

(Editor's note: Swiss Theologian Karl Barth recently asserted that some U.S. jails resemble "Dante's Hell." For comment on this UPI went to James V. Bennett, director of the Federal Prisons Bureau for the past 25 years and one of the world's leading penal authorities. The following dispatch gives his rebuttal as well as his views on capital punishment, the parole system and alleged "coddling" of prisoners.)

By LOUIS CASSELS
United Press International
In 1926 a congressional committee retained James Van Benschoten Bennett, a young attorney not long out of Silver Creek, N.Y., and Brown University, to study conditions in federal jails. What he found was a mess. He was then hired to clean it up, and this has been his life's work. A famous foreman said something shocking about an American prison this month. It stirred Bennett, now 67, to look back over his career and utter what might be termed a

report to the American people on the scary, shuddering-up civic problem of prison management.

In 25 years as director of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons, James V. Bennett has established himself as a penologist of international renown as well as a respected administrator. Today he directs 29 federal institutions with about 24,000 inmates. Not his concern reaches to the approximately 500,000 Americans in federal, state and local prisons, jails, workhouses and other penal institutions at any given moment.

Bennett is a gray-haired man of great dignity. He speaks in a measured tone. As he discussed the problems of criminal rehabilitation, a problem directly affecting roughly one out of every 370 Americans, his voice rose and his hand shook.

Shocked By Conditions
Dr. Karl Barth, the noted Swiss theologian who currently is making his first visit to the United States, told a news conference in New York that he was "terribly shocked" by the conditions he observed in one prison he visited.

Barth said he found human beings incarcerated like animals in "cages" and that it was like a scene out of "Dante's Hell." He added that "the jails in Switzerland are a paradise compared to what I saw here."

When these quotations were read to Bennett, he gazed silently at the ceiling of his office for a moment as if he were praying for patience. Then he asked, "Did Dr. Barth say which prison he saw?"

Delivering Lectures
"No, he didn't identify it. But he was delivering lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J., at the time."

"I thought so," said Bennett. "They probably showed him the New Jersey State Penitentiary at Trenton. It is one of the oldest prisons in America—in use since 1794—and it is one of the worst. I have been saying for years that it is a disgrace to American penology. It is hardly a fair sample of our prison system. We have a number of new institutions, state and federal, which are just as good as anything they have in Switzerland. Why didn't somebody show Dr. Barth one of them?"

Q Do we have many jails like the one at Trenton?
A We have made a great deal of progress in the past

25 years or so in improving prison conditions in this country, but there is a long way still to go. More than a hundred prisons still in use today were built before the Civil War. The Maryland prison in Baltimore dates back to 1811, and the Ohio penitentiary at Columbus was opened in 1834. Overcrowding is a serious problem even in our federal prisons. At the Atlanta penitentiary, eight and 10 men are occupying cells intended for four. Men stand in line at the toilets and washrooms. They go to the dining room in shifts. Conditions like these breed unrest, and make it virtually impossible to do any effective educational or rehabilitational work with prisoners.

Q Why don't we build new and better prisons?
A With all the demands for money to build new schools, highways and hospitals, legislatures are reluctant to vote appropriations for prisons. The lawmakers are reflecting public attitudes when they put prisons at the bottom of the list of needed civic improvements.

Q Do you think the public is indifferent toward prison reform?
A A considerable portion of the public has the idea that prisoners are just a lot of human scum who deserve whatever misery they suffer. The average citizen seems to think that our jails are filled chiefly by murderers, rapists and kidnapers.

Q Isn't that true?
A No, it is not true. More than half the people committed to our jails are drunks and vagrants. Two-thirds of all offenders sent to prison each year are convicted of non-violent crimes. Less than 10 per cent have been convicted of homicide, rape or kidnapping. Sure, there are some prisoners who are pretty nasty individuals, and who ought to be quarantined. But there are tens of thousands who are simply victims of discrimination and environment. They are the handicapped, the underprivileged, the slow-witted, the alcoholics, the drug addicts, the kids from slum neighborhoods who drop out of school and drift into crime.

Voice Steadily Rising
Bennett's voice had been rising steadily as he talked. Now he was obviously angry, and his hand shook slightly as he interrupted himself to light a cigarette.

