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Community Correction Centers Involve Citizens and Inmates

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LEGAL EXAMINATION

(Reprinted from *Punch*, in *Living Age*, Vol. I, E. Littell & Co., 1844.)

Contributed by Charles J. Iseman

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Q. Mention some of the principal law books which you have studied? —A. Hoyle's Laws of Whist, Cribbage, &c. The Rules of the Cricket Club; ditto of the Jockey Club.

Q. Have you attended any, and what law lectures? —A. I have attended to many legal lectures, when I have been admonished by police magistrates for kicking up rows in the streets, pulling off knockers, &c.

COMMON LAW

Q. What is a real action? —A. An action brought in earnest, and not by way of a joke.

Q. What are original writs? —A. Pothooks and hangers.

EQUITY AND CONVEYANCING

Q. What are a bill and answer? —A. Ask my tailor.

Q. How would you file a bill? —A. I don't know, but would lay a case before a blacksmith,

Q. What steps would you take to dissolve an injunction? —A. I should put it into some very hot water, and let it remain there until it was melted.

Q. What are post-nuptial articles? —A. Children.

CRIMINAL LAW AND BANKRUPTCY

Q. What is simple larceny? —A. Picking a pocket of a handkerchief, and leaving a purse of money behind.

Q. What is grand larceny? —A. The Incometax.

Q. How would you proceed to make a man a bankrupt? —A. Induce him to take one of the national theatres.

Q. How is the property of a bankrupt disposed of? —A. The solicitor to the fiat, and the other legal functionaries, divide it amongst themselves.



A NEW CONCEPT
IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE...

Community Correction Centers Involve Citizens and Inmates

This New Concept Maybe The
Last Before Suspension of
the 8th Amendent

BY LEONARD A. SIPES, JR.

"Those people are crazy, that's all. Crazy. Please tell me why anyone would want to put the criminal back into the area when the citizens and police have tried so hard to keep him out. Yea, sure I oppose the idea."

This remark from a resident in Waverly, represents the feelings of many in

the Baltimore area when the question of community correction is brought up. But it seems that one cannot escape the feeling that he is also saying something else.

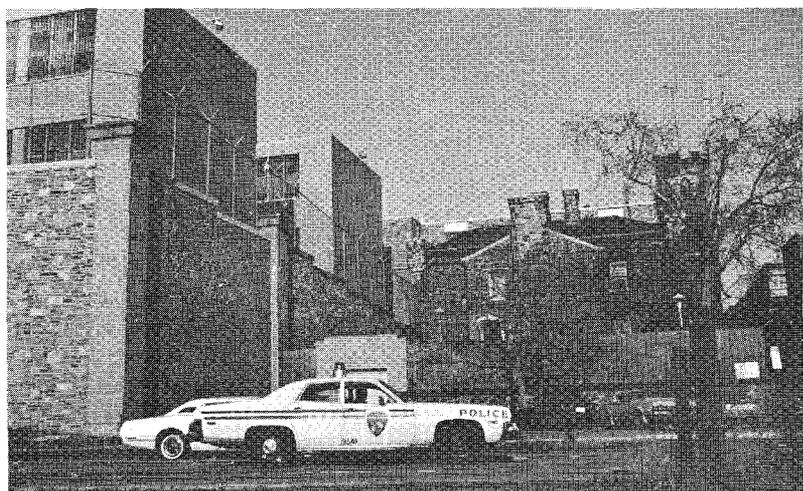
It is a feeling of fear and confusion that often surfaces when one talks to a community resident who lives in an area where crime is a significant problem. It is indeed difficult for anyone to understand just why "new" and "liberal" ideas in crime fighting are put fourth as answers when the solution seems so simple "lock 'em up and throw away the key," or "bring back the death penalty and use it," or "get the soft judges off the bench and get people who will get tough with these people. "This is the common plead heard when one attends a community meeting dealing with local crime problems.

The crime rate in the city of Baltimore has decreased while it continues to rise in the counties and the nation, but there is still a dominant theme of frustration, anger and confusion in the minds of many.

So this is the setting for the introduction of a new idea, one that is hailed by some as the greatest breakthrough in criminal justice in this century, and an idea that is cursed by others. Just what is community corrections and how is it to effect us?

