

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CORRECTION
JUNE 9, 1971

A regular meeting of the Board of Correction was held on Wednesday, June 9, 1971, in the library of the Manhattan House of Detention for Men, 125 White Street, New York, New York.

Present at the meeting were Messrs. vanden Heuvel, Dribben, DeMonte, and Schulte, 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, Albert Glick, Deputy-Warden-in-Command, Manhattan House of Detention for Men, Terry Strauss, Research Assistant, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Peter Lesser, Summer Interne for the Board of Correction, and Jeffrey M. Siger, Esq. Mr. vanden Heuvel acted as Chairman and Miss Spector as Secretary of the meeting.

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 2:00 P.M. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the meeting of May 13, 1971 were adopted.

The Chairman stated that he had had a lengthy meeting last week with Commissioner McGrath and Michael J. Dontzin, Counsel to the Mayor. He further stated that he discussed the community representative program at that meeting, explaining to Mr. Dontzin that Commissioner McGrath had informed the Board on April 19 that he would not permit the continuation of the Manhattan Volunteer Project which allowed volunteer clergy, social workers and attorneys to work directly with prisoners in their cellblocks. The Chairman declared that he further told Mr. Dontzin that Commissioner McGrath had stated that he would submit a volunteer program to the Board by June 1, and that the Board still had not received the proposal. The Chairman stated that Mr. Dontzin then informed the Commissioner that the Department's position was not responsive and contrary to the Mayor's wishes. The Chairman declared that the Commissioner then agreed to initiate a volunteer program organized by Assistant Commissioner George Camp. The Chairman declared that there would be a meeting on June 16 to discuss this broad volunteer effort with Commissioner Camp and Deputy Commissioner Benjamin Malcolm. The Chairman requested that Mr. Dribben, Rev. Wilson and Mrs. Singer represent the Board. Since the June 16 date was not convenient for Rev. Wilson, the Chairman asked the Secretary to try to re-schedule the meeting for June 14.

The Chairman declared that the experience gained from the pilot project at the Manhattan House of Detention should be fully discussed with Commissioner Camp. Mr. Siger stated that there had been a meeting of the New York Clergy Coalition on Tuesday, June 8, at which an announcement was made that the community representative program was being reactivated. Mr. Siger further stated that most of the clergy come from Brooklyn and that it might be advisable to expand the program into the Brooklyn House. The Chairman stated that he is anxious to start the program in the Adolescent Remand

Shelter. The Chairman asked Mr. Siger to talk to Commissioner Camp about briefing sessions for the volunteers.

Mr. Siger suggested that a letter be sent to each clergyman who attended the Clergy Workshop, enclosing an application for participation in the community representative program. The Chairman stated that there should be someone to coordinate the schedules of the representatives. The Board agreed generally that Ronald Boyette, Project Coordinator of the Board, should perform this function.

The Chairman stated that the program should be carried back into the community, i.e., that parishes in the community should work toward assisting inmates while in prison and after their release, as well as with inmates' families.

Mr. Siger declared that he feels it is important to involve continually new people in the program. To that end, he suggested that the Board might work toward recruitment of representatives from law schools, seminarians, etc. At this point, Mr. Siger left the meeting.

Mr. Brickman stated that the Department would like from the Board a list of people to invite to the June 18 dedication of the new Women's House and sentence facility at Rikers Island. The Board agreed generally that the Department's request should have been made several weeks before.

Mrs. Singer then raised a problem brought to her attention by Mrs. Alexander of the Decorators' Committee concerning dress regulations for instructors in the prisons. Mrs. Singer stated that Mrs. Vivian Smith, who teaches sewing and good grooming to inmates at the Women's House, had been ordered by Mrs. Durr at the WHD to wear a uniform. Mrs. Singer stated that she felt this was inconsistent with rehabilitation aims. Miss Strauss stated that she would discuss the matter with Deputy Commissioner Malcolm.

The Chairman then stated that a draft of the final report on the 51-point Agenda for Action had been submitted to Mr. Dontzin and to Henry Ruth, Director of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. The Chairman declared that, generally speaking, the response to the Agenda has been good. The courts have been most cooperative. The State Legislature, however, has not been as responsive. The Chairman stated that if the Board really hopes to have its legislation passed next year, it will have to start planning this summer for next year's legislative session.

The Chairman then introduced Warden Glick to the members of the Board. The Warden stated initially that he thought the Board should make an effort to make itself known as a group of individuals, rather than solely as William vanden Heuvel.

