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EDITOR WRITES ON PRISON AT JACKSON; SEES PROBLEM OF UPKEEP FACING STATE

Here are some of the observations made by Earl H. DeFoe, editor of the Charlotte Republican, on a recent trip through the state prison at Jackson. They are made by a man who has had experience on a parole board and who considers the problem of crime in its many phases with a cool and impartial power of observation. His articles follow:

Michigan State Prison Jackson, Nov. 20, 1928

It is not surprising that Governor F. W. Green and legislative leaders favor laws strengthening the crime code passed two years ago. Experience has suggested changes but the real reason state officers are urging more drastic legislation is based on the fact of an increase of crime in the face of all these efforts to curb law breaking. For example, the new cell blocks at the new prison are being filled up just as rapidly as they are ready for occupancy. As the plans stand today the four-teen new cell blocks, when finally completed will take care of 5,180 men and at the present rate the prison will be filled to capacity as soon as the last cell unit is ready. In other words, if the crime wave isn't checked shortly the prospect of abandoning the old Back when the writer was executive clerk in the Chase S. Osborn regime and in that position served as secretary of the old pardon board, the prison population of Jackson was around 800 (according to Mr. Latimer). The count November 1st stood at 3826, a gain approximately four hundred per cent. This condition is appalling, first of course, in the matter of crime increase, but reflects for a moment on what this mounting population is going to cost in taxes. In other words, state leaders are concerned with the terrific cost of crime and if the crime code isn't the remedy, where is society to turn for protection, not only for the safety of its members but the financial burden that follows all crime. A visit to this great prison project (sixty-one acres enclosed within the walls) emphasizes the seriousness of the problem.

This growing population adds another menace to prison management, the question of furnishing labor (which should be produced) to this army of men. No problem of a prison quite equals idleness. It promotes the same mental and physical uneasiness that unemployment does on the outside and idleness of any character is a crime promoter. A large number of men, we are told, go to say 1800 but this seems too large, are now engaged in the construction work on the new prison but this will stop some time. Just now the road work is dropping off and these men are being returned from prison road camps, and in addition to these figures, whatever they total, 700 inmates are idle at the present moment, giving some adequate idea of what this means in cost to not mention the mental value of keeping a man employed. Industries take the best discipline because it takes the prisoner's mind off his personal worries and gives him something to think about. Outside industry, labor unions, etc., have been able to possibilities of all prisoners to a very limited field, all of which adds to the complications of this item of industry within the walls.

In 1920 the state legislature authorized the State Prison Commission to submit a report on the requirements and plans of a new prison. At first, an institution accommodating 1,000 prisoners was planned, with expansion possibilities to care for 1,000 additional men in the future, but later, on account of the rapid increase in the prison population it was decided to change the plans so as to accommodate 5,180 prisoners. The building of the cell block number one was begun November 11, 1925; cell block number two, November 20, 1925, and of the power plant July 3, 1926. At the present time cell blocks one, two and three, as well as the power plant, are complete. The wall, which is thirty-four feet high, with a width of twenty-four inches at the bottom and fourteen inches at the top, is practically complete. The administration building, hall, master's control, one factory building, dining halls, kitchen and bath houses are under construction. Work on cell blocks number four and five has been started. The factory building is eighty by one hundred feet, with two stories and basement, and is of the most modern, fireproof construction. The dining halls have a seating capacity of 1,500 men each, or 6,000 for four dining halls. The kitchen is adequate for the preparation of food for 6,000 inmates. Cafeteria service will be used and the idea comes from Juliet prison where this plan for feeding has worked out very successfully.

The principal industry thus far at the new prison is the dye shop,

a type of employment that requires careful training in the various stages. For that reason all employees of this industry are made doing not less than seven and a half years to life. The ordinary prison turnover could not be maintained if the men were given a life or practically in charge of the plant which is most interesting. It is interesting to note the commission, Warden Jackson said, as far as possible, to make here the textile machinery. The matter of such an arrangement as to the textile machinery. The motor plant under way. One large industrial plant is now ready for the textile machinery. The motor plant industry has made possible another large and non-competitive industry, the manufacture of steel plates, metal road signs, etc.

