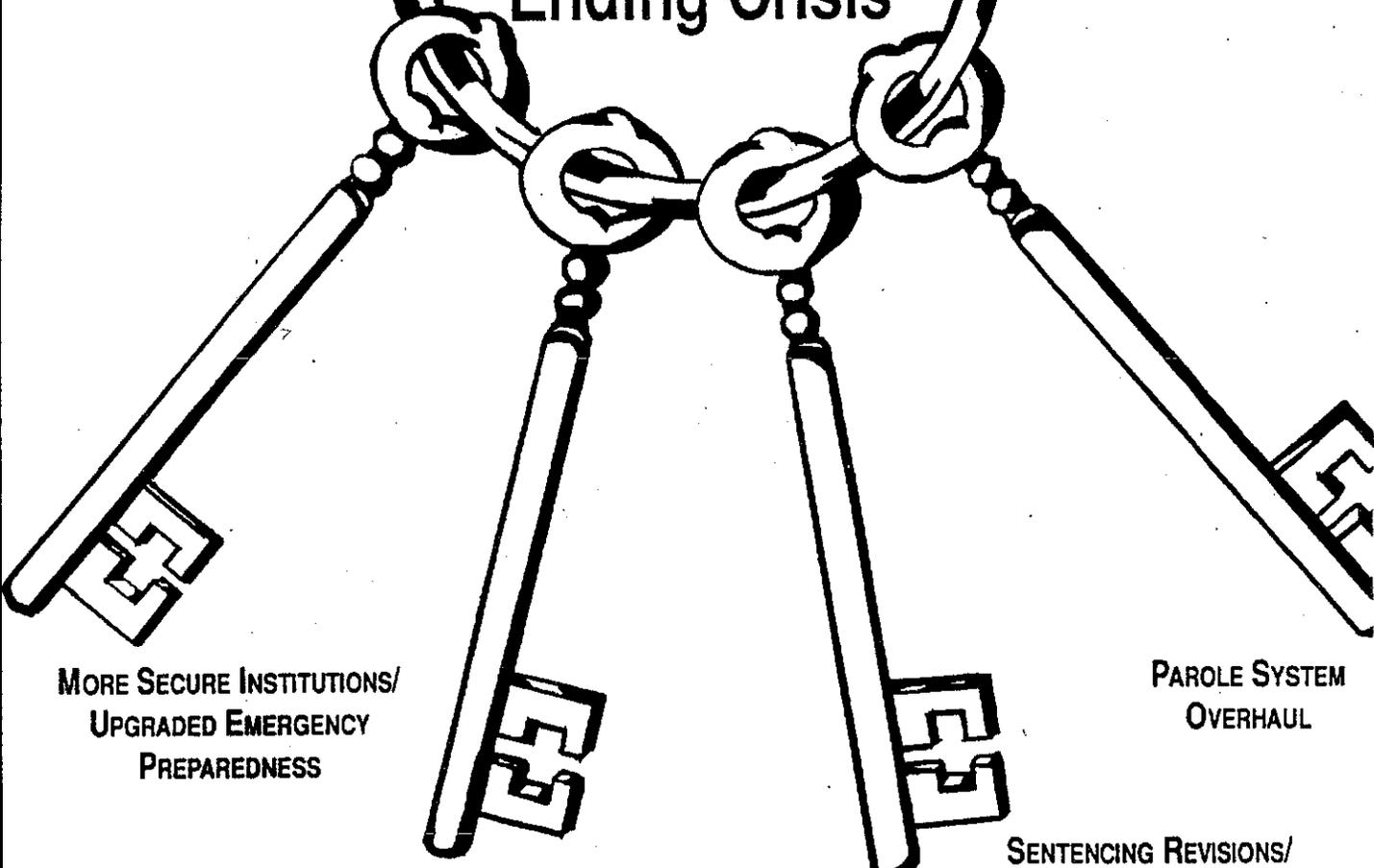


CORRECTIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

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After Camp Hill: The Keys to Ending Crisis



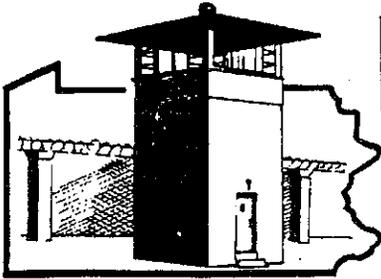
**MORE SECURE INSTITUTIONS/
UPGRADED EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS**

IMPROVED PRISON MANAGEMENT

**SENTENCING REVISIONS/
ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION**

**PAROLE SYSTEM
OVERHAUL**

Report by the Senate Judiciary Committee
Senator Stewart J. Greenleaf
Chairman



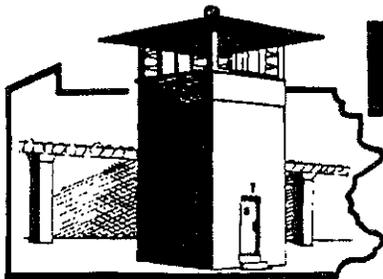
CORRECTIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

After Camp Hill: **The Keys to Ending Crisis**

Report by the Senate Judiciary Committee

Sen. Stewart J. Greenleaf, Chairman
Sen. Mike Fisher, Vice Chairman
Sen. Craig Lewis, Minority Chairman

Sen. David J. Brightbill
Sen. Vincent Fumo
Sen. John Hopper
Sen. Robert C. Jubelirer
Sen. Charles D. Lemmond
Sen. Jeanette Reibman
Sen. John Shumaker
Sen. Hardy Williams



CORRECTIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Executive Summary

This report is divided into three parts. The first part describes the Committee's investigation into the Camp Hill prison riots and explains how the investigation evolved into a systemwide study of corrections in Pennsylvania. As a result, instead of presenting a chronological report of the events at Camp Hill, the Committee developed a series of recommendations which should serve as a blueprint for statewide prison reform.

Part II summarizes the testimony and other information which was gathered during the Committee's investigation. The report discusses prison overcrowding but concludes that the underlying causes of the Camp Hill riots go beyond overcrowding. Several problems were identified including inadequate management practices which led to a polarization between the prison administration and much of the corrections force; mixing classifications of inmates in the same prison; continuous problems with the prison's physical plant; lack of incentives — programs and jobs — for inmates; and significant numbers of inmates serving time beyond their minimum sentence or as technical parole violators.

The second part of the report also discusses the prison administration's response to the Camp Hill riots. Two major areas of concern are identified. The prison administration's failure to search and secure the facility after the first day of rioting violated a fundamental principle of corrections. The failure to activate the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency until the second night of rioting indicated a serious breakdown in communications between state agencies.

Part III of the report lists the Committee's recommendations. As a backdrop to the recommendations, the Committee emphasizes the need for master planning. Instead of operating by crisis management, Pennsylvania needs a comprehensive master plan which would include both the state and county prison systems. The plan must deal with the increasing number of criminal offenders, the availability of intermediate punishments, the budget realities of prison construction, inmate and institutional classification, and the parole system.

The Committee recommends:

1. Construction of a super-maximum security prison to house inmates who threaten the security of institutions because of their violent predatory acts against staff and other inmates.
2. Improvements in the maintenance and repair programs for the existing state prisons. Where infrastructure repairs and improvements were once routine, too many are now emergencies.
3. Establishment of minimum security camp facilities to house and employ minimum custody inmates.
4. Implementation of an earned good time program to provide an incentive for

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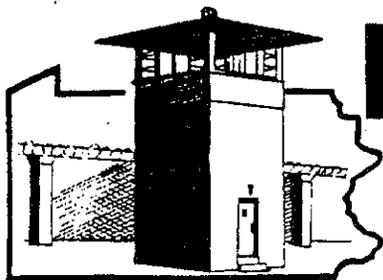
inmates to pursue educational and employment opportunities and to abide by prison rules.

5. Review of Pennsylvania's sentencing practices, including possible revision of the Sentencing Guidelines.
6. Establishment of a public advisory committee to the Department of Corrections to make recommendations to the Department on corrections policy including inmate educational, treatment and recreational programs and visitation policies.
7. Formalization of an activation system for the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency so that PEMA can take the lead role in providing emergency support during any crisis at a state facility.
8. Overhaul of the parole system to address the serious problems caused by the large number of inmates who are serving beyond their minimum terms and by the technical parole violators who are sent back to prison.

In addition to these policy recommendations, the Committee urges the Department of Corrections to consider several administrative actions. These include revising the inmate and institutional classification system along the lines of the Federal system, establishing the Department's reception and diagnostic centers for incoming inmates away from existing institutions, and implementing unit management in Department facilities.

Finally, the Committee recommends immediate action steps which should be taken by the Department of Corrections. These include regular tours of the prisons by the prison administrators, establishing a Community Relations Committee at each institution to facilitate a better relationship between the institution and surrounding communities, establishing an office in the Department's Central Office to respond to inquiries from inmate family members and developing a mobile command center to assist the Department in responding to emergencies at state prisons.

The Committee believes that the proper implementation of these recommendations will improve the delivery of correctional services for the residents of Pennsylvania. The Committee looks forward to cooperating with the Department of Corrections in implementing the recommendations in this report.



CORRECTIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Part I

Background

On October 25 and 26, 1989, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections experienced an unprecedented catastrophe in the form of massive, sequential inmate insurrections at the State Correctional Institution (SCI) at Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. These riots culminated in the complete loss of control within the institution by state officials. The physical takeover of the Camp Hill facility resulted in staff taken hostage, buildings burned, and millions of dollars in damage caused to real and personal property. The fact that no one was killed in a disturbance so massive and destructive is a tribute to the performance, restraint, and professionalism of many Camp Hill staff and the State Police officers who responded to the crisis. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that notwithstanding the problematic background of the riots, because of the bravery and professionalism of many state and municipal employees and volunteers, no inmate escaped and public safety was never jeopardized.

But beyond these visible facts, there are many questions about the fundamental causes of this uprising. While a tremendous body of information already exists, much of which relates to the events of the uprising itself, there is an important need to inquire into the underlying conditions at Camp Hill at the time of the riots, the overall management conditions at Camp Hill and throughout the State's correctional system, as well as the precipitating events themselves. While charged with the task of evaluating these facts about the riot itself from a broader perspective, the Senate Judiciary Committee's investigation of the October 1989 riots at the State Correctional Institutions at Huntingdon and Camp Hill evolved into a systemwide study of both the State and the county prison systems, because of the inter-relationships between those components of the criminal justice system. Though institutions themselves were the primary focus of the study, the committee also considered testimony on sentencing and parole policies.

The Judiciary Committee, chaired by Senator Stewart J. Greenleaf, has oversight responsibility for the state and county prison systems. Prison reform already was high on Senator Greenleaf's list of priorities for the Committee for the 1989-90 session. For example, the Committee held a public hearing on alternative sentencing and community corrections on April 18, 1989. The riots at Huntingdon and Camp Hill increased the Committee's interest in finding solutions to the critical problems in Pennsylvania's prisons.

The riot at Huntingdon, a maximum security prison, occurred on October 23 and was contained by prison staff to one cellblock. Approximately 50 inmates were involved in breaking windows, setting fires, and using pieces of broken furniture to ward off corrections officers. Twenty-nine officers and 19 inmates were injured during this uprising. That episode followed a far less troublesome course than the later Camp Hill disturbance, was resolved efficiently, and as the

Committee's investigation unfolded, did not constitute the major focus of inquiry.

In contrast, the riots at Camp Hill that began on October 25 were far more extensive, involving hundreds of inmates and most of the institution. State Police were ordered into the prison to quell the initial disturbance, and late on October 25, prison officials announced that the institution was secure and the inmates were in a lock-down status.

However, the prison erupted again on October 26 and the renewed rioting lasted into October 27. Once again, State Police were used to retake the institution.

These three days of rioting resulted in more than 120 injuries to prison employees and inmates, destroyed much of the prison, and caused the relocation of more than 1,000 inmates to the Federal prison system and other prisons in the state.

During the seven months following the October riots, the Committee held 17 public hearings and collected over 3,000 pages of testimony. While most of the hearings were held in Harrisburg and focused on the riots at Camp Hill, the Committee also heard testimony in Huntingdon and in Norristown, which is near the State Correctional Institution at Graterford. The Committee heard testimony from prison employees, inmates, families of inmates, community leaders, and criminal justice experts.

At its meeting on November 14, 1989, the Judiciary Committee authorized Senator Greenleaf, as Chairman, to issue any subpoenas necessary to investigate the prison riots. The subpoena power enabled the Committee to compel the attendance of some witnesses and to shield other witnesses who were concerned that their voluntary testimony might cause them problems.

In addition, numerous prison employees and inmates wrote to the Committee to express their viewpoints on the riots and prison conditions in general. The Committee retained a private investigator, Lawrence G. McConnell, who interviewed dozens of prison employees and inmates from throughout the state correctional system. For instance, letters and phone calls from corrections officers at the State Correctional Institution at Rockview resulted in the Committee's review of the circumstances of the February, 1989 riot at that facility.

Many of the letters from employees and inmates resulted in follow-up interviews by Mr. McConnell. It was the Committee's goal to receive information

directly from the people who live and work in the penal institutions of the state and its various counties. By so doing, the Committee hoped to develop an understanding of prison conditions in general, and the underlying reasons for the Camp Hill riots specifically.

It was not the Committee's intent to replicate the work of the Governor's Commission to Investigate Disturbances at Camp Hill Correctional Institution (the Adams Commission). That Commission's report, issued December 21, 1989, contains a chronology of the Camp Hill riots.

While the Adams Commission's sole purpose was to investigate the Camp Hill riots and report back to the Governor within a certain number of days, this Committee spent several months receiving testimony at hearings and otherwise gathering information about Camp Hill and the other institutions in Pennsylvania's State and county prison systems. As a result, this report uses the information gathered during the Committee's investigation to develop a series of recommendations that should serve as a blueprint for prison reform in Pennsylvania.

Also, during the Committee's inquiry, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency issued a report making a number of recommendations to alleviate prison overcrowding in the state. The Committee generally endorses those recommendations, and has incorporated many of the same concepts in its recommendations.

The Committee also retained a consultant in prison management, Stephen Grzegorek, retired Regional Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The professional assistance provided by Mr. McConnell and Mr. Grzegorek in conducting the investigation and preparing this report proved to be a tremendous help to the Committee.

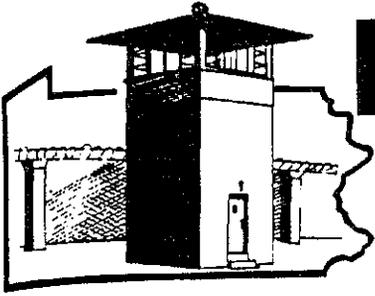
The first few hearings held by the Committee focused on the specifics of the riots. As the investigation evolved, however, the Committee heard testimony about inmates who were transferred into the Federal Prison System, problems in the county prison systems, sentencing and parole issues, and about SCI Graterford, Pennsylvania's largest prison. While these later hearings did not address the specifics of the riots at SCI Camp Hill, they were very helpful to the committee in understanding the reasons for prison unrest and in developing the committee's recommendations.

Throughout the hearings, the Committee's investigation was a bipartisan effort. Every member of the Committee has been concerned about the crisis in the Pennsylvania corrections system. This report is intended to provide a plan

for bringing the crisis to an end. The Committee looks forward to working with the Commissioner of Corrections in implementing the recommendations in this report.

In any project of this type, it is critically important to avoid substituting an individual's or a committee's retrospective judgment for that of the officials who made critical decisions under fire. That was not the Committee's charge. However, it is proper following a crisis such as this to fairly and objectively assess the manner of compliance with policy and procedure, and the application of commonly accepted correctional practice.

The Committee objectively reviewed riot preparation and tactical execution by the Department of Corrections staff and weighed in that context the tremendous body of testimony for significant details to determine what steps were reasonable at the time. Just as importantly, the Committee sought to learn what can be done in the future to prevent riots, and to better control them if they occur. Part II of this report summarizes the hearings in that light, and Part III presents the Committee's recommendations based on those findings.



CORRECTIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Part II

The Committee's Hearings

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This section sets forth findings based on the Committee's investigation as described in Part I. It will be divided generally into three sections, the first describing contemporary correctional thought on the cause of riots, the second dealing with the causes of the Camp Hill uprising, and the third relating a few key observations about the administrative response to the uprisings.

General Causative Factors

Riots in a correctional facility are often either impulsive, unpremeditated events or the result of a group of inmates attempting to force their will on other inmates. Still others result from unsuccessful mass escape attempts such as occurred at the Federal Bureau of Prisons facility at Oakdale, Louisiana.

In the case of SCI Camp Hill, overcrowding has been touted as the cause of the riots, and indeed, ample evidence was presented to the Committee that the Camp Hill Institution was overcrowded. But it is simplistic to say that overcrowding itself was the cause of the riot. Prison riots are often the result of complex interactions between staff, inmates, the physical plant, and highly variable management factors.

The American Correctional Association (ACA), in the 1990 issue of its publication, "Riots and Disturbances," notes that, "Prison disturbances are complex and varied in their origins. But it is well-known that underlying systemic and institutional factors such as overcrowding, idleness, inadequate security, lack of staff, poor staff training, substandard facilities, and lack of programs, can contribute to these crisis events. Even so, it is not possible to identify a specific cause, or set of causes, which will always precipitate a disturbance, or the absence of which will always prevent one. Although many disturbances seem to have been caused by a simple, critical episode, those incidents are often just sparks igniting an already volatile, riot-prone situation."

The ACA publication goes on to state, "Within an institution, some of the symptoms of administrative practices which may precede a riot or major disturbance are: vague lines of authority and administrative responsibility; absence of clearly defined and easily understood rules and regulations; poor communications; partiality in dealing with inmates and staff; lack of familiarity by top staff with the institution, its staff and inmates; and, indecisive action on legitimate grievances."

The Committee heard testimony that some form of virtually every one of these elements was in existence in October 1989 at Camp Hill.

While Department staff asserted that systemic crowding and other factors

presented them with uncontrollable conditions in the institution, the ACA publication further notes, "True, many of the underlying causes of disturbances in prisons can ultimately be traced to circumstances which are beyond the control of correctional administrators. But a significant number of the conditions and practices which precipitate disturbances can be directly attributed to management practices at the institutional level."

