

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CORRECTION
FEBRUARY 11, 1971

A regular meeting of the Board of Correction was held on February 11, 1971 in Room 1410, 100 Centre Street, New York. New York.

Present at the meeting were Messrs. vanden Heuvel, Dribben, Schulte and Satterfield, Rev. Wilson and Mrs. Singer. Also present by invitation of the Board were John M. Brickman, Executive Director of the Board, Lesley J. Spector, Executive Secretary of the Board, and George F. McGrath, Commissioner of the Department of Correction. Mr. vanden Heuvel acted as Chairman and Miss Spector as Secretary of the meeting.

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 2:25 P.M. The Chairman and the Commissioner told the Board members that the incident at Bellevue involving James Ainsley, an inmate, had been referred to the District Attorney for investigation, and that they hoped to meet with District Attorney Hogan within the next week to discuss the problem of violence in the prisons. They stated that they also were prepared to meet with Leo Zeferetti, President of the Correction Officers' Benevolent Association, to discuss violence and the use of excessive force by correction officers in the prisons.

The Chairman stated that one very serious problem the Commissioner has is budgetary. The Commissioner declared that, with the existing job freeze, the Department is only permitted to fill 25% of all vacancies as they occur. The Chairman further stated that he would communicate with the Budget Director and explain to him that the job freeze is one of the factors contributing to the crisis in the prisons.

The Chairman then informed the Board that he would like its approval to announce publicly, on behalf of the Board, an "Agenda for Action," and postpone the Day of Hope for approximately 90 days after the announcement. The Chairman explained that the Agenda for Action would call on the community to show its good faith in helping to improve the conditions in the prisons. For example, the Telephone Company would be urged to expedite phone installations in the prisons. The Administrative Board of the Judicial Conference would be called upon to set a maximum period of detention before trial.

Mr. Schulte declared that he felt there should be some protection for the community in this area, i.e., detainees should not be released indiscriminately if they aren't brought to trial within a certain time limit. The Chairman said he felt the sole purpose of this ruling would be to force the courts to speed up trials.

Mr. DeMonte suggested the use of arbitrators appointed to handle these cases. The Commissioner informed the Board that, in the Brooklyn House of Detention, an arraignment part is being established. Although judges will sit rather than arbitrators, it will cut down on transportation and will give the courts another room in which to operate.

Mr. DeMonte suggested that methadone be dispensed in the City's high schools. Mr. Satterfield stated that he has found one of the most effective ways to deal with the drug problem in the schools is to have streetworkers go into the schools and talk with the students. Mr. Satterfield further said that this is effective because teenagers relate to "images" they see. If a streetworker who was once an addict explains what happened to him, hopefully the teenager will learn from the streetworker's experience.

Mr. DeMonte recalled the bill that he co-sponsored with Councilman Julius Moskowitz, which would make the dispensing of methadone mandatory in every clinic or other like facility in the City. The bill states that the Commissioner of Correction shall establish a program (at Rikers Island) for dispensing methadone for all sentenced prisoners who are found suitable for the program on their arrival to the institution.

The Commissioner informed the Board of a program now being run by the Health Department at Rikers Island. The Health Department now has ten clinics in various parts of the City which dispense methadone. Health Department personnel are sent to Rikers to interview inmates who will be discharged within one month. These personnel determine which inmates will most probably need and benefit from a methadone maintenance program. Those prisoners found suitable are enrolled in the maintenance program upon their release from Rikers. A similar program will start at the Women's House of Detention next week.

Mr. Satterfield declared that one of the problems with methadone is that some of its users eventually become alcoholics.

The Chairman informed the Board that on February 26, he will meet with Gordon Chase, Health Services Administrator, to discuss the matter of methadone in the prisons. The Chairman explained that he may suggest to the Administrator that a controlled study be conducted by a group such as the Public Health Service, to determine how many prisoners are in fact addicts when they arrive at a prison.

Mr. Schulte declared that he thought it might be useful to do a survey of ten prisoners who are deemed "suitable" for such a methadone maintenance program, to judge how many, in fact, keep their appointments with the clinics. Commissioner McGrath informed the Board that these men are "escorted" to the clinic; therefore, such a survey will reflect a high percentage of appointments kept.

