

Prison Riot Leads Check Of Massachusetts System

By LEONARD P. GIBLIN
BOSTON (U)—A month after four desperate convicts banded over their guns at state prison and freed five guards held hostage 3 1/2 days, Massachusetts is starting to take a new look at its penal system.

But progress is slow. The people, speaking through the voice of the Suffolk County grand jury, have called for a "thorough investigation" at the antiquated, often-condemned, 150-year-old Bastille, soon to be abandoned.

In particular, the grand jury wants to know "how the convicts were able to get guns, ammunition and contraband."

Three separate inquiries are under way — by the Department of Correction; Atty. Gen. George Fingold and a committee of four experts appointed by Gov. Christian A. Herter.

The grand jury hinted it might make a fourth. And in the State House of Representatives there have been proposals for still another.

So far no agency has made public its findings.

Standing by watching developments is the seven-man committee which persuaded the convicts to give up. This was composed of the two prison chaplains, the prison doctor and four men from outside selected by the convicts themselves.

These four were Erwin D. Canham, editor of the newspaper Christian Science Monitor; the

Rev. John J. Grant, associate editor of The Pilot, weekly newspaper of the Catholic archdiocese of Boston; Sumner Babcock, president of the Boston Bar Assn.; and Governor's Councilor Patrick J. McDonough.

The committee promised the convicts to work for penal improvements so that men facing long sentences — and those the rebels face amount virtually to life terms — can have some hope for ultimate release.

The revolt — the 17th disturbance at the prison in two years — began shortly after 2 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 13.

Two convicts broke out of cells in the isolated Cherry Hill block, surprised two guards and locked them up, then released 18 other convicts from their cells, including the other two ringleaders.

Bent on escape, the four fashioned a ladder out of lumber scraps held together with leader belts and wire. It proved inadequate. But as the convicts moved about the prison yard in the dark another guard making rounds came close and was taken prisoner.

Still the escape went undetected — until officers in the prison roundhouse sent two guards to Cherry Hill to check why the others had not reported. These two also were ambushed.

Unwilling to admit the ladder's failure had killed their chance to escape, the convicts held on, airily

demanding a car to take them through the gates as state troopers with riot guns ringed the cell block.

The armed stand — happily bloodless through the restraint of Warden John J. O'Brien's "wait them out" policy — went on for 24 hours until the committee of seven negotiated a surrender.

With the revolt over, Atty. Gen. Fingold pressed for indictment of the four rebels (a new law makes holding a guard hostage punishable by 20 years imprisonment) but the grand jury put off action until March 7, possibly agreeing with Superior Court Judge Paul G. Kirk that there is no rush.

Meanwhile the governor's inquiry committee, headed by President Nils Y. Wessell of Tufts College, is ready to get rolling on a study of "the actual conditions in our state correctional institutions, together with recommendations for improvement of our penal system."

Since the January siege, the gray old Charlestown pile with its 580 inmates has been quiet. The new three-million-dollar maximum security prison at Norfolk, authorized in 1949, is almost ready and Correction Commissioner E. Lawrence Spurr says the transfer of the convicts will begin April 1.

Amateur Talent Show At 4 Corners Church

FOUR CORNERS — Trinity Methodist church here will sponsor an amateur talent show February 22, at 7:30 p.m. in Community hall. Proceeds of the show will go toward the chair fund of the new church. This all-variety program will be given by the local young people and children.

Cake and coffee will be sold. Work on the new church is progressing rapidly, and it is hoped that it will be ready for occupancy early in March.

ATTEND BALL

MOLALLA — Mr. and Mrs. Newell Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Ron Brown and Dr. and Mrs. J. V. Robertson were among those from Molalla who attended the Potentate's Ball in the Masonic Temple, Portland, Friday night.

Hells Canyon Bill Due To Appear This Week

WASHINGTON (U)—Backers of the proposed federal Hells Canyon Dam plan to ask Congress this week, probably Wednesday, to authorize the controversial Snake River project.

At least 25 senators and four representatives are expected to sponsor legislation to authorize the Reclamation Bureau to build the big dam in the deepest river canyon on the continent, which forms the Idaho-Oregon border.

A Senate bill will be introduced by Sen. Morse (D-Ore) and co-sponsored by other senators advocating the project. In the house, where co-sponsorship is against the rule, identical bills are expected to be offered by Reps. Frost (D-Idaho), Green (D-Ore), Magnuson (D-Wash) and Metcalf (D-Mont).

The group of public power proponents plans to press for early committee hearings in the hope of getting a bill through Congress before the Federal Power Commission acts on applications for private power dam licenses covering Hells Canyon.

The Idaho Power Co. is seeking FPC permission to build a dam near the proposed federal site and two others in the Hells Canyon

reach of the Snake, a Columbia River tributary.

Idaho Power's applications and testimony taken during a one-year hearing on them now are being studied by FPC Examiner William J. Costello.

The examiner hopes to write in May his opinion on whether the licenses should be granted or the canyon should be reserved for a federal dam. FPC Chairman J. K. Kuykendall recently was quoted as saying the commission may finally decide the issue in late July or August at the earliest.

Bills were introduced in both houses of Congress during the past session, but they never were

taken up by committees.

This year, with the Democrats in control, the public power members of Congress hope to get action on the bills. They feel the chances will be good, especially in the Senate with 25 of the 96 members listed as sponsors of the bill.

The bills are expected to be based on measures introduced last session, as suggested by the National Hells Canyon Assn., which is fighting Idaho Power's three-dam plan.

The bills would authorize, but not appropriate money for, a dam estimated to cost 357 million dollars and power transmission facilities costing an estimated 100 million.

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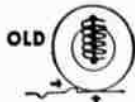
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