The Committee heard ample testimony indicating that inadequate management practices at Camp Hill were a cause of the initial uprising, as well as the second flare-up that resulted in widespread damage to the physical plant at Camp Hill.

In the above context, the Committee carefully examined the causes, both proximate and remote, that witnesses and other sources perceived as specifically fomenting the Camp Hill riots.

Fundamental Causes of the Uprising

No one would disagree that the crowded conditions at SCI Camp Hill constituted a serious problem. At the time of the riots at Camp Hill, there were over 2600 inmates housed in an institution with a capacity of 1826. The Committee heard overwhelming testimony from prison administrators, corrections officers, treatment and maintenance staff, and inmates that overcrowding was a major problem. Overcrowding was making it difficult to provide for basic inmate needs, such as food, shelter, and sanitation.

Commissioner David S. Owens, Department of Corrections, testified before the Committee on October 31, 1989, as to the unprecedented expansion of prison capacity in Pennsylvania in response to widespread overcrowding. However, Mr. Owens further testified that "we cannot build our way out of this problem. The cost would be astronomical and we can't bring cells on line fast enough. Therefore, we are going to have to take a serious look at viable alternatives to incarceration."

To gain additional perspective on this subject, the Committee heard testimony from Mr. Anthony Trivisono, Executive Director of the American Correctional Association, who stated that nationwide, the numbers of confined offenders is increasing and overwhelming prison systems. According to Mr. Trivisono, the distribution pattern of offenders remains the same, i.e., 75 percent to some type of community supervision and 25 percent to prison. However, the absolute numbers have grown enormously. The nation's prison population doubled in size from 1960 to 1980. This 20 year period for doubling decreased to 10 years from 1980 to 1990, and most projections now indicate a 5 year period for the

next doubling. J. Michael Quinlan, Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, projects the Federal prison population will increase from 56,000 currently to 95,000 in 1995. So Pennsylvania, which as of October 31, 1990, is 158% of capacity systemwide, is not alone in this problem.

It is true, though, that the Pennsylvania prison population growth rate has been greater than the national rate. In 1980, there were 8,000 inmates in the state; now, there are over 22,000. Pennsylvania's prison population actually approached a three-fold increase in the number of offenders during this period. The cell space shortfall approached 7,000 beds, despite the fact that the Department has added 3,800 cells since 1987.

In addition to overcrowding, there were other factors in place at Camp Hill that contributed to the climate in the institution at the outset of the riots.

It is a widely accepted premise of sound correctional management that the visibility of top administrators in the institution is a barometer of the health of the institution. However, at Camp Hill, top management staff were not making rounds in the institution, inspecting the cellblocks, or observing the quality of inmate and staff interaction and communications.

The Camp Hill situation was best exemplified when Corrections Officer Keefer testified, "I worked that G block for a year, over a year, and during that year, working the 2 to 10 shift in G block, I have never seen anybody above the rank of captain in my block. I have only seen my captain no more than twice during that year in my block. You can't run an institution and not go inside it."

Another fundamental management tool in a correctional institution is the acquisition, evaluation, and communication to top managers of intelligence gathered from various sources. Yet this process was impaired, and when "hard" intelligence was gathered and forwarded up the chain of command there was little or no action.

Sergeant Joseph Miller stated that he had lost sources of intelligence because he was recently placed in charge of two cell blocks instead of the one block he had responsibility for previously. He lamented, "I did not know the inmates anymore."

Captain Donald Bowser testified to the loss of trained officers from SCI Camp Hill to SCI Frackville. He related this to the loss of intelligence because staff could not read mail or monitor phone calls. He also complained of the lack of tool control (carpentry, plumbing, electrical and other maintenance tools), another critical prison management problem.

Prompt, sure, fair discipline is critical to the safety of staff and inmates alike. However, inmate discipline at Camp Hill was uniformly reported as being ineffective.

Camp Hill Superintendent Freeman testified he could not maintain discipline, citing as one example an inmate at the facility who had been a major disciplinary problem at the State Correctional Institutions at Pittsburgh and Huntingdon. The inmate was ordered out of the Restricted (disciplinary) Housing Unit (RHU) at Camp Hill by Deputy Commissioner Erskind DeRamus over the Superintendent's objection. Superintendent Freeman wanted the inmate transferred to a maximum security institution but instead he was ordered to place the inmate in general population under heavy supervision. However, this inmate was returned to the RHU shortly before the riots because he was caught, according to Superintendent Freeman, encouraging inmates to create a disturbance.

Lieutenant James Barrett testified, "There was no respect for the officers. No morale, no inmate discipline, inmate court is a joke. RHU is run by the PRC (Prison Review Committee). It's been easier for the officers to look the other way instead of getting involved, because when you get involved, there's always a chance when dealing with people that you make a mistake. And mistakes aren't tolerated at Camp Hill, at least the officers'." He also testified that "there were 225 assaults on staff in fiscal year 1989." Although assaults on inmates were always investigated, he testified that assaults on staff were seldom investigated.

Corrections Officer Bernard Venesky Jr. stated that as an acting sergeant he attended a sergeants' meeting on August 6, 1989, where it was stated by several officers that the punishment meted out by the hearing examiners who heard complaints of inmate misconduct had little deterrent effect on the inmates. Generally, the officers said they believed that inmates did not fear being housed in the RHU enough to deter them from misconduct. The officers also were concerned that the intelligence reports they sent up the chain of command were not acted upon. Sergeant Bernard Baker, in his testimony, also stated that inmates who were convicted of serious violations were not punished enough and intelligence reports were not acted upon.

- There were indications that the activities by disruptive groups played a part in the uprising. There was testimony from many witnesses who stated their belief that the riots were fomented by an Islamic religious splinter group (Fruit of Islam-F.O.I) which, in a well organized manner, took advantage of inmate discord. Some staff said they believed that institutional conditions provided the perfect base for a small organized group of terrorists to create discord, spurred by the reality or at least the perception by staff and inmates that rules and regulations

were not enforced because of fear by top officials.

Inmate classification principles and practices developed in the United States in recent decades have established that a homogeneous group of inmates is more easily managed than a heterogeneous one — where the weak are preyed upon by the strong, and in which staff must deal with a variety of security risks, from minimal to grave. A companion practice is to confine similarly-categorized offenders in facilities that meet their specific security and supervision needs. However, Camp Hill contained a mixed population which included maximum security inmates housed in a minimum/medium security institution which was built for relatively unsophisticated young adults. Inmate Douglas Walburn testified that mixing inmates this way "can turn a nonviolent criminal into a violent criminal."

While the Department of Corrections does have a classification system for inmates, Camp Hill was housing inmates of all classifications at the time of the riots. Several factors contributed to this mix of inmates.

Camp Hill is a regional diagnostic center. Incoming inmates from the central part of the state are housed at Camp Hill, regardless of the type of crime for which they were convicted, until they are classified and assigned to a specific institution.

Technical parole violators added to the overcrowding problem and to the mix of inmates. Many of these inmates would ideally be placed in minimum security facilities or alternatives to incarceration would be found for them. However, because these facilities and alternatives are not available, most of the technical parole violators are returned to state maximum and medium security prisons. The Board of Probation and Parole recommitted 1,409 technical parole violators in 1989 of which 1,151 were incarcerated in state institutions. The remaining violators were placed in county prisons.

In addition, overcrowding throughout the state system has made adherence to the present classification system difficult. Inmates must be assigned to an institution that has an available space instead of an institution which might be more compatible with the inmate's classification.

Superintendent Freeman testified to the misclassification of inmates at the medium security institution. "We had over 200 lifers; almost 10 percent of the inmate population were not parole eligible." Unfortunately, he stated he could not transfer aggressive, violent inmates to a more secure setting.

Mr. Grzegorek's testimony was consistent with that of the Department of

Corrections personnel, in observing that one of the other major causes of the Camp Hill riots was confining maximum custody inmates in a medium security facility. He noted that inmate custody levels should parallel institution security levels. He stated that the present two institutional security levels (either medium or maximum) forces compression of all types of offenders — violent with nonviolent, young with old, first offender with repeat offender, predator with non-predator — into an inappropriate setting. He also testified that classification of facilities on a broader scale (several levels of classification from minimum to maximum security), while not a panacea, would allow the removal of the predators, whether they are a small band of organized terrorists acting in concert or individuals operating singly. These inmates could be housed in a super maximum security institution such as the Federal facility in Marion, Illinois.

Inmate and staff morale can be affected tremendously, as can security, by the maintenance and upkeep of a prison. However, maintenance of the Camp Hill facility was uneven, with persistent plumbing and security lock problems, according to staff testimony. Kenneth Chubb, who supervises the maintenance department at Camp Hill, testified that his staff had "continuous problems" with the locking system. Another problem voiced by maintenance personnel was the number of man-hours required to maintain the Department's headquarters and other buildings outside the walls of the institution.

Superintendent Freeman pointed out that the physical plant infrastructure was not in a good state of repair. Budget problems, he testified, became so grave that he did not receive \$8,000 for an interior fence to protect the modular units.

