

Canada Weekly

Volume 5, No. 34

August 24, 1977



Ottawa, Canada

Wide-ranging reforms mapped out for Canada's penitentiary system, 1

Bravery awards, 3

International sport exchanges, 3

Does meditation really work?, 3

Exports to Iran, 3

Trade in automotive products, 4

Farmers receive assistance, 4

International interest in unique airport fire-fighter, 5

Learning materials for the blind, 5

News of the arts — theatre, 6

Cornfields of Belize, 7

Volunteer home teachers, 7

Solar heating a necessity, 7

News briefs, 8

Wide-ranging reforms mapped out for Canada's penitentiary system

Fifty-three of 65 recommendations of a Parliamentary sub-committee, which has been studying the penitentiary system for the past five months, have been accepted in whole or in part by Solicitor-General Francis Fox.

"The sub-committee has mapped out a course that will lead to fundamental and wide-ranging reform," said Mr. Fox. He added, however, that it was "of first importance that inmates realize that a responsible attitude on their part is a prerequisite to continued public support of reform programs".

In tabling a detailed response to the sub-committee report in the House of Commons on August 5, Mr. Fox said he reserved his position on six of the recommendations "because of their far-reaching implications".

Action already taken

As evidence of his commitment to action, the Minister referred to the amendment he introduced at report stage of the new bill (No. C-51), authorizing the appointment of independent chairpersons for inmate disciplinary hearings, following a recommendation of the sub-committee. He expects that independent chairpersons will be appointed for maximum security institutions by November 15. That date has also been set as the target for introduction of a pilot project at Saskatchewan Penitentiary, using a new grievance procedure that had been recommended by the sub-committee. A grievance committee will be established, composed of two inmates and two staff, chaired by a member of the administrative staff who would vote only in case of a tie.

Embodied in the principles of the Minister's response is the recognition of the role of the staff in the reform of penitentiaries. "In reaching the goal of a professional career service, the RCMP model is one which will be given consideration," he said. "The Minister strong-

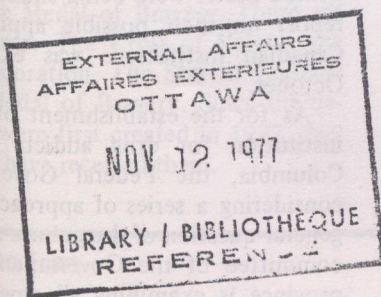


Solicitor-General Francis Fox

ly supports the principles concerning the establishment of decentralization as a basic organizational principle, with the delegation of authority, responsibility and accountability as close to the level of action as possible."

Purposes of imprisonment

In response to the sub-committee's recommendation that the criminal justice system be re-examined with a view to enlarging the alternatives to incarceration, Mr. Fox said that action was well under way and would be continued as a priority. Also, with a view to "establishing standardized correctional operations across the country", another of the recommendations, he said discussions with the provinces had been held at several meetings of federal-provincial ministers and that a working committee had been established. A continuing committee of deputy ministers would report progress at the next conference of ministers.



Aug 24/77