The monthly statistical reports of the prison are interesting, in fact is a growing interest in part of the public in prison statistics. This information is very helpful in the solution of a crime problem and it is obvious that reliable statistics are necessary for an intelligent understanding of the question of crime. The figures for October, for example, justify the recent action of the state board of equalization, with reference to the percentage of the state tax charged to Wayne county. Of the 3,826 prisoners, in October Wayne county furnished 172, or nearly the exact ratio of their state tax. Kent with Grand Rapids and Genesee followed Detroit but Oakland and Kent 140, Genesee, 148, and Kent 140. Eaton furnished 18 in the October count, a gain of 18 in the September count. Robbery is the most popular crime with 521 offenders; larceny is next with 572; breaking and entering at night registered 302, and then liquor law violators with 239. The smallest crime representation is a solitary prisoner for resisting an officer. The September count showed two for this offense but one has been returned. Sixty inmates were born in Michigan; 1975 born in other states, Canada is next with 170, followed by England with 106. The following nations have a single representative: Africa, Algeria, Australia, Brazil, China, Hawaii, Persia and Switzerland; and two states 3181 out of 3826 are American born, which does away with all this talk of "foreigners" doing the bulk of the law breaking. There are 132 white lifers, 39 colored, and Mexican; 124 are here for murder; 474 have previously been in Jackson; exactly the same number have previously been in Ionia; 154 have done a stretch in Detroit House of Correction; 136 in Marquette at one time; 42 are graduates of the Reform school and 440 have done time out of state prisons for a total of 1870 out of total population of 3826; only 82 are listed as college men and 564 are classed as illiterate. The same philosophy of crime causes holds today as it did back in 1859, (seventy-years ago) when W. L. Scaton, agent and chaplain of the prison, and later warden (1859-64) in one of his official reports said this: "Our prisons are only schools for evil—that three-fourths of the convicts that leave them are more hardened and villainous than before I come to these sad conclusions from a careful observation during the past five years that I have been connected with this prison. Of the conduct of convicts after being discharged, and from the reports of other prisons conducted on our system, "Evil" communications corrupt good morals" is an old truth, truthful advice, and with our congested system of prison, it is impossible to prevent communications between convicts. The young man who may be sent here for one year for his first offense, works beside the villain who made crime his business for years; and as misery loves company, they sympathize and support each other; both wear the disgraceful stripes; both march out behind the other, in the humiliating lockstep; both eat at the same table; lock in cells adjoining each other and perhaps both leave prison together; and if the young man formed good resolutions when he entered, they are all forgotten; and being disgraced, no money, no friends, no labor to be obtained, (for the world turns a cold shoulder to the convict) he seeks at once the company of those who were imprisoned with him, and again plunges into crime."

Crime is a disease and until the state hospitalizes the criminally incompetent little improvement can be hoped for. Most of the repeaters are "mental cases" and society should be protected from this type of criminal from the date of his first arrest, not keep releasing him until he returns to prison for a major offense. This policy is the only effective crime code.

Most newspaper readers no doubt think of R. Irving Latimer, famous Jackson prisoner, as the oldest inmate of Jackson prison. Notwithstanding Latimer was 63 last month and will have served forty years next April, a man by the name of Shivers, older in years and length of time served. His prison number is now the lowest with Latimer in second place on the present records. Latimer is very gray with a French officer moustache to mark his hair. He is very careful of his personal appearance and has lifted himself up to a high intellectual standard since he has been in prison. He has already given an order for engraved Christmas cards which fact perhaps as well as anything, depicts his attitude toward life. He never speaks of his crime, and the good time allowances to good

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WE HEARD IT SAID BY—
T. C. Hotelling, assistant postmaster: "Removal into the new postoffice makes the fourth building that the village postal department has occupied in the past 11 years. In 1917 the post office was located at Maple avenue at Pierce street. Later it moved to 127 North Woodward avenue. Five years ago the building which we vacated last week was adopted as the mail center. The 11 years and four removals mark a gradual expansion in the post office. The staff during this time increased from three to 22."

Officials of a small Belgian city were recently informed that Prince and Princess Nyota Dragpore of Hindustan would spend a few hours in their town, breaking the trip from Paris to Berlin. Crowds thronged the streets as the distinguished guests proceeded from the station to the town hall, where a royal welcome was extended. Then the prince and princess suddenly disappeared, after which it was discovered that they were only two students from a near-by university, out for a lark.

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