

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CORRECTION
JANUARY 13, 1971

A regular meeting of the Board of Correction was held on January 13, 1971 at the offices of Stroock & Stroock & Lavan, Room 2530, 277 Park Avenue, New York, New York.

Present were Messrs. vanden Heuvel, Dribben, DeMonte, Rev. Wilson, Mrs. Singer and Miss Torrado. Also present by invitation were John M. Brickman, Executive Director of the Board, Lesley J. Spector, Executive Secretary of the Board, State Senator John Dunne, Chairman of the State Senate Committee on Penal Institutions, and Miss Terry Strauss, Research Assistant, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. Mr. vanden Heuvel acted as Chairman and Miss Spector as Secretary of the meeting.

The Chairman brought the meeting to order at 4:15 P.M. He then introduced Senator Dunne to the members of the Board. The Senator discussed ten bills, which his Committee planned to introduce into the Legislature on January 14, intended to improve New York City prisons. Following is an outline of the Senator's ten proposals:

1. To provide for the greater independence of the State Commission of Correction, by providing that the Chairman be independent.
2. To amend the State Constitution to enable a defendant to waive indictment of a Grand Jury (This is a procedure that has been effective in California).
3. To compel the State to provide, within a reasonable time, its facilities to narcotics addicts being (improperly) detained in City institutions.
4. To create a State Prison Death Review Board to investigate any and all deaths in any detention facility in the State.
5. To have the State take over, at State expense, all sentenced prisoners serving terms longer than 15 days.
6. To require the State to take over the City Criminal Court system over a period of five years.
7. To require all Criminal Court judges to visit one local men's facility, one local women's facility and two State facilities.
8. To consolidate the four City probation agencies into one.

9. To require the State take-over of all reformatory prisons.

10. To mandate a speedy trial for all detainees.

The Board then discussed the additional problem of police lock-ups. It was suggested that a letter be sent to the State Commission asking it to commence inspection, as is its right, of these precinct facilities.

The Senator declared that State facilities do a better job of prisoner orientation (explaining rights, duties, etc.) than do the City institutions. The Chairman informed the Senator that the Board of Correction was in the process of preparing a handbook for City prisoners.

Senator Dunne said that these proposals had not, as yet, been endorsed by the Governor. He also acknowledged the fact that no provisions are made for rehabilitation in this package but that these bills address themselves to the problems faced by the Manhattan House of Detention.

The Chairman stated that the City was in the process of preparing its own legislative package and that the most important piece of the Senator's package is the mandate for speedy trials.

It was generally agreed that if this legislation is passed this year, our whole correction system would be totally revolutionized.

Mr. Dribben suggested that some personal lobbying might help the Senator get the package through the Legislature. The primary objection to the proposals will probably be their cost. The Chairman declared that it might be useful at some point to convene a meeting of all City legislators to make sure they understand the City's legislative program. Additionally, it was suggested that the Board might wish to establish a citizens' committee. It was generally agreed that now is the time to act because the public sentiment has been aroused.

Mrs. Singer suggested a project relating to prisoners' art work. At present, their paintings are put on exhibition but are not being sold. The Senator said there was no law prohibiting their sale. The Chairman declared that this might be a project with which a volunteer group could get involved.

Senator Dunne said that he would send copies of his Committee's Annual Report to the Board. He then left the meeting.

The Chairman stated that the Senator had invited him to participate in a press conference on Thursday, January 14, at which the Senator would announce his legislative package. The Chairman agreed to attend the conference to endorse certain of the proposals.

The Chairman then reported on the events of the past week concerning (i) the suicide of George James and (ii) new developments in the Raymond Lavon Moore case.

District Attorney Hogan will convene a grand jury to hear the statements of Correction Officer Arthur Blake. As to the release to the press by Commissioner McGrath of the names of the four Correction Officers involved, C.O.B.A. seems to be blaming the Chairman. As it now stands, the Department will take no further action against the suspended officers pending the outcome of the grand jury investigation.

Mr. Dribben commented on the lack of an adequate communication system between the wardens and the Commissioner's office. The Chairman will be in touch with Commissioner McGrath and Acting Director of Operations Mutell to discuss methods of improving communication.

The Chairman informed the Board the medical volunteers should commence working on Monday, January 18.

As to the proposed grant of subpoena power to the Board, the Chairman said that a proposal granting such power would be opposed by C.O.B.A. and would have difficulty gaining City Council approval. Legal research indicates, however, that the Board may now, in fact, have subpoena power. The Chairman will seek a legal opinion on the subject from an eminent member of the bar.

The Chairman stated that in view of the expected receipt of funds from the Ford Foundation, it was in order for the Board to open a bank account. Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously resolved that bank resolutions in the form attached to these minutes, relating to the opening of a bank account and the operating of such account, be adopted.

The Chairman announced that in addition to the \$15,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, the Board has received a \$54,283 grant from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. The money is budgeted principally for the office staff, which is now comprised of three people. The office needs a full time Deputy Director-Project Coordinator as well as a stenographer. The Chairman asked if Board members knew any qualified persons who might be interested in either position, and if they did, to notify him or Mr. Brickman.

The Chairman suggested that each member of the Board be "assigned" to a specific institution and make periodic visits to that institution. Mr. Brickman asked that members desiring to be connected to a particular institution notify him. The matter will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

The Chairman then asked for discussion of the "Day of Hope." Spiritual leaders of all faiths will visit the City's prisons on that day and participate in workshops there. The Chairman stated that it would also be a day that the community as a whole would commit itself to the human values in the prisons. The Mayor has agreed to announce the "Day of Hope" on his television show. Rev. Wilson agreed to contact various spiritual leaders to further discuss it with them.

The Chairman then stated that correction officers who worked overtime during the prison riots last fall had not yet received overtime pay. He then suggested that the Board write to the Mayor and the Budget Director urging that a resolution be submitted to the Board of Estimate authorizing payment of the overtime monies.

Mr. Brickman reported on a meeting he and Mrs. Singer had with Mrs. Robbins of the Women's Prison Association. The Association runs a type of "half-way house" where women just released from prison can stay while they work or look for jobs and/or other living quarters. The Association also helps the women find jobs and gives them short-term financial aid. Mrs. Robbins expressed interest in working with us on a volunteer visitation program.

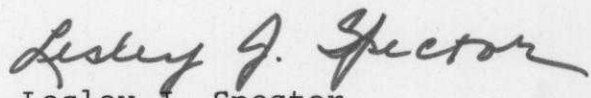
In discussing the need for bi-lingual Correction personnel and in response to Miss Torrado's comments, the Chairman stated that he would write to the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission urging that the Civil Service Examinations be given in Spanish with a qualifying exam in English.

The Chairman stated that a letter would be written to Mr. Schulte urging him to get well soon.

The next meeting of the Board will be on January 20, 1971 at 4:00 P.M., Room 2530, 277 Park Avenue.

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,


Lesley J. Spector
Executive Secretary