"To put it quite bluntly," he said, "society uses prisons

as a dumping ground—a place to get rid of the misfits and outcasts whom we want to get out of sight and out of mind."

"The prison population could be reduced enormously if communities would accept the responsibility of providing really constructive solutions for some of our social problems—like slums... or alcoholism."

Under Bennett's jurisdiction are 29 federal institutions, ranging from "maximum security" penitentiaries, such as Alcatraz, to relatively open correctional camps for boys who have gotten into trouble with the law.

Small Proportion
(The federal prisons, with about 24,000 inmates, constitute a relatively small proportion of America's detention system. About 175,000 prisoners are housed in state reformatories and penitentiaries, and some 300,000 are in local jails and county workhouses, making a total U.S. prison population of half a million persons.)

Bennett's blood pressure also rises when anyone suggests in his presence that prisoners are "coddled" in some of his new model institutions, such as the one at Seagoville, Tex., where men live in an

environment like a college campus, with no walls and no bars on the windows.

"It is not coddling to make a decent human being out of a criminal," he said. "With the exception of the three or four out of a hundred who die in prison, the rest all come out some day. They come right back into the community, and the point of all prison rehabilitation programs is to prepare them for this day by helping them learn the moral values of society and the skills that will make them productive citizens."

Is Tough Medicine
"Make no mistake—a prison sentence is tough medicine under the best conditions. It imposes a stigma that will linger with the offender long after he has served his time. It takes him away from his loved ones, confines him to a few acres of land, enforces a monotonous regime upon him, and deprives him of any normal sex outlet. The latter is for most prisoners a more refined torture than the cruellest kind of corporal punishment."

"If you add a deliberately punitive prison program to these hardships, you are going to send men back into society at the end of their sentences filled with so much hate and

bitterness there is not much hope of their going straight."

Q Isn't it true that a majority of prisoners do come back for a second or third hitch?
A Yes, we always have that thrown at us as "proof" that rehabilitation is a failure. Considering the overcrowding, the lack of rehabilitation facilities and other handicaps, I think it's pretty miraculous that one third of the people who serve time in prison never get into trouble again.

Controversy on Paroles
Q There is also a lot of controversy about paroles. Some people feel that parole boards are too lenient and release men who promptly go out to commit new crimes. How do you feel about that?

A You newspapermen stir up a lot of that. You write as if the parole board had just deliberately turned loose some criminal to let him prey on the public. I'll grant you that parole boards—like everybody else—sometimes make mistakes. But nobody's ever been able to document a single case in which a parole board had wilfully released a prisoner knowing he would go out and commit another crime.

Q But...
A Just a minute. Let's talk

about parole for a bit. Parole is never supposed to be a means of extending leniency. It has two purposes. First, it is a technique of getting a man out of prison at the time when he is best adapted to a successful return to society. Second, it is a device whereby we can have, in reality as well as theory, some semblance of equal justice under law.

Q What do you mean by that?
A I mean that different judges impose greatly differing sentences for the same type of crime. We encounter almost incredible extremes. One judge will put a man on probation, and another will send him to prison for 25 years—for the same offense.

The United States is the only nation in the western world where the sentence, as long as it remains within legal limits, can be imposed by a single judge without any review of its fairness by a higher court.

We have some real sadists on the bench. We also have some mentally ill judges who are still passing out sentences. The only way you can bring some degree of fairness and group judgment into this is through a system of paroles.

The system may not always work perfectly—nothing does—but what we ought to do is to improve it, not abolish it.

Q Do you think you've made any headway during your 25 years as bureau director in educating the public about prison problems and needs?

Bennett smiled at the question, and swiveled his chair around to look out of his office window, which commands a magnificent view of the Capitol Dome.

"Oh, I think we've made a little headway," he said. "But I wish sometimes that more of our citizens would follow Dr. Barth's example of visiting prisons and taking an interest in prisoners. It is a very enlightening thing to walk through a jail and look

at the people in it and remember that 'there, but for the grace of God, stand I.'"

Liberace Slowed By Tendon Strain

Portland, Ore.—Pianist Liberace has been told to take it easy for a few days after cutting short a concert last Tuesday night because of a strained tendon in his hand.