The Commissioner also declared that, at present, there are 159 addicts in the City's prisons who have been certified as such by the Narcotics Addiction Control Commission. The Commissioner further stated that he felt that the NACC should be expanded tenfold so that it can provide proper addiction treatment centers. This would, he said, provide needed medical attention for the addict, as well as relieve some of the overcrowding in the City's prison facilities.

The Commissioner informed the Board that April 1 is the probable moving date for the Women's House of Detention. He also stated that no decision had been made as to what will be done with the old WHD. He further declared that the Mayor hopes that, by the time of the move, the census will be low enough so that there would be no need to use the old WHD: the Board, however, agreed generally that it would be illusory to think that the old House could be eliminated. The Commissioner stated that if the building were to be used next year, the Department would need at least six months' notice to replace the boilers. He suggested that the building could be used as a methadone clinic, for work release programs, or a variety of other prison-related programs.

Mr. Dribben proposed that at least part of the facility be used as a satellite to the Bellevue prison ward. He declared that perhaps eventually, the entire ward could be moved to the WHD. The Commissioner commented that the Department of Correction hoped to get a 26-bed psychiatric ward at Van Etten Hospital in the Bronx.

In regard to the use of telephones in receiving rooms of institutions, Commissioner McGrath stated that he had instructed correction officers that until telephones are installed in the quadrants, prisoners should be permitted to use the receiving room phones.

The Chairman informed the Board that he had met with officers of The Legal Aid Society and had told them that their clients, i.e., prisoners, are most unhappy with the kind of legal assistance being given them. The Society is willing to have a representative at the Tombs every afternoon to help prisoners. The Commissioner stated he thought this was a good idea, but said that the representative would have to confine his activities to early afternoon and early evening.

The Chairman then discussed the problem which exists at Napanoch -- i.e., the housing of adolescent reformatory inmates with adults. The Commissioner said that the law allows the State Correction Commissioner to lease portions of the State institutions to the City. Contracts by the City were drawn on that basis. The Commissioner declared that, prior to the October riots, no New York City adolescents were housed upstate. The new procedure is that the City will transfer prisoners to one upstate facility where they will be screened and sent to the appropriate institution. The Commissioner stated that the complete separation of adult and adolescent reformatory inmates would be accomplished within the next few weeks.

Commissioner McGrath raised the question of the lack of sentenced personnel to do the work in the institutions. He said he has told the wardens to begin using detention prisoners to help with the work. He also informed the Board that he now had authorization to employ men who have been convicted but are awaiting sentence, and that he has sent a letter to the Budget Director requesting that he assume the burden of paying detainees. The Chairman suggested the use of prisoners to operate a recycling plant. Commissioner McGrath declared that he did not feel that there would be enough prisoners to start on new projects. He would rather have sentenced prisoners going to school and involved in manpower training programs than working in prison industries. Commissioner McGrath said he believes such industries would be more appropriate in State institutions.

The Chairman informed the Board of the meeting of the Food Task Force at which he, Gustave Levy (head of diet control for the Department) and Edward Hawkins (Vice President of Horn & Hardart) toured the kitchen facilities at the Tombs. He further noted that the basic problem is how to transport the food from the kitchen to the prisoner without it getting cold. The Task Force is looking at alternate ways to deliver the food.

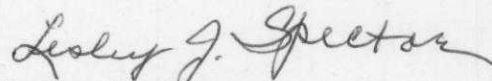
The Chairman then discussed Howard Levy, M.D., a dermatologist who is working on a volunteer basis in the Tombs. Dr. Levy has been convicted by a court martial of refusing to obey a superior's order, and has served a prison sentence. The case is presently being appealed. The Chairman stated that there are many correction officers who resent Dr. Levy's presence in the Tombs and are demanding that he be "fired." They have communicated with various veterans' groups and wish to know why their own backgrounds are checked carefully whereas no one looked at Dr. Levy's background. Commissioner McGrath declared that he wished to examine a report of Dr. Levy's activities since his release from prison and wants Dr. Levy to fill in the incomplete parts of the application form he had been given. Mr. Brickman stated that he would collect the information.

The Chairman then stated that it would be in order to consider the appointment of William Goodstein as unsalaried Counsel to the Board. Upon motion duly made and seconded, Mr. Goodstein's appointment was approved.

The next meeting of the Board will be on Monday, February 22, at 4:00 P.M., at 277 Park Avenue, Room 2520.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Lesley J. Spector
Executive Secretary