

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.

# NEWS RELEASE...



**From Senator  
John J. Shumaker**

**15th Senatorial District**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -- NOVEMBER 29, 1990



SHUMAKER PRAISES JUDICIARY COMMITTEE REPORT ON CAMP HILL RIOTS

(HARRISBURG) -- Sen. John J. Shumaker (R-Dauphin) today strongly endorsed the recommendations contained in the Senate Judiciary Committee report on the Camp Hill prison riots, calling the document "an important milestone in efforts to improve Pennsylvania's corrections system."

At a Capitol news conference to unveil the report, Shumaker said the document offers the Commonwealth an important opportunity for prison reform.

"This committee report presents us with an opportunity, not to criticize, point fingers or lay blame for past mistakes, but to create a stronger, more efficient and more effective prison system to protect the people of Pennsylvania," the Senator said.

Shumaker stressed the importance of two of the report's recommendations, of which he has been a longtime champion. The Senator said one key to prison reform is a revamped and improved prison classification system, which would be accompanied by the construction of a "super-maximum security" facility for the state's most dangerous, incorrigible prisoners.

The Senator said the state's prison system does not house inmates according to the offense they committed or the potential threat they present inside the prison, but rather according to where space exists.

"While that's expedient, it goes against good corrections practice and, more importantly, it goes against simple common sense," Shumaker said.

He said the practical effect of housing nonviolent and violent offenders together -- which was common at Camp Hill -- serves only to make the nonviolent more violent, and is an

(MORE)

Sen. Shumaker -- Page 2

inefficient use of prison space.

Shumaker said a sample classification model that should be considered is the federal prison classification system, which has a number of security levels, as opposed to the two levels -- medium and maximum -- that exist in Pennsylvania.

The Senator said an important component of a new classification system is the construction of a "super maximum" security facility that would keep the system's most dangerous inmates locked in their cells 23 hours per day.

"Let's face it," Shumaker said. "To keep the public safe, there are some inmates who must be locked up. Period."

He stressed that all the recommendations in the report are worthy of consideration and could reap major benefits for the state's corrections system.

"This document is a blueprint not only for a stronger, more efficient prison system, but for regaining the confidence and support of all the people of Pennsylvania," Shumaker said.

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# NEWS



## SENATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

SEN. STEWART J. GREENLEAF, R-12TH

NOVEMBER 29, 1990

### SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS CORRECTIONS OVERHAUL

HARRISBURG -- Calling for major changes in the state corrections system, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee today released the committee's report on the Camp Hill prison riots of October 1989.

Senator Stewart J. Greenleaf, R-Montgomery, said the report, which was developed as the result of Senate Judiciary Committee's inquiry into the riots at the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill, contains "a blueprint for statewide prison reform."

"The committee's hearings into Camp Hill evolved into a wider look at the problems of the entire corrections system," Greenleaf said. "While we identified concerns that were certainly specific to the Camp Hill institution -- such as the structural weaknesses that allowed inmate access to cell locking mechanisms -- many other problems are common to all institutions and must be addressed through comprehensive changes."

Many of the report's recommendations, including proposed establishment of a super-maximum state corrections facility for dangerous inmates and increased minimum security options for low risk inmates, are modeled on the federal prison system.

The report also recommends enactment of earned good time, revisions in the parole system, alternate placement for technical parole violators and master planning encompassing the state and county corrections operations in the areas of infrastructure maintenance, emergency preparedness and new opportunities for intermediate punishments to relieve overcrowding.

On the rioting at the Camp Hill prison, the report concludes that the underlying causes of the inmate rampage went beyond overcrowding. Some of the major problems identified were

inadequate management practices which led to a polarization between the prison administration and corrections force; mixing classifications of inmates; continuous problems with the physical plant; lack of incentives such as programs and jobs for inmates; and significant numbers of inmates serving time beyond their minimum sentence or as technical parole violators.

Although the report indicates that legislative action will be necessary for some major changes, it recommends that immediate steps should be taken administratively by the Corrections Department.

These include establishing a new custody classification system, a separate and more expeditious intake and diagnostic facility to prevent housing low and high risk prisoners in the same quarters, unit team management in the prisons to ensure better supervision and staff-inmate communication, community relations panels at each prison, an office to handle inmate family inquiries and a fully-equipped mobile command center to respond to prison emergencies at all facilities.

Other administrative changes include meaningful emergency training for staff, regular inspection tours by prison supervisors, better tool and key control, replacement of the dual radios with a unified communication system that incorporates an officer alarm system and videotaping of facilities and staff for use by law enforcement in the event of an emergency.

The report further recommends a set of response procedures for emergency occurrences.

"The emphasis of this report is on policies and planning that will prevent other riots in the face of a burgeoning prison population. We've identified the conditions that made Camp Hill a powder keg and the errors that compounded the problems that existed at the time of the riots. Inmates involved in the rioting are being prosecuted and a number of personnel changes have occurred in the aftermath of the uprising. This committee thinks the focus now should be on constructive approaches to alleviating our serious corrections problems systemwide," Greenleaf said.



The senator noted that the committee heard from the widest possible group of witnesses including guards, corrections officials, inmates, emergency service and law enforcement representatives, local government officials, inmate families and national corrections experts.

"My feeling is that the comprehensiveness of the hearings and the seriousness of our concerns with the state of the corrections system should provide momentum in the coming session for enactment of our recommendations," Greenleaf said.

"We must consider new approaches because the old ones are not working very well. Camp Hill was an example of what can occur if we ignore problems. I think we will have to revisit the debate on private prisons and what opportunities they might offer. We have to do more to provide programs and work for inmates and design a system in which security resources are employed where they are most needed. Every inmate does not have to be incarcerated in a maximum security, Alcatraz-type prison.

"Possibly, with a better classification system, we can save money in the long run. The federal prison system identifies 51 percent of its population as minimum security. Minimum security beds cost from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per inmate, while medium costs form \$40,000 to \$50,000 and maximum costs \$100,000 per bed. By better classification of inmates, we can effectively patrol those who require high security while employing low risk inmates in work benefiting the state system," Greenleaf said.