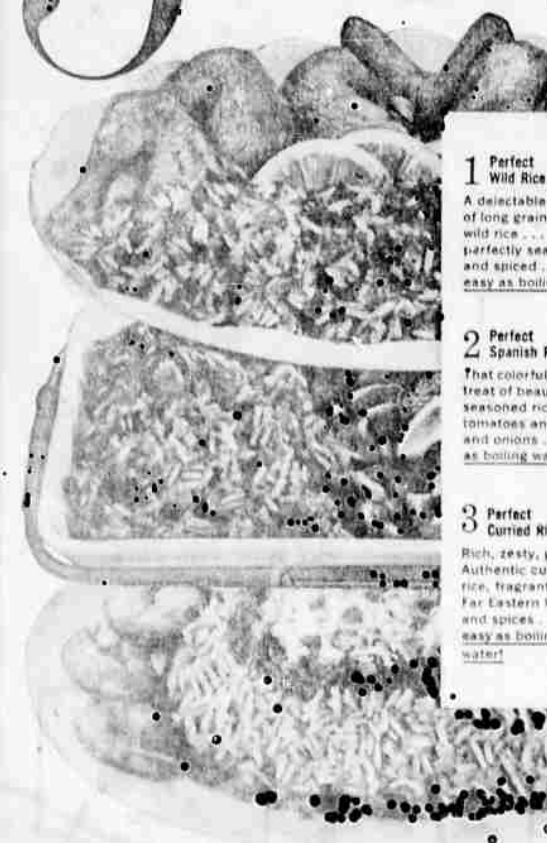
The entertainment idol played the piano with his left hand only during the shortened final half of his performance. He then was taken to a hospital.

His doctor said Liberace suffered an irritated tendon when he slipped on an oil slick in the driveway of his Los Angeles home a week ago. The doctor said Liberace probably would be able to play most numbers in a scheduled appearance this Friday at the Seattle World's Fair.

Liberace said the hand has hurt him since the fall. It gave way during a Chopin piece that required the pianist to stretch for notes.

JAIL VOTE CHALLENGED
Lincoln, N.C.—Chief Lowe, who lost an election for sheriff to the incumbent here last week by two votes, filed a complaint Tuesday, charging that two prisoners and a minor were allowed to vote. Sheriff Frank P. Heavner defeated Lowe by a vote of 3,606-3,604. Heavner has agreed to a recount of the ballots.

3 new rice mixes from Uncle Ben's! Perfect rice dishes... easy as boiling water!



1 Perfect Wild Rice Dishes
A delectable blend of long grain and wild rice... perfectly seasoned and spiced... easy as boiling water!

2 Perfect Spanish Rice Dishes
That colorful Old World treat of beautifully seasoned rice with tomatoes and peppers and onions... easy as boiling water!

3 Perfect Curried Rice Dishes
Rich, zesty, golden. Authentic curried rice, fragrant with far Eastern herbs and spices... easy as boiling water!

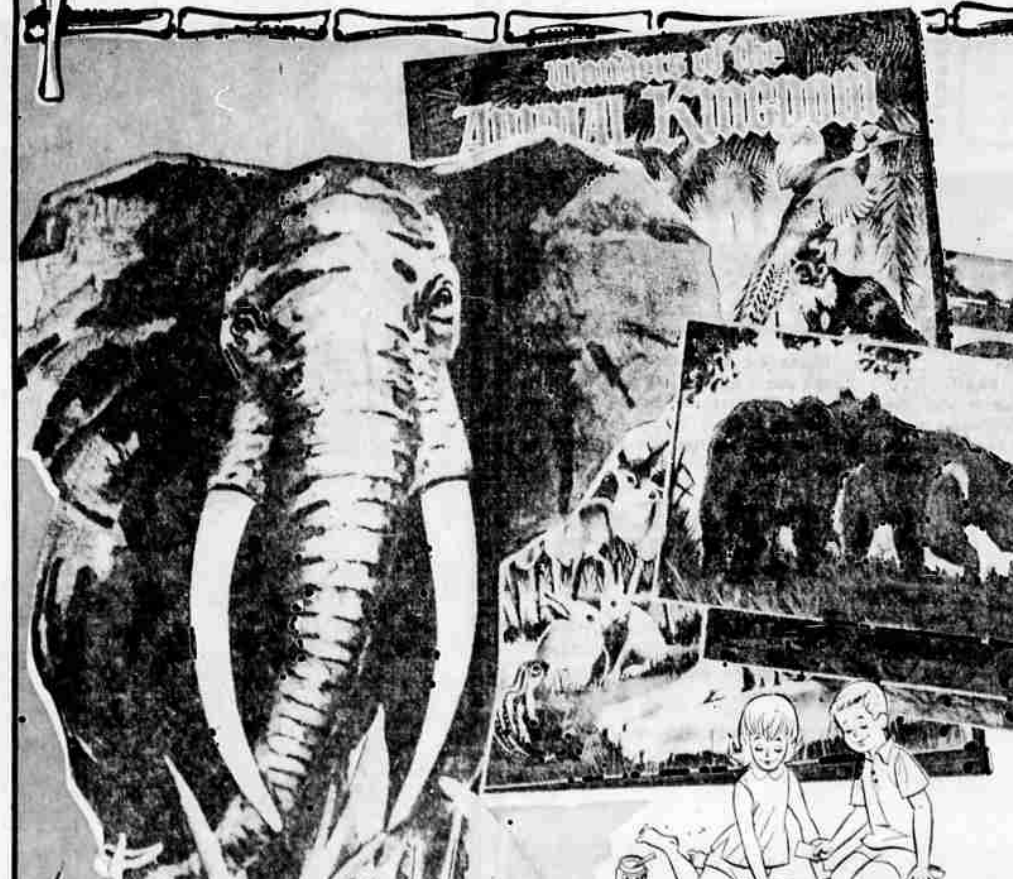
Fast complete rice mixes with exclusive **Flavor Nuggets!**