Captain Gerald E. Kerstetter testified, "Not only do we have security problems, we have problems with the plumbing, the heating. We are constantly calling for people to repair toilets, all kinds of electrical lighting in cells. The lighting in the cells isn't adequate, everything basically is obsolete." He further testified, "Corrections officers are in there with hammers tapping the buttons to come so that the water can work."

The Camp Hill institution was built to house juveniles one to a cell. However, at the time of the riots, the prison housed adult inmates generally two to a cell. The prison's infrastructure was not designed to meet the demands placed on it by double-celling. Superintendent Freeman testified that "when Camp Hill opened in 1941, it was built for 1,414 inmates. Not just the cell space was built for that but the dining room and the kitchen and the laundry and the sewer system and everything else was built for that number of inmates." Even the cells themselves were built for juveniles, not adults. The walls of the cells were built out of narrow hollow ceramic brick which, as it turned out, were easily broken by the rioting inmates.

At the time of the riots, because of the modular units which had been added, the capacity at Camp Hill was 1,826. However, Superintendent Freeman noted that you can add modular units "but that does not increase your sewer capacity, your dining room capacity, your kitchen services, your laundry or your office space or your exercise yards or anything else."

One of the other major problems identified was that sergeants no longer knew the inmates in their assigned housing units. Previously, a sergeant was responsible for 225 to 250 inmates, but at the time of the riots was responsible for 450 to 500 inmates because each sergeant was put in charge of two cell blocks instead of one. The sergeants testified that it was not possible under those circumstances to know the inmates, and the inmates to know and trust key staff. Communication was stymied and crucial information was not obtained because of the inmate to sergeant ratio. There simply was no communication base for staff to use, nor was there any concerted attempt, to explain the two policy changes that set the stage for the riots.

Sergeant Joseph Miller testified of his concern regarding the decision to place a sergeant over two cellblocks, instead of one. He said he even went so far as to meet with the Commissioner. He stated he could not properly supervise the corrections officers in two cell blocks; he could not adequately train corrections officers; he could not visually supervise the cellblocks. Finally, he did not know the inmates himself, testifying, "People probably think they (inmates) are on one side of the bars and we are on the other. That's not true, they are around us every day and the only way we survive each day is by earning their respect. You earn their respect by interacting with them."

Employee morale has an impact on the security status of a correctional institution. There are indications that there were ongoing morale issues at Camp Hill that were not being dealt with, including some at top management levels.

Captain Kerstetter testified that staff morale was the lowest he had seen in 18 years prior to the riot. He stated that polarization existed between the Superintendent and two Deputies on one side, and the corrections force on the other side. Other testimony from corrections officers, sergeants, and lieutenants corroborate Kerstetter's contention.

Mr. Freeman reported that during "the past couple of years there has been a growing concern in the Department of Corrections at the superintendents' level about the ability of the managers to run their institutions in the face of massive overcrowding, being strangled by the lack of resources, by the lack of money, by the lack of beds and by the lack of personnel."

Inmate programs, and particularly job opportunities for inmates, are critical to management of an institution, particularly one that is overcrowded. Camp Hill certainly had a deficit in this area, with waiting lists for the few that were available and about one third of the population totally idle.

Inmate Kenneth Ernst testified that inmates had "a feeling of hopelessness and frustration." Because of overcrowding and understaffing, many inmates could not participate in the programs they needed to qualify for parole. As a result, a vicious cycle had developed. Every time an inmate did not qualify for parole when his minimum sentence date came up, it added to the overcrowding problem and the frustration of the inmates — a dangerous mix.

Mr. Ernst further testified about the lack of incentives. The inmates were frustrated by "the lack of rewards and incentives for things they tried to accomplish." For example, he noted that working in forestry camps outside the walls of the institutions was once an incentive for "long termers" but that program had ended.

Many inmates were unemployed. Because of the lack of programs and jobs within the prison, many inmates were left with a lot of idle time. Inmate Ameen McKelvie testified, "by overcrowding, we had a problem of unemployment ... you got idle time, you got four or five or 600 people out in the yard everyday, doing nothing but playing games." This was particularly true with technical parole violators who were returned to prison. Kenneth Murphy, a technical parole violator, testified that it was like "living in a tomb. I can't go nowhere, I can't go to school, I can't even take shop, I can't get a job." Kenneth Ernst pointed out that technical parole violators "were in very low priority as far as jobs were concerned [and] had no opportunity to get involved in programs."

Superintendent Freeman stated the programs for inmates were inadequate. In the past when Camp Hill had 900 inmates, Mr. Freeman said "There were 53 full-time educational and vocational instructors. By the time Camp Hill had reached 2,600 inmates, we had 25 full time and part time vocational and educational instructors because of cutbacks in the budget." Some of the reduction may have been reasonable because Camp Hill originally was a more program-oriented youth institution. However, expanded educational and treatment programs and additional employment opportunities were sorely needed, especially in light of the ever-increasing prison population. The Committee heard testimony about Camp Hill's effective drug and alcohol abuse program. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of the inmates that needed this kind of help were in the program.

The result of such conditions was that, despite diligent work by many staff to

alleviate hardships of the inmates' crowded living conditions, Camp Hill barely contained tensions that were rapidly reaching a critical point. Conditions were such that all that was needed was a spark to set off a major conflagration. Indeed, it appears that top administrators may have believed that conditions were ripe for disorder.

Camp Hill Superintendent Freeman testified that he knew it was likely that there would be a major disturbance at one of the State Prisons and that this issue was discussed among the system's superintendents. Staffing levels can impair the operational status of an institution. Superintendent Freeman testified that he was short 88 corrections officers at the time of the riots. Camp Hill had 41 officer positions unfilled and had requested from the Commissioner an additional 47 officer positions. However, staff shortages went beyond the need for additional corrections officers. Mr. Freeman stated that when the shortage of treatment and support personnel are included, "you add 60 people, we were roughly 150 staff short of what we needed to run that institution in terms of managing the excess inmate population."

Despite the mounting evidence that there were imminent, serious problems, there was little or no effective action by the Department of Corrections and the prison administration to affirmatively address these underlying conditions. Even though there is testimony that this matter was discussed by the Department and the administration, Camp Hill continued to operate as it had for some time, setting the stage for events to come.

The Precipitating Events

A number of background factors, including overcrowding, understaffing, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of inmate programs and jobs, friction between the prison management and many of the corrections officers, many of which are considered by corrections professionals as classic precursors of disruptions, were in place at Camp Hill in October 1989 to provide a catalyst for anarchy. When two announcements changing important inmate management policies were issued early in October, the tenuous order that existed at the prison began to disintegrate.

One change was the cessation of families bringing in food on "Family Day." The second change restricted inmate access to the "sick line" to every other day. These changes were received with a high level of inmate resentment. The changes were issued without explanation, in what inmates perceived as an arbitrary exercise of power by the prison management. The changes affected two important areas of inmate life, namely, family and health.

Both policy changes may have had merit. The former change was aimed at reducing the introduction of contraband in food parcels, and was a necessary security control measure. The latter brought some semblance of order to the often chaotic treatment process of the sick line. However, the issuing of them together and in a manner regarded as high-handed heated frustrations at Camp Hill to the boiling point.

Sergeant Baker testified, "I wouldn't have hit them with two policies, two major policy changes, that close." Corrections Officer Venesky testified, "It was just too much being done too quickly. Not only couldn't the staff adjust to it, but the inmates couldn't adjust to it as well."

While several inmates testified about the underlying tensions and frustrations at Camp Hill, there seemed to be a general consensus among the inmates that these policy changes were, as Kenneth Ernst put it, "the straw that broke the camel's back." He testified, "Our freedom was continually restricted and things that we had enjoyed for many years were being taken away."

Inmate Douglas Walburn testified that the riot was caused by a "build-up of many issues" but when the policy changes came out "my housing unit was in an uproar." Another inmate, Kenneth Murphy, put it this way: "When you have 200 people on a block wanting to tear it down because you're taking the only chance they get to have civilized food, it tends to upset some people. I was scared."

Given the background of the institution, and the lack of a sound communication base with the inmate population, it is not surprising that there began to be signs of imminent unrest. These signs were either ignored, discounted, or improperly evaluated.

Sergeant Baker cited increasingly foreboding, classic signals that portend grave problems. "You hear rumblings, but you hear rumblings all the time ... things just weren't right at the mainline (when most of the inmate population is at the dining hall for meals). There were less people coming down eating. It was quieter. People that normally come up and talk to you, they walked by and didn't say anything."

Corrections Officer Raymond Eckenrode testified that the first day after the medical policy change, 175 to 200 inmates signed the "sick line" sheet, where prior to the policy change there normally would be 30 to 40 inmates on the "sick line."

Corrections Officer John Caffas testified that a reliable source related that there

was to be "... an organized effort by the inmates to protest the changes that have been made in family day visits and in the sick line procedures." An incident report was forwarded to a lieutenant.

Corrections Officer John Kraft testified, quoting an inmate he overheard shortly after the changes in the policy were announced, "They only have as much control over us as we let them have." Mr. Kraft reported the incident to his superiors, and as a consequence several inmates were placed in the Restricted Housing Unit for investigation.

Corrections Officer Harry Colestock testified that because of the medical and family day visiting policy changes, "Inmates were retaliating by having large numbers of inmates sign up for sick line." Staff responded, "by giving inmates 'lay-in' slips that effectively kept them from leaving the cellblocks to go to work or recreation activities. It also kept the inmates in their cells most of the time."

