

Some weeks ago, *The Gateway* sent a five-member team of reporters and artists to Fort Saskatchewan Provincial Gaol to interview new Warden A. Earl Wilson and inspect the little-known premises.

Reporters Janis Kostash, Larry Krywaniuk and Beverly Bayer, and artists Patricia Hughes and Bill Salter took several afternoons to see the sights. Their report, written by Miss Kostash, and lavishly illustrated, appears below.

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It used to be thought that evil spirits in people caused crime. So the criminal was boiled in oil or burned at the stake. The Christian was—and is—baptized to cleanse his sins. Today's criminal is isolated. The same cause—a fear of contamination—is behind all three actions.

Isolation is a two-way thing. While it protects the community from the offender, it also helps protect the offender from the community.

A. Earl Wilson, new warden of the Fort Saskatchewan provincial jail (gaol), emphasizes the fact that his problems begin when the offender is in prison. "We have nothing to do with putting him in here—it was done by society."

#### UNIDENTIFIED CAUSE

No one can exactly identify what causes crime; what may influence one man to break the law will not have the same effect on another. But it can't be said at this point whether the cause is internal or external to the criminal.

In spite of a generally enlightened approach, crime is on the rise—the opportunity is increasing, and the type of crime is changing. The big push is to possess material goods; forging and credit card stealing is on the rise.

The public tends to make a generalized image of the prisoner—one that doesn't always fit. Most inmates at Fort Saskatchewan are "in" for short-term sentences, sentences not given for crimes of violence. The maximum sentence there is two years less a day; the crime is often contempt of court or inability to pay fines.

#### MANY ARE REPEATERS

Of the 500 to 600 inmates at Fort Saskatchewan, between 50 and 75 are women. Sixty per cent have been in before. Federal penitentiaries don't do as well because of the increase in probation services, there are fewer prisoners on parole—the best parole risks are on probation.

The physical aspect of a building does not have too much bearing on the life inside it, Warden Wilson feels. He compares it to universities—the quality of the work is not affected by the age of the building.

The jail at Fort Saskatchewan was built in 1914, and the chief problems in the three-tier cell system are ventilation and heating. The single cells are six feet by eight feet; the type of work the inmate does partly determines whether he is here or in a roomier dormitory. The solitary confinement cell is like the single cell, but is away from the main center of the jail, and there is no communication with the other inmates.

## Offenders Against Body Politic Isolated To Prevent Contamination

#### SOLITARY—3 DAYS

Three days in a row is the maximum time in solitary, a punishment rarely used.

Photographs considered out of context tend to be judged by unfair standards; photographers therefore are not allowed in the Fort Saskatchewan jail.

The inmate lives a scheduled life, but one that as far as possible duplicates the life of an ordinary community. He gets up at 6:30 a.m., begins work at 8 a.m. Lunch is from 12 noon to 1 p.m., work until 5 p.m., supper until 6:30 p.m. movies, Alcoholics Anonymous, hobbies or free time until 10 p.m., lights out.

#### READING IS POPULAR

Recreation for the Fort inmates is largely reading—they have a good library of books, newspapers and magazines; TV is not as popular as expected. The sports facilities will be increased; a gym will be added this year and possibly an outdoor playing field. "If the inmate is going to reform," Warden Wilson comments, "he must have a substitute for his traditional activities." Sports are such a substitute, and a tension reducer.

Crafts are encouraged, and the products are for sale. Poker is not encouraged, because often the "young kid gets taken" and the game is not socially acceptable, as are chess, checkers, and cribbage.

The extensive work programs at the Fort include carpentering, cooking, barbering, plumbing, shoemaking, and the manufacture of licence plates.

#### REFORMATIVE LABOR

The jail runs a 2,000 acre farm, and in the summer a forestry camp. Warden Wilson emphasizes the reformative aspect of the work programs; the inmates are taught proper work habits and adjustment to discipline. "We don't have labor for the sake of labor."

The work is given in the sense of a junior trade, or apprenticeship, and inmates can apply for their papers on the basis of training received in the jail.

Correspondence courses in academics and trades are being taken by "a good number" of inmates. The warden feels a need to step up the educational end of the training programs.

The religious aspect of the inmates' lives includes Protestant and Catholic services every Sunday, and the chaplains' visits once a week. There is no compulsion to attend the services, but the attendance is probably greater than outside the prison. Religious customs and observances are allowed. (Few Oriental or Jewish people are ever in the jail!)

#### SOCIAL COUNSELLING PROVIDED

Social counselling plays a part in the inmate's life. Social workers do background on him and his family environment. The psychiatrist is available about once a week, and inmates see him mostly by referral. Because someone commits a criminal offence, the public assumes that he needs psychiatric care. Warden Wilson contends that this attitude is wrong—he needs social counselling instead.

The probation officer works with the offender, sometimes even before judgement, counsels him once a week, and checks to see that conditions of probation are carried out.

#### PERSONAL CONTACT STRESSED

Inmates can see the warden whenever they want to—their usual concern is for their families



THE VIEW WITHIN

or for legal assistance. The strongest impact the warden has is personal contact—"I have the person, not the crime, here in jail."

The most important individual is the guard; he has the most contact with the inmate, and often his background helps him understand the inmate.

There is a low incidence of homosexuality in the Fort jail; "safeguards are taken." The sex offender is very unpopular among the inmates. In some American jails trusted prisoners can be visited overnight by their wives; the warden feels that the wife benefits more from this than the inmate.

The Fort jail gets most of Alberta's youthful offenders; "youthful in years and development." Many of these go to Bowden, therefore the jail can't be thought of as a breeding ground. In the jail the youthful offenders are kept to themselves as much as possible, but contact with people in jail for crimes that aren't serious can help the youth.

#### MORALE GOOD, IN GENERAL

The morale in the Fort jail is generally good, the warden feels. The inevitable hostility was created before the offenders got to the jail. "They find that they aren't treated badly here, that there isn't much to be hostile about." Dejection is quickly discerned, and the psychiatrist helps determine the cause.

The Fort jail is a medium security prison—the guards don't carry weapons; work crews of ten are under one guard. Removing privileges is the most common form of punishment, and corporal punishment is given only when ordered by the courts. The warden comments that the best the staff can do is to use common sense judgements, to try to make the inmate realize it is to his advantage to obey.

A prison is punitive and reformative. It sets up an atmosphere encouraging the prisoner to reform himself; it duplicates the problems he faces outside. "We try to rehabilitate him into fitting into society, but the public treats him in a manner to get him back in here."

Social ostracism is the biggest worry with released inmates. Organizations such as the John Howard Society, the Salvation Army, and the half-way houses work to help the released prisoner help himself. This year a half-way house for women may be built; "an opportunity for self-reform is always available to women, if they want that kind of help." For many, it is easier to turn to prostitution.

Warden Wilson, a graduate of the Canadian Police College, has had 24 years of practical experience working with military prisons in the army. With social science and business administration courses in his background, he came to the Fort on Oct. 1 of last year for an indefinite appointment.



WARDEN A. EARL WILSON