have considered such a limited range of objectives.

WJ Kidston, Director of the West Australian Department of Corrections, has made a significant contribution to this debate in his 1978-79 Annual Report in

which he states the following: "... the concept of paternalistic rehabilitation whereby the Department has been perceived as able to reform prisoners in its care is now seen as impossible to achieve with a more realistic approach being for the Department to provide the means for rehabilitation but the onus being on the prisoners themselves to take advantage of such opportunities. Accordingly, it would seem appropriate for the name of the Department to be changed back to Prisons Department with the primary emphasis being on custody of those in its care."

Kidston goes on to define the specific objectives of the prison system in Western Australia:—

"1. To retain control over the freedom of movement of prisoners in the least restrictive manner appropriate.

2. To provide appropriate services for prisoners and their families to counter as far as possible the damaging effects of imprisonment.

"3. To ensure that prisoners retain the full rights and obligations of a citizen except those which must necessarily be denied as a result of their custody.

"4. To provide physical conditions for prisoners which are consistent with Public Health standards while maintaining security.

"5. To provide adequate, relevant and constructive work and recreational opportunities for prisoners.

"6. To permit prisoners to determine which options they utilise within the prison system subject to security and management considerations.

"7. To ensure that the daily life style of prisoners approximates, as closely as possible, that of the community at large.

"8. To promote interreaction between prisoners and the community by using community resources wherever possible."

These objectives recognise the reality that imprisonment is designed to deprive individuals of their liberty, and that this is the sole aim. In achieving this aim, the above objectives must also be adhered to.

It is argued that Tomasic and Dobinson have missed this central aim, and have lost an opportunity to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of Kidston's objectives. In summary, these objectives could probably be described as the provision of humane secure containment. No-one would dare argue that Australian prisons generally meet the required standards, as set out in

the "United Nations Minimum Standard Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners." But it must be conceded that significant advances have been made in many areas. For example, in Victoria alone, there is a wide-ranging temporary leave programme to assist prisoners to maintain ties with family and community, the new "J" Division in Pentridge provides a well-accepted standard of accommodation for long-term prisoners, and the contact visit facilities now existing in every Victorian prison have been augmented by private visit facilities, enabling completely private visits for selected families. Furthermore, Victoria is well advanced in planning a Prisons Industry Corporation, to dramatically restructure and reorganise prison industry, and has already introduced an incentive payments scheme for prisoners. These developments have been complemented by a significant reduction in security breaches, measured by both escapes and institutional incidents. In fact, Victoria's escape rate has fallen from 26 in 1977 to 18 in 1979, a significant reduction, despite a major increase in muster numbers (see David Biles' monthly statistical analysis, published by the Australian Institute of Criminology.)

It would be argued, then, that in Victoria the objective of humane secure containment is being achieved, and that prisoners are being offered opportunities to "rehabilitate" themselves by the provision of a wide range of programmes operating within the boundaries of secure containment. This recognises the principle of individual responsibility, considered feasible even in a prison setting.

It can be further argued that within the aim of humane secure containment, the other objectives referred to by Tomasic and Dobinson can all be incorporated, and in fact provide an integral component. It certainly provides for Norval Morris' neo-punitive concept, and his "facilitated change rather than coerced cure" approach, as further espoused by Kidston. It is also in accord with Stanley Johnston's concern for the reconciliation of the offender, the victim and the community.

It is argued, then, that the book is narrow in its approach to the argument about the failure of the system, and it appears to have been written by academics, who have not considered in sufficient detail, the

REVIEWS



serious reassessments of objectives being made at grassroots level by prison administrators throughout Australia, and their efforts to make such objectives realistic, widely-acceptable, attainable, and measurable.

The remainder of the book, dealing with community corrections and alternatives to imprisonment generally, is a disappointment as it fails to proceed past beginner's level in most of the discussion. It does not appear to have the same well-researched background as the first half of the book, and it quotes considerably from basic descriptive and definitional papers. The over-riding concentration on New South Wales appears to have precluded the authors from even mentioning Victoria's Attendance Centre programme, a community-based direct alternative-to-prison scheme, now accommodating 160 Victorian offenders at any one time.