Captain Robert E. Stotelmeyer testified that it was his opinion that the new sick line policy was a proximate cause for the riots. He said the staff morale was at an all time low. He also corroborated the polarization between the administration and the corrections force, and he reflected on the large number of incident reports written on inmates who were talking about the changes in the sick line and visiting policies.

In sharp contrast to other witnesses, Major John Stover testified that the number of incident reports was not increasing prior to the riots, contradicting the testimony of the vast majority of lieutenants, sergeants, and corrections officers. Nevertheless, the predominant body of evidence supports the proposition that the two policy decisions considerably heightened tension in the institution, poisoning the inmate population in readiness for a single triggering event.

That event was the E Gate confrontation on October 25 when, as inmates were returning to their cellblocks from yard, an inmate allegedly struck a corrections officer and a fight broke out between several officers and dozens of inmates. This melee began the first day of rioting. The ACA "Riots" publication describes this kind of trigger event in broad terms. "A disturbance is sometimes caused by a random incident that gets out of control... An inmate who is being taken to segregation draws a crowd; a staff member momentarily loses self-control and hits an inmate; an inmate 'goes off' and assaults a staff member, takes keys and incites others. These trigger events may be tied in to some other circumstance, or they may be totally unanticipated..."

Inmate Douglas Walburn stated: "I think that the reason why the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill rioted that evening is because the

opportunity was there, I think it would have happened at any time the opportunity arose. That was the opportunity and the inmates grabbed it."

And so it was that all of these accumulated long- and short-term tensions and grievances — apparently unrecognized, unacknowledged or unremedied — came to be released in the violent series of acts that were the Camp Hill riots.

Response Issues

The third area of Committee findings is the response to the crisis once it was under way. While it heard significant testimony in this area, this report will not attempt to replicate the work of the Adams Commission. However, there are a few points that bear mention in view of the recommendations that follow.

First, many of the long-term conditions noted above as underlying factors had corresponding impact in the riot response scenario.

The prison administration's lack of personal involvement and knowledge of the institution and its staff had severe implications for the tactical response, as well as in the search and lockdown decisions that enabled the inmates to initiate the second phase of the riot.

Limited maintenance resources adversely impacted the ability of the institution to immediately respond to the damage to the prison caused by the first day of rioting.

Staff morale, already low, was further lowered by the prospect of returning to duty in housing areas where there was every reason to believe the inmates could free themselves from their cells at will.

There was a paucity of usable intelligence to use in forming plans for tactical response and follow-up. There was little or no credible communication base with inmates from which the administration could have developed a solid understanding with the inmates that might have prevented the second surge of rioting.

Because it is so critical to the course the riot took, it is necessary to discuss one aspect of the administrative decision-making process — the failure of the prison administrators to personally ascertain the condition of the institution before proceeding with any additional decisions.

Superintendent Freeman testified that he did not initiate an immediate search

and secure" process because he relied on Captain Kerstetter's report that the cell blocks were secure and because of the emotional climate. He indicated he was concerned that the inmates might have been brutalized by staff had a "search and secure" procedure been instituted.

However, the cell blocks were not secure. Apparently, the reason for this confusion was the failure of the prison staff to realize that the inmates could easily leave their cells by reaching through and above the bars on their cell doors and pulling a lever which opened the cell doors. Many of the panels above the cell doors which hid the mechanism for opening the cells had been removed during the first riot. Captain Kerstetter reported "all secure" when he placed inmates in the cells and shut the cell doors. No one seemed to recognize at the time just how insecure many of the cell blocks were immediately following the first riot because everyone was primarily concerned with getting the inmates back into the cells.

Superintendent Freeman stated that the prison administration thought the institution was secure after the first night of rioting. However, the prison administrators did not go into the institution to see for themselves. Instead, they relied on information coming up the chain of command. Had they gone inside, in addition to seeing firsthand the damage and the condition of the locking devices, their presence inside the facility may have bolstered morale by a show of concern and support.

This decision to stay at a distance and maintain a hands-off posture violated a fundamental principle of corrections. After a disturbance is contained and controlled, the prison administration should order corrections officers to search and secure the facility cell by cell, segregating ring leaders and gathering information and evidence.

Leaving the prison unsecured the first night was analogous to firemen putting out a house fire, but leaving open cans of gasoline next to smoldering embers when they depart.

In addition to this critical omission, the Department's state of emergency readiness, and that of the Camp Hill facility in particular, was a concern to the Committee.

Commissioner Owens testified about the incident at Huntingdon and commented generally on the way emergency plans at the Department's Central Office and at the institutional level are executed.

There were major differences between the two institutional riots under

consideration. The incident at Huntingdon was a localized riot, but the situation at Camp Hill constituted a complete takeover. The physical plant at Huntingdon, because it is a maximum security facility, facilitated effective tactical response. The facility at Camp Hill was not structurally hardened, and staff were unable to cordon off and contain large numbers of rampaging inmates.

Adequate contingency plans were not in place for the call up of community resources, and the effective management and replenishment of those resources.

Moreover, ample testimony was given that while the local situation was maintained under control at the facility perimeter by various municipal police and fire departments, there was no plan to replace these forces in order to continue to assure protection for the surrounding communities.

Ronald Mull, Manager of Lower Allen Township, the municipality in which SCI Camp Hill is located, testifying before the committee about local emergency response to the riots, stressed the need for preplanning and communications.

Mr. Mull explained that there had been very little planning by the prison administration and local governments on how to respond to a full scale riot at the prison. "Advance planning provides corrections officers, state and local police and local firemen and emergency medical personnel the opportunity to review and refine responses to critical events with clear thinking and cool heads." He emphasized the need to "identify specific roles for the municipalities" in responding to a riot at a State institution.

Mr. Mull recommended that the "Department make a commitment to improve communications between the various agencies." He pointed out problems in communications between local agencies (different radio frequencies), between State agencies (why was the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) not notified the first night of the riots?), and between the State and local agencies (local government officials had difficulty finding out what was going on from prison officials).

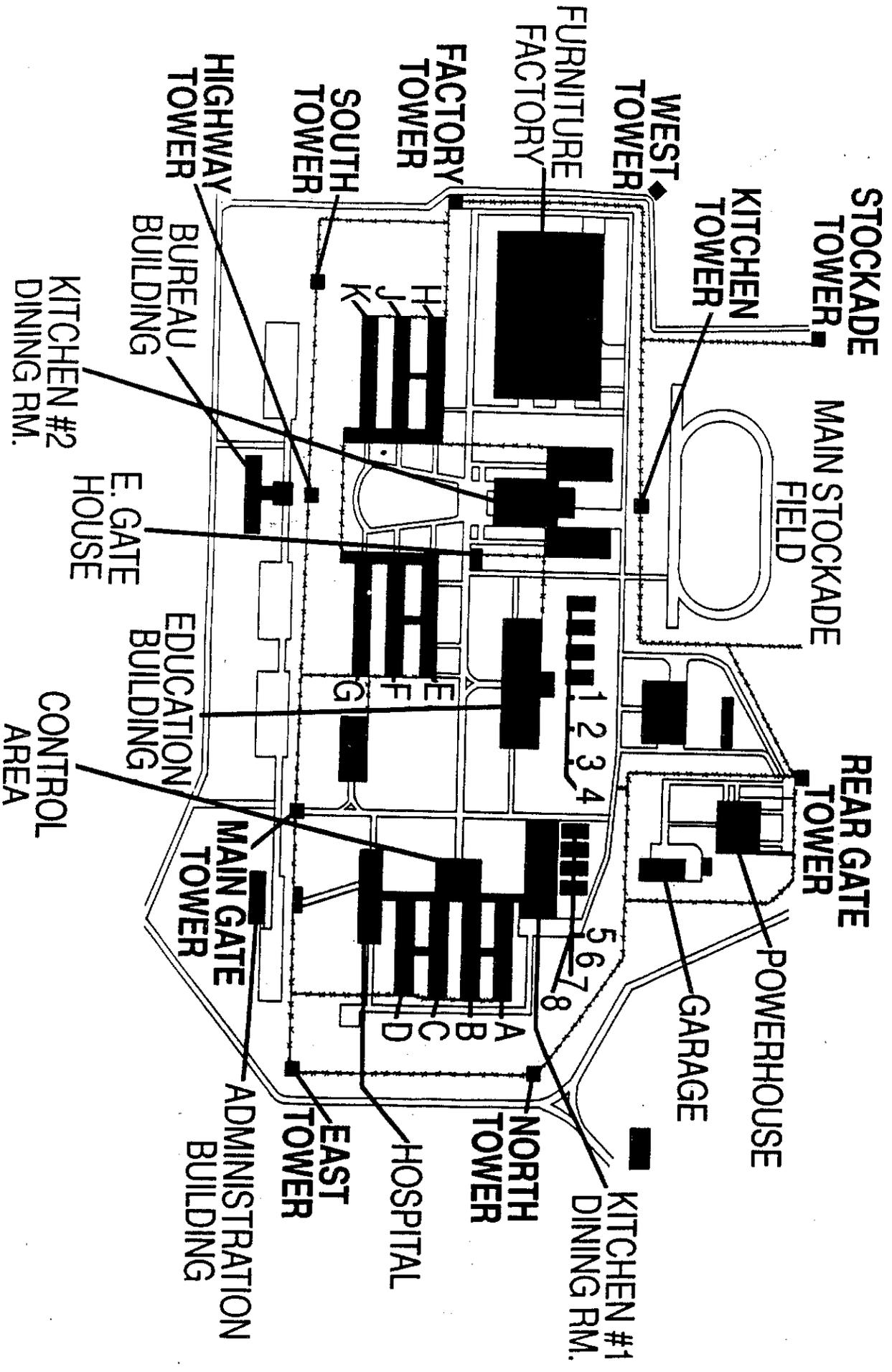
The testimony pointed out a particularly troublesome problem concerning PEMA, the State's emergency response coordinating agency. Joseph LeFleur, Executive Director of PEMA, admitted that the agency was not involved during the first night because no one had activated the agency. However, it was unclear whether there was any established procedure for activating PEMA. In fact, when PEMA was finally activated the second night, it was at the request of the Cumberland County Office of Emergency Preparedness. PEMA was not contacted by the State Police or Department of Corrections.