The Warden stated that there are only 17 fewer inmates at the MHD now than there were at the time of the riots last year. Additionally, there are fewer services (e.g., recreation) than there were at the time of the riots.

The Warden added that the City's prisons are run symptomatically, i.e., that action is only taken during a crisis but that there is no long-term planning. The Warden stated that the Board's function is to do that planning.

The Warden declared that although he is grateful for the methadone detoxification facilities instituted at the MHD, he strongly believes that narcotic offenders do not belong in the prison.

The Warden also stated that his major administrative problem was a logistical one. He explained that the Tombs was built to accommodate 855 inmates. With a population of almost 1400, it is virtually impossible to plan any program which involves the moving of prisoners from one place to another within the institution.

Mr. Dribben stated that he felt the general public was unaware of the severe overcrowding in the City's institutions, and suggested that the Board issue a weekly press release detailing each institution's capacity, the number of prisoners housed in each facility that week as compared to the same week last year, and the percentage of overcrowding. The Board agreed generally that this was a good idea.

The Chairman stated that he felt a lot of administrative problems of the institutions could be corrected with the institution of a classification system. Miss Strauss stated that Assistant Commissioner Jack Birnbaum has been working on such a system. Mr. Dribben stated that classification should begin at the time of arrest.

The Chairman informed the Warden that with respect to the telephones on the housing floors, the seven-digit dial system and the timing devices would be installed in July. The Warden stated that he was pleased, since the installation would remove an additional burden from correction officers. Mr. Schulte declared that the Department gave him no cooperation concerning the installation of the phones.

The Warden stated that the recreation area could not be used unless he received additional personnel. He further stated that 5+ correction officers are needed to cover each post seven days a week.

The Warden explained a procedure which, because of Departmental regulations, he must observe in the methadone ward. An officer must observe each prisoner every half hour and write a report on what each prisoner is doing. The Warden noted that if there are 200 patients on the ward, an officer would have to write 3200 reports in the course of one eight-hour shift. The Warden further stated that he felt this procedure was a waste of time and effort and that he feels an officer should only have to note unusual behavior.

The Warden suggested that the Board submit a questionnaire to all wardens and deputy wardens, asking them to suggest ways in which the Board can be helpful in improving prison conditions. The Warden further stated

that he felt it would be wise to allow the questionnaires to be returned anonymously.

The Warden declared that it is vital to get a correction health facility, since prisoners are often sent to Bellevue and returned the same day due to overcrowding. Thus, the MHD gets "stuck" with sick people who do not belong in prison.

The Chairman asked the Warden if, once the chapel gate was completed, any inmate wishing to attend Sunday services could do so. The Warden responded that any inmate could attend, providing the number of inmates did not exceed the maximum seating capacity of the chapel. If this meant that more than one Sunday service would be necessary, the Warden stated that he would try to arrange it.

The Chairman asked the Warden when the showing of movies would be resumed. The Warden stated that movies were shown in the chapel and that the chapel drapes had been destroyed in last year's riots and had not been replaced. He also stated that he would not show movies while the recreation area was open because there were not enough officers to move the prisoners to both areas at the same time. He further stated that if movies are to be shown this summer, it will be a portable operation on the housing floors.

The Warden stated that there should be a permanent representative from the U.S. Army, the Department of Welfare, etc., assigned to the institutions. The Chairman suggested that perhaps such representatives could be invited to participate in the lecture series.

At this point, the Warden left the meeting.

The Chairman stated that there were still 658 prisoners as of April 30 who had been in detention facilities for more than six months and that he would like to use summer internes to interview these prisoners to ascertain whether the delay in going to trial was created by the inmates' themselves or by other factors.

The Chairman then proposed two resolutions for adoption.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that each member of the Board, after consultation with the Chairman, shall be assigned to a particular prison, and shall visit that prison at least once each month and report back to the Board.

Furthermore, upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that any member of the Board who fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Board without excuse satisfactory to the Board shall be asked to resign from the Board.

Mr. Dribben stated that he had visited the Brooklyn House of Detention and that Warden Monroe is pleased with the concept of the Board of Visitors.

The Chairman stated that the Governor signed a bill which will close the Reformatory at Rikers Island on January 1, 1974.

The Chairman presented the Estimated Budget for the Board of Correction to the Board for its approval. After discussion and upon motion duly made and seconded, the Budget was approved.

The Chairman declared that he will ask one of the summer internes to study the work release program at the Hotel Granada in Brooklyn.

The Board agreed generally that one major area of concentration should be incentive pay for inmates.

The meeting adjourned at 4:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Lesley J. Spector
Executive Secretary