

PRISONS

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10,900. This is also 8.7 percent more than the state's emergency capacity of 13,620.

Emergency capacity is one step beyond normal capacity and means that the prison is using all available space but still has no control of its inmates. North Carolina further exceeded its emergency capacity by more than 100 inmates during the end of February, Kautzky said.

"Until we can make other arrangements, we're going to have to live with that (overcrowding)," said Stuart W. Shadbolt, North Carolina's Department of Corrections public information officer. "We'll fit in whatever we have to," he said.

"The pressure is on medium (custody) inmates," Shadbolt said. Medium-custody inmates include newly admitted felons who require less security than maximum-custody inmates, felons returned from escape or readmitted for parole violation and inmates who are likely to escape.

Central Prison, the only maximum-security unit in North Carolina, is also severely overcrowded. Central prison houses approximately 100 inmates, two-thirds more than the emergency capacity of 900.

Many medium-custody inmates are sent to Central before going to a medium-security institution,

Shadbolt said, which adds to the prison's overcrowding.

"It (Central Prison) was always overcrowded but that wasn't a problem (in the 1968 riot)," said V.L. Bounds, North Carolina's Commissioner of Corrections at the time.

But Central Prison, built in 1884, is being replaced by a \$35-million structure which should ease the population problem, Central Prison warden Garrison said. "It's obvious that it (Central Prison) isn't doing what we want it to do since we're building a new one," he said.

The new unit will house 825 inmates and the last phase should be completed by 1984, Garrison said.

A \$14-million, 480 single-cell prison at Salisbury, scheduled to open in early March, should also help ease population problems in the state, Garrison said. It will house inmates from Central Prison and medium security units throughout the state, he said.

Construction of new units in Greene and Montgomery counties and addition to units in Northampton and Hoke counties should begin this year and will also relieve other prisons of overcrowding pressure, Garrison said.

The state recently bought 32 modular units to use at prisons throughout the state, which should ease the

Overcrowding, a chief cause of prison riots, is a pervasive problem in North Carolina's correctional facilities

overcrowding situation, Shadbolt said. Each unit, comparable to a double-wide mobile home, houses 28-32 inmates, he said.

The construction and renovation of prisons and jails on the local level is also thriving in the state. This is due in part to complaints from community residents and state agencies such as the jail and detention services of the North Carolina Department of Human Resources.

County jail reform was an important issue in the murder trial of Joan Little in 1975. Shortly after the trial, Woodburn Williams, director of the state's jail and detention services, said: "We're very concerned about it (the Joan Little case) because it reflects poorly on jails throughout the South. North Carolina's jail system does have its inadequacies, but the jails are improving throughout the state."

And the jail and detention services still is trying to improve the situation. It is presently requiring Orange

Prisons turn offenders to criminals

By THOMAS JESSIMAN

We were walking through an empty tunnel down in the bowels of Los Angeles Central Prison. The officer leading us had just explained that the prison holds as many as 5,000 people at times. Officer Milton smiled. "Let me show you one of the inner tanks," he said.

Milton led us, four college boys huddling together, through the electronic doors and out into a bridge in the center of a long room with three decks of cells on either side. An officer walked to meet us from the control tower in the middle of the bridge; the officer introduced himself as "the jackal-keeper" and said, making a broad sweeping motion with his hand, "And these, boys, are the jackals." He laughed. "Let me show you one."

He went back to the control room and threw a switch. A cell door opened down on the first floor and the jackal-keeper called for the prisoner. A tall, long-haired man dressed only in blue jeans walked out of the cell and crossed the floor to the stairs next to the bridge.

"How you doing, Navajo?" the keeper asked and then turned to us. "Navajo here thinks he's an Indian."

"I am an Indian," he said and launched into a story about officer brutality where six officers had come into his cell and pummeled him. "That's the way these people work. I could take them one-on-one but they need to work in packs." He spoke in an agitated manner, his face twitching, his hands gesticulating.

"OK, OK," the keeper said, laughing. "You can go back home now, Navajo."

Officer Milton thanked the keeper and led us back down the bridge. He told us that many of the prisoners in the building were hardened criminals and cited instances of prisoner brutality and rape. A special cell block existed where younger and weaker prisoners were kept, he said. "That's where you boys would be. For a number of reasons, if we turned you all loose in the prison, you wouldn't last a night in here."

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I'm only an observer and have not read all the books or taken the sociology and criminal law courses, but lately I have been increasingly depressed and disillusioned with our penal

system and code. When 33 inmates were killed and others badly mauled in a riot in an overcrowded New Mexico state penitentiary recently, it was a shocking but not isolated incident.

Penitentiaries across the country are ridiculously overcrowded and some authorities estimate that as many as 45 percent of the inmates in the country live in unreasonably cramped conditions. The trend recently has been to build more prisons, and North Carolina is in the process of building larger and more spacious penitentiaries.

Larger prisons may ease the overcrowding and enable prison officials to have tighter control over the inmates, but the overall pernicious effect of prisons on inmates will not be diluted.

Our penal system makes the soft criminals hard and the hard criminals harder; released prisoners are mad and bitter at their treatment and many times commit an even more violent crime than their first.

Three possible functions of any prison system are to rehabilitate the prisoners, to exact revenge or to serve as a warning or deterrent to potential criminals on the outside. A careful study of this country's penal system would show that revenge is its only successful function. The trend to build larger prisons reflects current thinking that "criminals" should be swept off the streets, thrown in jail and made to pay for their crime.

Our penal system makes the soft criminals hard and the hard criminals harder; released prisoners are mad and bitter at their treatment and many times commit an even more violent crime than their first. Our prisons are not serving to protect society from violence and crime but instead encourage such action.

Rehabilitation may no longer be in vogue as it was 20 years ago, but it still ought to be considered the primary function of every prison. The reason rehabilitation programs have not had great success in this country is that they never really were given a chance—they never got the money. Taxpayers are far more comfortable giving millions of dollars to build larger prisons

than to educate and improve prisoners. The people in prisons become "criminals" and any money spent on them would be a waste; everyone loves to perpetrate the "us" against "them" syndrome. We all feel comfortable throwing the first stone.

"Why worry about the criminals, doesn't anyone care about the victims?" people cry. Karl Menninger adeptly diffuses this argument in *The Crime of Punishment*: "Of course no victim should be neglected. But the individual victim has no more right to be protected than those of us who may become victims. We all want to be protected. And we are not being protected by a system that attacks 'criminals' as if they were the embodiment of evil."

Building larger prisons will not dramatically alter a penal system where animosity, knifing and rape are a part of life; instead, we should seek ways to get the inmates out of the prisons. Work-release and study-release programs must be encouraged and more programs should be implemented like the "I Can" training program in North Carolina where inmates gain confidence and motivation. There is no sense in paying \$15,000 a year for the upkeep of a prisoner if he is only going to get out and kill or steal again.

In California at a maximum-security prison, a guard told me that all rehabilitation programs were useless and that the only time someone changes is when they decide to be good. "It all starts from inside," he said. Maybe. But few people are going to change in an environment where being good is, if not impossible, at least a personal liability.

People will say that prisons are not that bad, but how many have actually seen them? An increased emphasis should be placed on educating the people about the condition of our prisons. Perhaps if only people saw the revenge they were exacting on the inmates, they could better understand why recidivism is so pervasive with released prisoners. Indeed, larger prisons will better protect the public during the six years an inmate is a prisoner, but, unlike rehabilitation programs, larger prisons will do little if anything to protect the public once that prisoner gets out.

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