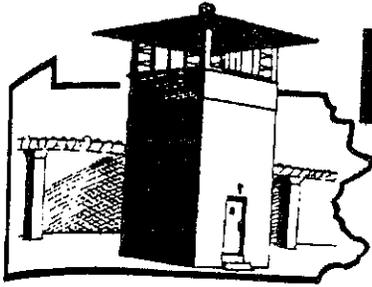


The institution's own emergency response team was not as effective as it might have been under the circumstances it encountered. Captain Robert Keith was the head of the Special Emergency Response Team (SERT). Surprisingly enough, he stated in testimony before the committee that the team was not very effective. The major reason why the SERT team was not effective, according to Captain Keith, was because the members of the team worked different shifts making training as a unit difficult.

These inadequacies, among the many cited by the Adams Commission, are addressed in the recommendations that follow.

CAMP HILL STATE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION





CORRECTIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Part III

The Committee's Recommendations



The Committee's recommendations fall into four major areas:

- Master Planning
- Public Policy Issues
- Administrative Actions
- Immediate Action Steps

The information in this section is a compendium of major areas where change is needed. Particularly in the last two sections, the Department of Corrections should have considerable latitude in amplifying on recommended steps, in accord with sound correctional practice.

Master Planning

As a preamble to the other recommendations that follow, it should be pointed out that without a well thought out master plan for agency operation, budget preparation and execution is an exercise in looking "through a glass, darkly." Such a plan must take into account the realities of increasing numbers of criminal offenders, the availability of intermediate punishments or sanctions, the budget realities of additional large-scale prison construction, the proven principles of inmate and institutional classification, as well as necessary features of the State's and agency's statutory and regulatory underpinnings.

To gather additional perspective on this subject, the Committee heard additional testimony from ACA Executive Director Travisono, who stated that we "must have the highest level of criminal justice planning at both the executive and legislative (branch)." He observed that such a plan must "take the state as a whole... and combine local (units) into the master planning process and find out what the counties can do."

Mr. Travisono testified that the police, prosecutors and courts are doing a better job of clearing cases, but in the process are sending more offenders into Federal, state and county prison systems. He proposed that Pennsylvania consider and adopt a variety of new ideas that are in place and working in other jurisdictions, such as shock incarceration (boot camps), house arrest, 24 hour parole offices, community service, electronic monitoring and minimum type camp facilities, as well as other avenues, to divert offenders from traditional incarceration.

The need for a community corrections (intermediate punishments) law which would authorize many of these programs was emphasized by many witnesses. Senate Bill 718, a community corrections proposal, has passed the Senate and the House of Representatives. While Senate Bill 718 applies only to counties, a similar program should be considered for the State.

In further addressing the need to reduce overcrowding through diversionary strategies, Dr. M. Kay Harris, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminal Justice at Temple University, in her testimony, described diversion programs as following the "principle of parsimony," which "favors the least drastic means that will satisfy legitimate and government purposes." Dr. Harris testified that she was "particularly troubled by what I regard as the serious over-reliance on incarceration in Pennsylvania and in many other jurisdictions."

In short, the Department must find programs and services for offenders, including technical parole violators, that meet the public safety imperative, yet also confine them economically and in a setting that has some potential for meeting individualized needs. Using a generic prison environment for confined offenders across the board does not meet that test.

To this end, there has been a movement in the United States toward privatization of correctional functions, and this strategy is often touted as a remedy for overcrowding. Mr. Travisono indicated that private agencies can do some things better than government agencies, and there is some potential in private sector corrections for reducing crowding in the prison systems. This can include private design, construction and operation of correctional and community prison facilities.

He stated that in addition to exploring privatization, the agency should do, "what you can do together to reduce the size of particular institutions by having several more of them or smaller ones in certain areas." Use of facilities of this type must be efficiently meshed with other agency resources, of course.

As a method of reducing crowding at the "back end" of the criminal justice system, Mr. Travisono testified as an advocate for earned good time. "Good time has been our salvation over the years and it is still a valuable tool." This approach is contained in legislation that has passed the Senate and is under consideration in the House.

The inmates who testified before the Committee made clear that the lack of incentives to encourage inmates to not only behave themselves, but to set and accomplish personal goals, was one of the biggest problems in Pennsylvania's prison system. Inmate James Dietrich explained that an earned time program "gives inmates something to look forward to. Inmates serving long sentences, that gives them initiative to behave themselves, to get involved in educational programs and skills and make themselves better than they were when they came in that gate, so they have something to go outside for and work for ... there's a very good attitude within the fences about the good time bill."

[REDACTED]

It appears clear from previously-cited inmate population growth figures, and the testimony of numerous experts, that without innovative diversion tactics, the Department cannot build enough institutions fast enough. Nor will the taxpayer stand by indefinitely, watching enormous sums of tax dollars pour into traditional correctional construction.

Future planning for the agency must take into account the cost to the public of its institutional structure. There are clear cost benefits attributable to providing differential housing to inmates with varied security and supervision needs, and yet Pennsylvania is not using minimum security institution options to any appreciable degree. "Fifty-one percent of offenders arriving in the Federal system are sent to minimum security correctional facilities," according to Mr. Grzegorek. He testified that a minimum security facility would cost 10 to 15 thousand dollars per bed; medium security, 40 to 60 thousand dollars per bed, and maximum security, 100 thousand dollars per bed. With these figures in mind, the Department could build four to five minimum security beds for every medium security bed, or two medium security beds for every maximum security bed.

Master planning that incorporated this factor would have an immediate payoff in real dollars. In Pennsylvania, if only 10 percent of its inmates were appropriate for minimum security facilities, then 2,300 offenders could be removed from traditional walled or fenced institutions. In reality, for a cost of approximately 23 to 34.5 million dollars, or about half the cost of one medium security institution, the Department could maximize the number of beds for the dollars spent, with no corresponding reduction in public safety.

Every inmate does not have to be incarcerated in a maximum security, Alcatraz-type prison. For many inmates, the removal of their liberty is punishment enough and they will be secure in a medium or minimum security institution. The security risk posed by the inmate is more important than the length of the inmate's sentence in determining what classification of prison the inmate should serve his sentence.

Strategies for diversion of appropriate offenders from traditional incarceration, and use of lower security facilities for non-dangerous offenders, must of course be consistent with the obligation the state has to protect society. However, the Committee urges that before millions of dollars are spent on building additional high security prisons, the Department should initiate a new master plan (or update the current one) to fully integrate these factors.

From all indications, without a master plan that is rationally derived and supported with appropriate resources, the Department will continue to operate by crisis management rather than by management by objectives. All further

recommendations are premised on the Department's involvement in this critical strategic planning, without which all other efforts will be far less effective.

Public Policy Issues

The following recommendations will require specific legislative action and support for implementation.

- I. Consistent with the above master plan, the Department of Corrections should build a maximum security facility modeled after the United States Penitentiary at Marion, Illinois.

There was ample testimony of the existence in the state of a relatively small group of highly dangerous, extremely disruptive offenders. The recommended facility would house the most violent predatory inmates in the state correctional system, the inmates who threaten the very fabric of the institution with their violent, predatory acts against staff and other inmates. Housing the "worst of the worst," this location would be geared to a 22 hour a day lockup in single cells. A staff-to-inmate ratio of virtually one-to-one would insure that staff always outnumber inmates during cell moves. There would be no congregate programs, movement, or gatherings. Education, dining, and religious services would take place in the individual cells. Inmates would be seen at the cells by medical staff. Visiting would be non-contact, to reduce the introduction of contraband. Inmates would be allowed out of cells for medical emergencies, and for two hours per day for showers and recreation. Inmates classified for the facility would include:

1. Capital cases.
2. Serious management cases, such as staff assaults and those committing murders in custody.
3. Inmates serving life sentences, early in the service of the sentence.
4. Inmates who present unusual escape risks, or those who may receive outside assistance in an escape attempt.

While inmates sentenced to life in prison initially would be sent to a super-maximum security facility like the one at Marion, these inmates should have the opportunity to earn transfers to less secure institutions. Inmates serving life sentences ("lifers") are often a stabilizing force in the prison population and their transfer to less secure settings should be encouraged.

