

Penitentiaries

inevitably return, it is naive to expect that person to come out of isolation and live well and productively in that world.

However, the committee also recognized that discipline was the tool in achieving normalcy. In the past, harsh punishment may have been seen as an end in itself, but our knowledge of human nature has progressed rapidly in the twentieth century. Attaining that normalcy requires a program of retraining and socialization that will make the former inmate more suitable to himself and society.

It has become a truism that many recidivists end up in prison again because there is nowhere else to go. Once out, there seems to be very little for the individual to do. Prison almost becomes a second family to the inmate. Like "Big Joe", a character in John Steinbeck's ironic novel "Tortilla Flat", he sees jail as a place where the food is reasonable and regular. It is a place where he can get shelter from rain and the elements, and, most of all, he knows the people there.

To counteract this, occupational and academic training must be provided to the inmate. Recommendation 43 of that report indicates that academic and trades training must be furnished in correctional institutions. On May 11 of this year, two inmates of Matsqui prison received bachelor of arts degrees. Apprenticeship programs exist in co-operation with local industries across Canada, producing worth-while goods ranging from furniture to printing. This is one step in the reform of prisoners. Other steps come from socialization skills learned in prison. One such step is the allowance of common dining in a majority of institutions across Canada. More significantly, the subcommittee suggested that contact visiting with family was an important factor in determining the success or failure of a newly released inmate. From this recommendation comes the result that all institutions, with the exception of Laval, permit contact visiting as of today and it will be instituted at Laval shortly.

Family visiting programs for visits of extended periods of time are planned for one of the major institutions in Canada before the end of 1981. So as to reduce the occurrences of violence, new procedures for dealing with discipline problems have been introduced. Specifically, the use of gas as a measure of restraint will be limited to only the most extreme cases. To arbitrate grievances in a better manner, an independent chairperson is in place in maximum security institutions and is being put in place in medium security institutions.

An hon. Member: How about minimum?

Mr. Weatherhead: Until 1978, there was an element of uncertainty in the entire parole system. This has been improved and regulations allow the inmate access to information on his case when it is before the parole board for review. Steps toward smaller living units and team concept facilities are being introduced in areas across Canada. The example of Kent Institution in British Columbia is a case in point. These are the steps to reform I spoke about earlier. Beginning with the Archambault report in 1938 and ending with the MacGuigan report in 1977, all reports on penitentiary reform came to the same conclusions. In order to reach the goal of reform,

the inmate must first acknowledge his responsibility in the crime which brought him to prison in the first place. Further, he must recognize that through his co-operation he can receive the necessary training to make himself more useful to the community.

Reform of the inmate, however, can be best accomplished in an environment which is conducive to such an aim. The inmate must have the assurance that he is not in an institution solely because he is being punished. He is not there to fill time, picking up the latest tips on how to break the law; this will only result in this being returned to prison. A person with such a low regard for his own liberty must be made to feel productive enough to fear the deprivation of liberty. I think the steps taken by the correctional service have gone a long way in this regard. Part of a conducive environment to reform is the assurance to inmates that there will be a standard, simple and straightforward set of rules governing the discipline and running of institutions. Progress toward this aim was begun in April of 1979, and such a code will make clear the responsibility of inmate and correctional officer alike.

Another move toward greater security can be found in the upgrading of educational and relevant outside experience for prospective correctional officers. Candidates for this occupation must now have the equivalent of a secondary school graduate's education. Further, to facilitate the officers' communications skills, they must also have had three years outside employment in a job which involved person-to-person skills.

The probationary period of a new corrections officer is now 24 months, giving the correctional service a better opportunity to assess the suitability of candidates, and five-day refresher courses for correctional officers are now required. In order to deal with problems, it is the policy of the correctional service that all non-officer personnel are trained to play key roles in emergency situations. When such problems arise, and are too great for the institution's personnel to handle, regional teams are in place to give assistance, augmenting the institution's emergency response force. Local police are advised of any situation which may require their assistance.

● (1630)

Perhaps the most important recommendation to be acted on with regard to prison security is the rule in place which provides that no deals will be made with prisoners while hostages are being held. This must remain an essential element of any system of penitentiary discipline. It must be made clear that human beings cannot be made tools in a bargaining process. Compromises can be reached without taking innocent people as prisoners.

The government's action in these reforms will ensure that greater security is brought to penal institutions. The points I made earlier concern the reform of the inmate. I think that these two aspects are firmly linked. Greater security within the prison system will lead to greater possibilities for the reform of prisoners. In a situation where all those involved understand their own responsibilities to themselves and others the co-oper-