

# Expert Finds Little Effort To Correct Prisoners

By ED HUGHES

Why prisons? Vengeance against the offender? Punishment so they will not do it again? Or an effort to correct those who can be helped?



R. A. Chappell found very little effort being made to correct the prisoner.

His findings have been made public in a report which recommends a number of changes in Georgia's post-conviction handling of prisoners.

They are recommendations which range from advising judges to take a look at the inside of prisons to which they send people to suggesting high level revamping of the State Department of Corrections.

SEVERAL OF THE more far-

reaching proposals have already drawn criticism from the Georgia state prisons director. Some seem to have varying degrees of support.

This study and report was financed by the Atlanta Citizens Crime Committee as part of its efforts to reduce crime in Atlanta.

The committee had not gone far in its study when it found that Fulton County contributed 27 per cent of the prisoners to the state system. And it found that most of Atlanta's crime was being committed by persons who had been in and out of the prisons before.

**THE MAN PICKED** to make a study of the prison system was Richard A. Chappell, formerly of Atlanta, now of Macon. Mr. Chappell had served for many years on the Federal Probation Board in Washington and is now back on that post. He is an advisor to the United Nations on matters concerning probation and parole. And he has the added advantage of having served in the past as an advisor to the Georgia Pardon and Parole Board.

From all appearances, the re-

port dug even deeper than the crime committee had contemplated.

After studying the report, the committee approved it "in spirit" but not in its word-by-word content.

The following are some of the recommendations made in the Chappell report with reaction noted on proposals which have generated reaction:

**1. CHANGING THE** function of the Board of Corrections to give advisory powers only and placing full power and responsibility in a director who would be appointed on a merit basis.

State Prisons Director Jack Forrester spoke out strongly against this idea.

The crime committee avoided mention of this proposal in its own summation, concentrating instead on reorganizing the Department of Corrections to cover such areas as parole and probation supervision.

The committee further commented that the director and his chief division heads should not fall under the Merit System Law.

**2. ENCOURAGE** closing small prison camps operated by counties and by the state, putting prisoners in larger prisons with better facilities.

Again Mr. Forrester objected, contending that the 81 county camps over the state are essential to providing labor for county construction.

And here again, the crime committee avoided comment.

**3. STARTING** a wide industry program in the state prisons.

Mr. Chappell commented that this plan would teach the prisoners trades which they could use when they get out of prison and could be one of the major steps toward keeping them from getting into trouble again.

As it stands now, farming is about the only occupation in which prisoners can participate and thus offers little aid to the man leaving prison.

Of great importance would be an agreement by the state to purchase things made by the prisoners. This would require legislation to combat the objections always made by private industry to prison competition.

This is one of the standing recommendations of the crime committee and has received endorsement by the state prison leaders. Although the industrialization could be paying for itself in a few years, money would be required to launch the program.

**4. GUARDS SHOULD** have substantial increases in their present starting salary of \$185 per month and all personnel should be under the merit system.

Everyone agrees the salaries should be increased to attract higher type personnel, but Mr. Forrester has objected to a merit plan for guards.

**5. PRISONERS** should be paid small wages for prison work, giving them something to get started on when they get out.

This has received support from both the committee and state prison officials. It would be tied in with the proposed creation of industry in the prisons.

**6. To study** the punitive methods now used at the Buford Rock Quarry prison in an effort to develop a more constructive disciplinary program.

**7. ABOLISH** the state Probation Board, replacing it with a director, meanwhile increasing the number, caliber and pay of probation officers.

Mr. Chappell observes that the new probation board is accomplishing "much good," but feels the work could be done better by a single person. He comments that the state should set high standards for probation officers.

**8. Put** the administrative duties of the Pardon and Parole Board under the proposed probation office, utilizing the same investigative data.

This, he says, would leave the Pardon and Parole Board free of the administrative side and able to concentrate on its judicial decisions of who should be paroled. The crime committee concurred.

**9. PROHIBIT** state legislators from representing prisoners applying for parole.

On this touchy subject, Mr. Chappell comments that "it is reported that some members of the legislature enrich themselves by representing applicants for parole." He points out that the legislators in turn fix salaries for the board members and appropriate funds for use by the Parole Department.

**10. Abolish** the compulsory requirement that a person serve one third of his sentence before being eligible for parole.

Instead, Mr. Chappell proposes considering each case individually, allowing the prisoner to be released when he is most ready for parole and has the best chance of succeeding.

**11. ESTABLISH** a "Youth Commission" to handle all phases of processing, imprisoning and paroling young offenders.

Special emphasis is placed on this idea of separating youths

from older criminals. The proposed commission would have the power to operate youth training schools, to parole young offenders, to contract with private and public boarding homes and schools to handle juveniles which the commission feels should not be confined in prison, and to operate a classification center for determining where the youngsters should be confined.

**12. Build** more facilities for

youthful offenders, including more training schools and detention homes.

**13. PROVIDE** places other than jails and detention homes for keeping abandoned and neglected children.

**14. Do away** with the system of having juries which are unfamiliar with a person's background set the length of the person's sentence.

Mr. Chappell points out that all but 11 states have abandoned this idea, which allows persons with similar backgrounds and similar convictions to get vastly different sentences.

This plan has been approved strongly by the Citizens Crime Committee.

**15. INSIST** that judges visit

prisons over the state and become more familiar with what they are sentencing prisoners to.

In summing up his findings, Mr. Chappell made this observation:

"Good institutions cost money, but they are cheaper in the long run than poor ones which spawn embittered, hopeless youths and

adults, who, because of the treatment received while in confinement, determine to 'get even' with society.

"Such tragic figures often spend their lives on the merry-go-round of 'in the prison, out again, in the prison, out again.' These human misfits whom we help to produce weaken our communities and our nations."