The dominant theme is the fact that within the next year well over four thousand ex-offenders will return from the prisons and go back into the communities. Naturally, the vast majority of these people will return to the Baltimore area. Knowing that our prisons are often schools of crime in themselves, and noting the fact that the majority of these ex-offenders have no skills to enable them to make it in our urban society, they will probably return to crime. The community suffers again and again until the person is caught. The criminal is returned to prison again, only to wait out his time to return again to his community where this vicious cycle continues.

For those wondering why we do not end this cycle simply by placing these people in jail forever, the 8th Amendment of the Constitution states that "excessive fines" or "cruel and unusual



June Chaplin

punishments' are forbidden. Thus it would take a constitutional amendment to defeat the will of our founding fathers to lock people up for life.

Perserving the 8th Amendment, community correction hopes to gradually ease offenders back into the community under the supervision of rehabilitation counselors, educational specialists, community coordinators, psychologists and psychiatrists. The offender will hold employment or attend school during the day and return to the building at night for counseling and treatment. Each potential inmate for this program is evaluated in terms of the likelihood of his succeeding in this new program. In addition, the offender enters into a pact of "mutual agreement" with the center to make sure that everyone understands their obligation and the consequences of not meeting them.

Mr. Allen Friedman of the Mayor's Coordinating Council on Crime, highlights this new approach by this observation: our three part criminal system of police, courts and corrections has been officially expanded into a four part system-to include the citizens. With this new concept of community correction centers, the citizen will have a great deal of involvement in areas such as site selection, a community involvement board, with the veto power of center directors and assistant directors, and an overall power to see that the community interests are preserved.

But the main question in the minds of most citizens is why is this new concept necessary?

As Raymond K. Procuier, the Director of the California Department of Correction, once said, "Society's concept about prisons make no sense at all. We're charged with conflicting responsibilities, keeping convicted felons away from the 'good people' and at the same time, in the unbelievably unnatural society that prevails in prison, rehabilitating them."

To understand today's prison is to keep Mr. Procuier's statement in mind. Thus it is noteworthy that it is common among many citizens not to use

sociological studies and information when discussing crime and seeking out viable solutions to this problem. However, the concept of community centers is not theory, but fact.

For example, when one travels from his urban community to prison after conviction, it is much the same as leaving Baltimore to resettle for five or six years in Montana. What was important to you in your old community is no longer that important when faced with a drastically new environment with different rules and behaviors, concerns and problems. There is little difference when one goes to prison. Within those walls exist a community of criminals. Old family and community values are forgotten or put aside in order to cope with the "rules" of this criminal community.

Studies have shown what people connected with prison life already know: that there are two sets of rules that exist in prison — *official* and *convict-made*. And as any prisoner will tell you, "well, you break the man's rules and you get hassled, but you break our rules and you get screwed" (raped, beaten or murdered). In this light, it is tragic that the opposite is not true — you can take the community out of the prisoner but you can't take the prisoner out of convicts returning back to the community.

Community correction will try to undo all of this. With the convict remaining in the community, he retains family and community values and beliefs. Learning a trade, going to school or working and producing tax dollars will substitute his learning new methods of committing crime and other prison values. Money that was spent on guards and large institutions can now be spent on treatment programs, thus getting the most of our criminal justice tax dollar.

Coming out of prison is similar to being discharged from the army. After spending a number of years where people have made decisions for you, the new civilian finds it difficult to make his own decisions. In contrast, a community correction center, the "inmate" will be encouraged to stand on his or her own two feet, thus preparing them for life on their own. With the old prison system,

the inmate only learns ways of prison life, including new techniques in crime, and tax dollars goes to support this education. In the community center he will learn a trade, independence and self-reliance while producing tax dollars and support of his family. Additionally, he will be paying the state for his nightly room and board at the center.

Mr. William Lamb of the Community Correction Task Force describes the situation this way, "The community must come face to face with the issue, it must realize that there is indeed a crime problem and that community correction is an area's best bet. The choice is theirs: the prisoner either comes back cold into the community, or comes back under supervision." He also goes on to say that like an alcoholic, that until the community realizes the problems and wants to do something about them, community correction will fail.

Governor Mandel has gone so far as to state that if the community does not choose a site for a center, then the local government "might" be brought in to select a location. More of this penal approach will be known after the present law making session ends in Annapolis. But in the end, it will be the decision of the average citizen that will make or break this new concept of community correction. Local government may choose a site or an area, but as anyone connected with community correction can tell you, citizen approval and cooperation is of the utmost importance for this concept to work. So it seems at last the four-part criminal justice system will evolve, and the citizens' decision is the most crucial one.