But while such community-based schemes are being established, and certainly are welcomed, the reality is, as David Biles has pointed out, that the trend in Australian prisons is towards an increased number of younger, violent, longer-term prisoners. This is clearly indicative of the nature of their offences, which would generally make it unacceptable for the community to tolerate them in a community-based alternative. Hence it seems prisons are here to stay, and in such a situation, Tomasic and Dobinson could have been more productive to Australian prison management by assisting to operationalize realistic objectives. Such a continuation of the system need not be negative in outcome if our objectives are clear, attainable and measurable.

In conclusion, the job of the critic is to be critical but positive. In two areas this book is valuable. Firstly, in evaluating the achievement of rehabilitation, deterrence and reform by prisons, the authors have provided an excellent overview of research and current arguments. However, this view of objectives is narrow and restrictive, and not up-to-date with prison administrators' current thinking around Australia. Secondly, for the beginner only, the book provides a brief description of community-based alternatives to imprisonment. It should be stated separately that the chapter entitled "Punishment and the Dangerous Offender" is an excellent summary of this issue.

My major dilemma after reading the book was to try to marry the different parts together into a single whole. The authors clearly had some difficulty in achieving this, particularly as some major sections were "lifted" from separate individual papers prepared for other reasons. This has reduced the book's capacity for cohesion and consistency of theme. However, the reader should appreciate the value of the information put forward, but temper any conclusion with the knowledge that many prison administrators would have still wider objectives which have not been fully considered in this book.

Grant Johnson
B.App.Sc.(Soc.Wk.), A.Mus.A
Supervisor of Classification,
Correctional Services,
Department of Community Welfare
Services — Vic



TODDLERS AND PARENTS

by T. Berry Brozelton

240 pages

First published U.S.A. 1974,

Delacorte Press

Reprinted in Pelican 1979

Price 3.95

240 pages

Dr. Brozelton, the associate Professor Paediatrics at the Harvard Medical School, has a research interest in infant-mother relationships, and is author of *Infants and Mothers*.

In *Toddlers and Parents* he examines development and behaviour in the one to three years age range, in the family context. This, greater than usual, concern with the family is both relevant and refreshing. The struggle for "inner control", universally experienced by children of this age, constitutes a basic theme.

Informality renders this serious study both readable and meaningful. This effect is achieved by dealing with behaviour in a

situational manner. Several family profiles illustrate a wide variety of normal one to three year old behaviour, set against a realistic, though occasionally mildly exaggerated background of daily life in its variety of forms. In this way the important contribution of siblings and significant others, as well as parents, is incorporated. Personalization of the "characters" is also achieved by this approach, and by giving them names.

Dr. Brozelton's brief comments and interpretations are interspersed between these descriptions. These remarks are not steeped in complex psychological theory and jargon, but rather, one suspects, they are based on experience, common sense, and understanding. His clearly stated conviction, that each child is born with particular strengths and marked individuality, no doubt shapes his interpretations.

In the supportive and constructive resolutions offered for coping with the described behaviour, empathy with both children and parents is always apparent. The resolutions vary between simple explanation and blatant directiveness.

Whilst at all times aware of individual physical and emotional stages of development, Dr. Brozelton observes in several situations that children are seeking limits to their behaviour, and recommends that these be firmly established by parents.

He also demonstrates an awareness of current social problems and recent social changes, particularly devoting attention to substitute care givers, lone parent families, the changing role of women in society, and sexism in child rearing.

This book is directed towards parents, offering understanding and security in its supportive but often directive approach. But there are also some lessons for the substitute care giver, both in perceiving the patterns and individual variations in behaviour in this age group, and more particularly, regarding their important function in supporting the parent-child relationship, rather than competing for it.

Joan Ozanne-Smith
Medical Officer
Institute of Early Childhood
Development, Kew.

