

Coleman leads panel on prison reform

By Arthur Freund

Can prisons rehabilitate the incarcerated? Are there viable alternatives to the prison system? Some people in the justice system of this country believe that the prison system does not operate the way it is intended to. John Coleman, President of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, is one person who advocates sweeping reforms in the American penal system.

Dr. Coleman, a former Haverford College President, a ditch-digger, dishwasher, and a prison inmate, presently works for a foundation that supports research and some demonstrating projects in prison reform. Arbitrating a panel of four experts on the subject, Coleman spoke before an audience in Sternberger Auditorium this past Wednesday, January 20th.

The other panel members included the following: Willis Wichard, Associate Judge of the State Appeals Court; Rae McNamara, Director of the Department of Corrections of North Carolina and one of only two women in the United States that holds such a position; and Ralph Herbin, a former inmate who spent ten years in North Carolina prisons.

As part of his work, John Coleman has served time in seven state and federal prisons in order to understand the problems of incarceration and investigate prison life from the inside. Even through he concedes that his "experience was phony" because there was always a way for him to contact the warden and extricate himself from the situation, Coleman did make some expert observations of prison life. He saw that an inmate is not treated as an individual but as one of a great, indiscriminate mass to which the authorities act and react. He recognized that there is always a "constant inducement of violence" to prove you are a man which is compounded by the "sense of idleness endemic of our jails." Coleman's worst experience was the realization that prison guards learned how "to strip a man of his dignity" as it was "the last thing a man had left."

Statistics and testimony substantiate the claim that prisons are ineffective at rehabilitating the criminal. Coleman pointed out that there is "no evidence at all that heavy use of incarceration works," and that the recidivism rate is not on the downswing. Accordingly, Coleman claims that 30-70% of prison inmates should not be in-

carcerated as diagnosed by prison administrators.

What are the alternatives to incarceration being promoted today? All of the panel members agreed that, as Judge Wichard put it, "prisons are the proper place for violent offenders but wrong for the non-violent." Even before a case reaches a courtroom, there is an alternative to the adversarial court system. A relatively new alternative, the

dispute resolution process uses a mediator(s) who helps to work out a dispute between two parties and reach an equitable agreement.

According to the Chapel Hill based Dispute Settlement Center they have had a 91% overall success rate with this system. As such, mediation sidesteps the litigation process and saves time and money for the people involved and the tax-payers.

In cases that do reach the court systems, Dr. Coleman advocated a variety of punishments for the non-violent offender. These include community work orders, restitution orders, drug rehabilitation, and week-end prisons. He feels that new prisons and longer sentences only "insults our intelligence, pocketbooks, and sensibilities."

A poignant case of alternatives can be made in North Carolina.

See "Coleman," p. 7

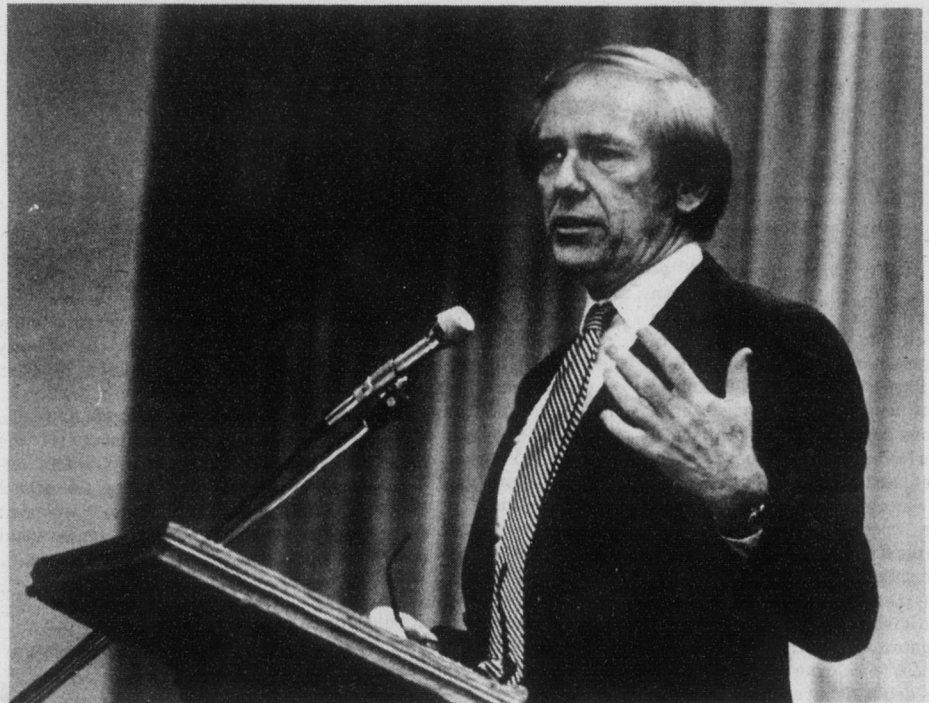


photo by Steve Lowe

John Coleman, former president of Haverford College led a panel discussion on prison reform on Wednesday of last week.

Mini-course on the Guilford College computer system

The course will run the gamut from simple to complex aspects of using the computer.

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Faculty come and faculty go...

By Janice Lynch

Faculty turnover has resulted in the addition of two new faculty members at Guilford and study leaves for two professors. Sophie Jeffries is the new Assistant Professor of French and Adrienne Mann has been named Instructor in African History and Afro-American Studies.

Sophie Jeffries, a Ph.D. candidate at Ohio State University, received her B.A. in French and her Master's Degree in French literature from Michigan State University. She received her "Diplome D'Etudes Francaises" from the Université de Tours in 1976.

Adrienne Mann, A Ph.D. candidate at Johns Hopkins University, received her bachelor's degree from Howard University. She has a Master's Degree from both Howard and Johns Hopkins University.

On leave this semester are Jerry Godard, who is working on a study of Blake, and Elwood Parker, working on questions in computer mathematics. Jane Caris, from the Center for Personal Growth, is

also on leave, working on her poetry.

Six other faculty members have been granted study leaves for 1982-1983. These are the following:

Maritza Almeida, Foreign Languages Dept. (Spanish) - 1 year - Women in Columbia.

Ann Deagon, Classics - 1 year - Autobiographical book.

Damon Hickey, Associate Director of Library - 1 year - Ph.D. studies, Quaker History.

Donald Millholland, Philosophy Dept. - Spring 1983 - Book on Friends.

Sheridan Simon, Physics Dept. - 1 year - Research in Physics and writing books.

Paul Zopf, Sociology Dept. - 1 year - book on Populations Study and America's Elderly.