

The State Prison Report

A two-months' investigation of the state prison by the board of control ended with a report hedged with adjustments among the penitentiary personnel. Complaints over alleged carelessness in connection with the death of a convict who committed suicide in March prompted the investigation.

The report avoided the role of judge over individuals and their conduct. Instead, it called for reorganization of the guard personnel and for employment of a full-time doctor, two male nurses, and a full-time chaplain. Certain shifts in personnel assignments were bound to come from such an investigation.

The investigation has been a good thing. It has amounted to an appraisal of the prison by board members who are relatively new to the specific administration of state institutions, since two of the three members came into office by the election of only a year ago.

As might have been expected, part of the trouble was in a shortage of manpower and facilities. That is leaving aside the matter of personalities and the question of the alleged carelessness in the handling of one of the convicts.

As George Neuner, attorney general and the man who directed the investigation, said: "The increase of the prison population... has overtaxed all of its facilities, and the lack of finances has curtailed operations."

The report has come forth with a constructive "accounting system" for the prison. The board has decided to have the warden, George Alexander, make a monthly report in person. This will permit the warden to make suggestions as to improvements. This will permit also ready attention by the board following a prison break which, in one case, terrorized the community earlier in the year.

Regular, frank reports by the warden to the board should permit the members to act in advance to keep the prison in shape so that the warden will have the facilities and program he needs to administer the penitentiary properly. Or the members will be in position to make recommendations to the legislature if they are not in a position themselves to take adequate action.

Such an analysis of conditions by the warden leaves the decision for corrective action to the board. In this connection, it should be noted that the board of control, created in 1913, has as its "primary function" management of the 10 major state institutions.

Reports by the warden could be supplemented by unannounced visits to the prison by board members to check conditions.

This combination of personal reports and board visits might be worked out for the other state institutions, too.

The Two Jimmies—Byrnes and Roosevelt

James F. Byrnes of South Carolina with a long record in both houses of congress, then supreme court justice, then resigning to become war mobilizer and later secretary of state, in a speech before the southern governors' conference at Biloxi, sharply criticized administration spending and called for a cut in federal taxes and public debt. He stated:

"Our real trouble is debt and taxes. We cannot cure it by more debt and more taxes. We should devote to cutting expenditures some of the thought we are devoting to taxing and borrowing. But cutting expenditures is not seriously considered in the executive departments and new taxes will not be seriously considered in congress. So deficit spending will continue."

Byrnes pointed out that if expenditures for national defense, foreign aid and fixed charges like interest on debt were eliminated, we are spending in one year \$15 billion for civilian-domestic functions of the federal government. In the four years of peace from June, 1945, to June, 1949, more than \$2 billion in taxes in excess of the taxes collected in the 12 years of Roosevelt's administration were collected from June, 1933, through June, 1945, which included the depression and World War II.

Byrnes stated the number of federal civilian employees has increased until there are more than 2 million, costing \$6.5 billion yearly and the number is increasing daily. There are 65 departments reporting to the president, we are making direct payments to 17 million persons—one out of nine of the total population. Which, though he did not say it, is enough, with their dependents, to win any national election.

At the same time Byrnes was warning against debt and deficit spending, James Roosevelt, eldest son of the late president who has announced his candidacy for the democratic nomination for governor of California, said in New York in the American Mercury magazine, that "deficit spending is the taxpayers' best guarantee of economical government," and that a balanced national budget today would result in "the utter collapse of every government on earth now friendly to us." He further attributed to our balanced budgets the responsibility for both the stock market crash of 1929 and the late war.

All of which reflects the difference between a statesman and a demagogue seeking public office and the hopeless split in the democratic party.

Only the Old Lottery Lure

According to a 1000 man hour study, presumably in "social science," reported by the University of California in Los Angeles, the appeal of radio "give-away" shows, with their "vast and variegated array of prizes, lies less in the acquisitiveness of fans than in their yearning for modern 'magic.'" The reports states:

"Contestants and members of the radio audience are made to feel they can re-live the Cinderella story either directly or vicariously as a wave of the program sponsor's wand makes their dreams come true, it was stated. There seems to be an increasing need during these confused times for belief in this sort of magic. This belief, rather than the desire for 'loot,' is the prime factor responsible for the increasing popularity of such programs."

All of which is so much bunk and interesting only as disclosing how professors of social science can waste their own and students' time in moronic pursuits. The appeal of give-aways in movies as in all lotteries or games of chance to get something for nothing, which seems universal in humanity. The joy of the winners frequently turns to howls of anguish when they try to cash in and pay income taxes, and the "Cinderella complex" evaporates.

Like the old "bank night" lotteries that the movies staged during the depression to bolster business, movie "give-aways" are a clever device of the radio to stimulate its decreasing audience of listeners and offset the ravages of television. Instead of improving their dreary programs they have substituted the lure of "something for nothing" in a new setting.

BY BECK

That Guilty Feeling