- II. The maintenance and repair program should be upgraded in all Department facilities.

Repairs and improvements to the existing Department facilities cannot be ignored or deficiently budgeted. The physical plant infrastructure is in a marginal state of repair, and in some cases is inadequate to handle the number of inmates involved. One only has to look at the massive sewage problem that exists at SCI Graterford to see the extremely problematic situation this state-wide issue is going to create in the future. Where infrastructure repairs and improvements were once routine, too many are now emergencies.

Unless each facility undergoes a full architectural evaluation, with the resulting findings and recommendations incorporated into agency master planning, the Department will continue to be in a position only to react to one crisis after another. Sewage plants are undersized; food preparation components are inadequate; electrical systems are marginal; heating and ventilation systems must be replaced. A proactive posture must replace the current reactive state. Only by developing and carrying out a master plan that establishes and enforces priorities for funding and project execution on a multi-year basis will the Department and ultimately the community overcome the present degenerating condition of the infrastructure.

III. Minimum security camp facilities should be established to house non-dangerous offenders who can provide public service manpower for the state and local communities.

The forestry camp concept should be expanded to house and employ minimum custody inmates. In the past, inmates were gainfully occupied working at forestry camps that were located throughout the state. Only the camp near SC Rockview now uses and houses inmates. In addition to independent camp facilities, minimum security camps should be established at all Department facilities, to provide a work cadre for the exterior of the main institutions and reduce overcrowding.

By following this concept, the state would be able to use relatively inexpensive inmate housing for appropriately classified inmates. For example, a 500-bed maximum facility would cost \$75,000 per bed, or \$37,500,000, in contrast with the cost of a 500-bed camp at \$15,000 per bed, or \$7,500,000. Satellite camps, dependent upon the adjacent higher security institution for some services, could be built for an estimated \$5,000,000, a figure that it may be possible to further reduce through the acquisition of surplus properties, such as deactivated military bases, bankrupt private schools and other suitable institutions.

IV. Sentencing practices in Pennsylvania should be reviewed. The Committee heard testimony from John H. Kramer, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania

Commission on Sentencing, about minimal revisions in the Sentencing Guidelines which could have a significant impact on alleviating prison overcrowding without jeopardizing public safety. The Committee encourages the Commission to continue its study of proposals to revise the guidelines.

V. An earned good time program should be established.

At the present time, there is no means for an inmate to gain a statutory minimum mandatory release based on good behavior. Consequently, a powerful incentive for stable behavior is unavailable to correctional managers. The vast majority of inmates will respond positively when given the hope of shortening their sentence via good time. Conversely, when inmates perceive a "no hope" situation, one can predict violent acting-out behavior.

Any such plan should allow for the forfeiture of specific amounts of earned time for inappropriate behavior. Furthermore, the plan should be readily understood by inmates as well as staff.

VI. A public advisory committee to the Department of Corrections should be established. The committee should have members representing all aspects of the criminal justice system including representatives of inmate advocacy groups and members of the public-at-large. The committee should make recommendations to the Department on corrections policy including inmate educational, treatment and recreational programs and visitation policies.

VII. The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency should have a formalized system for activation. In the case of a prison riot, the Governor should be immediately contacted by the Department of Corrections. The Governor should activate the agency and the agency should coordinate its response and the response of local agencies with the Department and the Pennsylvania State Police. PEMA was not activated during the first night of the Camp Hill riots and activated itself the second night only after being contacted by Cumberland County emergency personnel who were concerned about the depletion of their supplies. PEMA should take a lead role in responding to emergencies of this kind.

VIII. Legislation should be enacted making substantial revisions in the Board of Probation and Parole and its policies and procedures in order to address the serious problems caused in the Pennsylvania prison system by the large number of inmates who are serving beyond their minimum terms and by the technical parole violators who are sent back to prison.

A revised parole system must do a better and more timely job of releasing

[REDACTED]

inmates from prison into parole plans after the inmates have served their minimum sentences, minus earned good time. The sanctions imposed on parole violators by the parole board should be in accordance with guidelines adopted by the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing.

Technical parole violators should not be incarcerated in maximum or medium security prisons unless no other facilities are available. The Department of Corrections should develop minimum security facilities and alternatives to incarceration for technical parole violators.

Administrative Issues

The following recommendations will require specific action by the Department of Corrections for implementation, but do not necessarily entail direct legislative action.

I. The Department should develop a revised security classification system.

The insurrection at Camp Hill, and to a large extent those at the Federal Correctional Institution at Oakdale, Louisiana, were the result of attempting to house maximum security inmates in a medium security setting. A frequency distribution of the Department's current inmate population, using a typical five point security scoring system (with one corresponding to a camp and five corresponding to a maximum security facility) would reflect a skew to the higher security levels. This is a logical outcome, one that can be witnessed in any correctional system that is crowded, because it is perceived by the administrators as the safest approach. The objective separation of inmates by security levels along a broader scale (shifting from two or three levels of security to five or six levels) will prevent crowding from adversely affecting the higher security facilities.

A security classification system based on a broader scale will give the Department more flexibility. The inmates at the higher end of the scale who present the most serious security risks are more easily singled out and may be sent to an institution more capable of handling them.

In order to distribute the inmates and remove the compression at the high security correctional facilities, there should be a five-level security system for categorizing inmates and making institutional assignments. They are:

1. Minimum - camps
2. Low-medium

3. Medium
4. Low-maximum - Graterford, Pittsburgh, Huntingdon
5. Maximum - Marion type facility

This classification system is based on Federal Bureau of Prisons' system.

- II. The Department should develop a system for more rapid classification of incoming offenders, to maximize the efficient use of high security beds.

Currently, the Department uses Reception and Diagnostic Centers to classify and assign inmates. This process is cumbersome and clogs the institutions that function as intake centers with inmates who do not fit the criteria for that particular facility. For example, a sentenced fraudulent check writer with no detainers, no history of violence or escapes, could be held at SCI Graterford for 12 weeks waiting to be assigned to an appropriate institution. The check writer does not need the security of SCI Graterford, but more importantly, he occupies an increasingly expensive bed in a severely crowded high security institution.

Reception and Diagnostic Centers should be at facilities separate from the established State prisons. A system that could function with information derived from the Pre-Sentence report, using objective criteria and scoring, would speed the processing of inmates, save manpower, and alleviate these types of bedspace and offender mismatches.

- III. Revise the inmate custody classification system.

The Department of Corrections should redefine the inmate custody classification system, to more accurately reflect the security and supervision needs of the offender population, through the use of four custody classifications based on objective, verifiable data and documented professional judgment. This strategy is becoming almost universally accepted in the United States, employing the following general classifications:

1. Community (work release programs)
2. Out (may work outside of the institution under prison staff supervision)
3. In (may work only in the institution)
4. Maximum (not eligible for work programs)

The Federal Bureau of Prisons uses a four step custody system that forces staff to consider objective criteria from verified background sources, yet provides the classifying personnel with latitude to exercise professional judgment in exceptional cases. Numerous successful implementations of such systems are extant nationwide, and the Department should quickly undertake to review,

analyze, and adapt one such system for its use.

IV. Implement unit management in all Department facilities.

Unit management subdivides large, monolithic institutions into more manageable "mini-institutions" administered by a functional unit team of a unit manager, social or case workers, counselors, other "treatment" staff, and selected security personnel. The unit management system that has been adopted by many state systems and the Federal Bureau of Prisons merges security and treatment staff into a cohesive team for control and programming of inmates.

The use of small functional units dates back 25 years, and began as a treatment tool for delivery of specific programs. Later research and experience disclosed that the functional unit was an even greater tool for control of inmates. The unit team typically knows every inmate in the unit, their background, their associates, and their daily activities and behavior patterns. It normalizes staff-inmate relations and facilitates the flow of information to staff, as well as provides an avenue for staff to convey information to the population in an effective, credible manner. Despite the fact that some units may be as large as 300 or as small as 50 inmates, unit management can function effectively to combat idleness, promote programs, and enhance security and safety.

Immediate Action Steps

The above public policy and administrative changes will position the Department of Corrections to remedy many of the underlying conditions that contributed to the Camp Hill disturbance. But in addition, based on its findings, the Committee recommends that the Department immediately undertake the following additional steps.

1. The top department officials, from the Commissioner through the Deputy Superintendents, should tour the institutions on a regular basis.
2. The Department should ensure that in all of its facilities staff enforces the rules for inmates fairly and firmly, and that the agency is properly and affirmatively responsive to the difficult management problems that some offenders present.
3. The Department should establish a consistently designed and enforced system of key and tool control that ensures the security fabric of each institution is not breached. This should include regularly scheduled inventories of keys and tools.