YOU CAN BOIL WATER, get Uncle Ben's national new Rice Mixes and you're all set to serve up a whole new world of delectably different, dinner-party-perfect Wild Rice, Spanish Rice, and Curried Rice dishes!

All sorts of perfect rice dishes are easy as boiling water with Uncle Ben's Rice Mixes. They're the most complete rice mixes ever made... with all the rice and spice... plus Uncle Ben's exclusive Flavor Nuggets.

If you are interested in developing your child's appreciation for nature, you'll be interested in...

Wonders of the ANIMAL KINGDOM



Stimulating! Educational! Fun! Magnificent, colorful **ALBUM** with text by a professional zoologist **AND OVER 400** full-color, easy-to-apply **PICTURES**

Wonders of the Animal Kingdom informs, entertains and broadens the interest of your child in all the fascinating forms of life on our earth. Sections feature: PRE-HISTORIC ANIMALS — MAMMALS — BIRDS — FISHES — REPTILES — CRUSTACEANS — INSECTS. With the pasting of each picture, attention is focused on the accurate, brilliantly-colored illustrations and accompanying, easy-to-understand discussion. Created by 4 outstanding artists and a leading zoologist, here is a work of authority, valuable to many adults as a reference or teaching aid and lots of fun for children. Wonders of the Animal Kingdom are available only at...

SAFEWAY

INSTRUCTIONS:
EACH WEEK, FOR 7 WEEKS, 3 NEW PACKETS OF PICTURES WILL BE ISSUED. A valuable coupon in our weekly advertisement will make one of these packets ABSOLUTELY FREE, and the other two will cost only 15¢ each. As a special offer, Here are all the coupons ahead of time! Save them. Redeem them at the proper time for your FREE packet of pictures each week. In seven weeks your album will be completed and you will have saved money on the entire collection.

There are 21 packets of pictures in the entire collection and each packet contains 20 brilliantly colored pictures.

FREE! PICTURE PACKET NO. 4
With this coupon June 7
Effective date
Packets No. 3 and No. 6 cost only 15¢ each

FREE! PICTURE PACKET NO. 7
With this coupon June 10
Effective date
Packets No. 8 and No. 9 cost only 15¢ each

FREE! PICTURE PACKET NO. 10
With this coupon June 21
Effective date
Packets No. 11 and No. 12 cost only 15¢ each

FREE! PICTURE PACKET NO. 13
With this coupon June 28
Effective date
Packets No. 14 and No. 15 cost only 15¢ each

FREE! PICTURE PACKET NO. 16
With this coupon July 1
Effective date
Packets No. 17 and No. 18 cost only 15¢ each

FREE! PICTURE PACKET NO. 19
With this coupon July 12
Effective date
Packets No. 20 and No. 21 cost only 15¢ each