

COST OF KEEPING A PRISONER £10 A WEEK

AFTER the Minister for Justice, Mr. TRAYNOR, had introduced the Second Stage of the Criminal Justice Bill (1960) yesterday in the Senate, Dr. SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON said that the Minister was going in the right direction, as one of the most valuable things which could be given to a prisoner was trust. But it was startling to hear that it cost £10 a week to keep a prisoner, and he wondered if we were getting value for the expenditure of the money. Were the prisoners getting value for it?

Mr. DONEGAN welcomed the introduction of parole and said that it was only in accordance with the practice in other civilised countries. He also welcomed the efforts envisaged in the bill to rehabilitate offenders, particularly the young.

Mrs. CONNOLLY O'BRIEN said that the borstal stigma was being removed under the Bill in regard to boys, but the position in relation to young girls was not a happy one. Unconvicted girls awaiting trial would either have to go to prison or to an institution which would leave a stigma on them all their lives. She suggested that a sister institution of St. Patrick's which could be called St. Bridget's, should be set-up for unconvicted girls.

NO COMPLAINTS

Mr. KISSANE said that the Bill had an enlightened and humanitarian outlook. The prison system here was reasonably good and there had been no recent complaints from prisoners. In regard to unconvicted girls, he said that they had the choice of either being remanded to prison or to an institution.

Mr. CARTON said that the facts were that the girl did not know what she was choosing. He welcomed the Bill, but asked the Minister to give the matter raised by Mrs. Connolly O'Brien profound thought.

Mr. Seán O'DONOVAN appealed for the abolition of the term "criminal lunatic," retained in the Bill.

He referred to the malicious damage which had been done to Crumlin Technical School, Dublin, and said that he would like to see the young culprits responsible for that incident detained in some place where they would have to work to earn sufficient money to compensate for the damage they had caused.

Such a system of detention would

provide a corrective influence, and the young people would not be classified as sentenced or imprisoned.

Mr. CARTER said they should not be too soft with juvenile delinquents who refused to respond to corrective training.

ECCLESIASTICAL GUIDANCE

The Minister said that, in regard to the criticism about remanding young girls to the Magdalene Home, he was very much in the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities. It was thought desirable that young girls should be remanded to a convent rather than a prison.

He had made it clear that girls should be remanded to a portion of the convent where they would not be in contact with the type of person members of the House had in mind.

He could not see that the indignity of being remanded to the Magdalene Asylum was as great as the indignity of being remanded to Mountjoy Prison.

There were adequate work and recreation facilities at St. Patrick's institution and he was satisfied with conditions there. He was wondering if they were going too far in making prison a "home from home."

AUTHORITIES TOO SOFT?

Looking at some of the crimes committed in Dublin by those under 20, one had to ask, he said, if the authorities responsible had been too soft; and if there was a lack of discipline and too much sentimentality in dealing with juvenile delinquents. In Dublin they appeared to be reaching the stage reached in other capitals in Europe and that was a state of affairs that would have to be the serious concern of those responsible for these matters.

The Second Stage was passed.