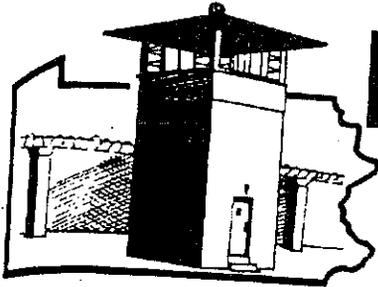
4. The Department should eliminate the current dual radio system which operates on incompatible frequencies, and adopt a unified communication system that incorporates an officer alarm system. This would allow an officer to immediately alert the control center that there is a problem and the officer needs assistance.
5. The Department should provide the resources to ensure that able-bodied inmates work or go to school a portion of each work day.
6. The Department should explore the use of community public works programs for inmates, such as the successful program in Lehigh County. The Lehigh County program allows inmates to work outside of the correctional institution with minimal supervision.
7. Each facility should have a Superintendent's Community Relations Committee comprised of key law enforcement officials as well as elected officials and citizens. Such a body would facilitate not only emergency tactical action, but form the basis for an ongoing relationship between the institution and the community in which it is located.
8. An office in the Department's Central Office should be established specifically charged with responding to inquiries from inmate family members. This should include an inmate locator system that operates from the institutions as well as the Central Office, in order to enable inmate family members to easily obtain the location of and information about an inmate in custody.
9. A position at the Central Office should be established to coordinate site acquisition for new facilities. Clear siting criteria for State institutions must be developed. This should include local public advisory committees which would work with the Department in selecting a site.
10. The Department should conduct meaningful emergency drills and familiarization tours with State Police, local law enforcement agencies, PEMA, National Guard, and other local, regional, state and Federal officials, in order to facilitate contingency planning and actual tactical responses.
11. The Department should ensure there is a system in place for mandatory review and understanding of emergency plans by all Department staff.
12. The Department's training curriculum should be modified to provide at least 20 hours of riot training per year for all operational staff members.
13. A system should be developed for identifying key indicators of a potential

disturbance such as abnormally high numbers of inmates reporting sick and numbers of grievances filed in critical areas, and for monitoring them on a meaningful schedule that can give effective advance warning of impending problems.

14. The interior and exterior of all buildings should be vide taped to assist in familiarizing SERT teams and State Police during rescue and sweep operations.
15. All staff should be videotaped for identification purposes.
16. The Department SERT teams should train with the Special Operations Response Team (SORT) team at the United States Penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. This could be done at no cost to the Department.
17. A Mobile Command Center should be established by the Department with the following equipment:
 - (a) Secure frequency state police radios, and Department-standard base and mobile equipment.
 - (b) Sufficient riot gear for six SERT teams.
 - (c) Sufficient supply of tear (CN or CS) gas, as determined by agency staff.
 - (d) Emergency plans and facility drawings for all institutions.
 - (e) Mobile phones.
 - (f) Fax machines.
 - (g) Several dozen Department jackets with large logos on the back.
 - (h) Several dozen Department baseball hats.
 - (i) Firearms and ammunition as determined by the Department.
 - (j) Sufficient supply of restraints, primarily nylon or plastic temporary restraints.
 - (k) Video and still cameras
 - (l) Tape recording capability for recording radio traffic and other command activity.
18. In the area of emergency operations, when a riot or hostage taking occurs at a Department facility:
 - (a) The Deputy Commissioner or Regional Director should be placed on site to assist the Superintendent. If the loss of the facility appears probable, then the Deputy Commissioner or Regional Director should assume command.
 - (b) A command post should be located at the site.
 - (c) Relief Superintendents should be sent from other institutions.

- s.
- (d) A senior department official should be assigned to coordinate security, PEMA, and assignment of staff.
 - (e) A senior public information officer should be assigned on-site, and a press briefing center should be established away from the tactical assembly area.
 - (f) A senior institution level official should be designated to assist hostage families at an area set aside, off-site, such as in a church or community center.
 - (g) A senior department official should be delegated responsibility to obtain equipment and supplies necessary to support any siege or tactical action.
 - (h) During such events, specific staff should be identified as recorders, whose task is to log all significant events, decisions and communications that occur in the command structure.
 - (i) During such events, the Deputy Commissioner should report to the Commissioner on a regular basis.
 - (j) All persons involved in negotiations should be approved by Deputy Commissioner before engaging in any negotiations.
 - (k) A person of Captain level rank should be placed in charge of rear and front gates.
 - (l) An emergency roster should be established, with placement of senior corrections officers on 12-on, 12-off, shifts with mandatory relief periods.
 - (m) Upon authorization of the local Deputy or Regional officials, officers should immediately be called in from other institutions.
 - (n) Experienced staff should be called in from the field to the central office, to provide relief and contribute with specialized skills.
 - (o) Procedures should be established to ensure all institutions are notified of crisis situations and their scope, as well as to provide periodic situation updates.
 - (p) Procedures should be established to conduct regular briefings of command center personnel.

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- (q) Procedures should be established to provide information to all staff on a regular basis, including hostage families.
 - (r) SERT teams from other institutions should be used to replace State Police officers after gaining control of a facility.
 - (s) The Deputy Commissioner, accompanied by the Superintendent, should oversee a sweep after the facility is secured, and should personally tour the facility to inspect the status of critical security and supervision systems.
 - (t) Procedures should be established to ensure that locking systems are functional and not compromised.
 - (u) Procedures should be established to ensure that all inmates are accounted for.
 - (v) Procedural safeguards should be established that include sufficient supervisory staff on-site to prevent any harassment of inmates or retaliatory action against inmates once an institution is retaken.
 - (w) Procedures should be established to debrief and examine any hostages.
 - (x) Procedures should be established to safeguard relevant evidence and secure critical portions of the institution that may constitute a crime scene.
 - (y) An immediate after-action report should be filed with the Commissioner by the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent.



CORRECTIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Part IV

Conclusion



The Committee heard testimony that riots are contagious, and that there is a likelihood that because crowded conditions exist in all the Department's institutions, the Huntingdon and Camp Hill uprisings may likely portend the spread of mass unrest. While this has not happened in the intervening period of time, the potential for another catastrophe certainly is heightened, the longer nothing is done to improve the system.

However, more than a reduction in overcrowding is necessary. This Committee found that there were numerous classic signals of long-entrenched management problems at Camp Hill, which in all likelihood predisposed the inmate population to participate on a widespread basis in a disturbance.

This was a riot that could have been foreseen, and if not prevented, at least limited in its scope. Some of these conditions were local, tied to management styles and the limitations of the physical plant. Others were dependent on agency policy, and discretionary actions of parties outside the institution. Still others were a result of budgeting and resource issues. But taken together, these factors placed Camp Hill on the verge of disaster in October, 1989, and all involved must surely count it fortunate that no lives were lost.

The Committee wishes to thank the many witnesses, citizens, and other contributors, as well as the staff of the Senate and the Department of Correction for their cooperation and assistance. With the proper implementation of the recommendations contained in this report, their efforts will have made a worthwhile contribution to the improved delivery of correctional services for the citizens of Pennsylvania.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR STEWART J. GREENLEAF
ON THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE'S CAMP HILL PRISON
RIOT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS
NOVEMBER 29, 1990

Today we are presenting the Senate Judiciary Committee's report on the Camp Hill Prison Riots of October 1989. Our hope is that it will serve as a blueprint for reform of the State corrections system.

While this report discusses the causes of the Camp Hill disaster and examines key areas of concern regarding the prison administration's response to the riots, the emphasis is not on recrimination but rather on the committee's recommendations.

Our goal is to prevent other "Camp Hills" by structuring a system that is more workable, more fair, more secure and possibly more cost-effective than our current system.

At the most basic level, the revisions advocate a clear policy of reward and punishment through new incentives for good behavior and an expanded classification system that would include a "more maximum" maximum security for those inmates who require it and a "more minimum" minimum

confinement for those who do not require a high cost security setting.

Our major recommendations include:

- Construction of a super-maximum security prison to house violent, high-risk offenders.
- Improvements in infrastructure maintenance in existing prisons.
- Establishment of minimum security camp facilities to house and employ minimum custody inmates.
- Implementation of an earned good time incentive program.
- Review of Pennsylvania's sentencing practices including possible revisions in the sentencing guidelines.
- Establishment of a public advisory committee to the Department of Corrections to make recommendations on corrections policies relating to inmate education, treatment, visitation and recreation.
- Formalization of an activation system for the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency so that PEMA can take the lead role in providing support during any prison crisis.
- Overhaul of the parole system to address

problems caused by the large number of inmates serving beyond their minimum terms and technical parole violators sent back to prison.

Virtually all of the recommendations in this report, while they are to be applied systemwide, address conditions that contributed to the Camp Hill prison uprising.

Though they were a grim and costly lesson, the riots provided almost a textbook example of what can go wrong in a correctional facility: overcrowding, understaffing, mixed classification of inmates, inmate idleness, inmate frustration over "Catch-22" parole requirements, vulnerable infrastructure, lack of chain-of-command communication, lack of emergency planning, failure to secure the facility after the first riot, failure of authorities to call upon PEMA, inmate access to tools and security systems, and the issuance of what was viewed by many inmates as arbitrary restrictions on policies affecting sick call and family food gifts.

Certainly there is enough blame to go around for these conditions and problems, as our committee hearings demonstrated. The mission of this report is not to castigate specific individuals but rather to utilize what we have learned from Camp Hill to produce a better corrections system for the Commonwealth.

The committee looks forward to working with the Department of Corrections in implementing the recommendations in this report.

Senator Shumaker and Senator Hopper, who are fellow members of the committee and who have been closely involved in the Camp Hill situation, also have comments on the committee's report.