

EDMONTON WELFARE COUNCIL  
JUVENILE CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE

April 12, 1966

Mrs. W.F. Bowker  
Chairman, Juvenile Corrections Committee  
Youth Services Division  
Edmonton Welfare Council

REPORT OF SUB-COMMITTEE  
ON JUVENILE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

It was a pleasure to work with this committee, not only because they represented several different disciplines, but particularly because they seemed to have one thing in common - to offer realistic suggestions and recommendations which could help to improve our correctional institutions. Of the members, there was no evidence on the part of anyone to expound a favoured theory or ideology or to ridicule or condemn the efforts of others who have worked for the same purposes. It was agreed that there was to be no "witch-hunt" with the result that the questions asked were practical and the answers given were not evasive.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr. W.S. Duggan (Chairman)  
Mrs. C. Elwood  
Dr. J.C. Nelson  
Dr. W.B. Dockrell  
Mr. R.M. Deildal  
Mrs. W.F. Bowker (Consultant)

In addition, there were several others who were consulted and who gave valuable opinions and suggestions, but, because of their respective positions, it would be unfair to include their names.

SCOPE OF STUDY

From the time the child is committed to the care of the Juvenile Offenders Branch to the time of release from the Correctional Institution.

PLAN OF STUDY

Two meetings:

1. Initial - to draw up terms of reference and agree on a plan of procedure.
2. Final - to consolidate our findings so that they could be presented in the form of a brief.

Apart from these meetings, there was a continuous exchange of ideas in the

course of our study.

Because all the committee members have full-time occupations and time was limited, it was decided to confine our visits to three institutions:

1. Bowden Institution (Juvenile Section), Innisfail.
2. Alberta Institute for Girls, Edmonton.
3. Our Lady of Charity School for Girls, Edmonton.

These were visited on March 18, 22 and 25 respectively and from 3 to 4 hours were spent at each place. The same procedure was followed in each case - a meeting with the staff followed by a tour of the premises. Our committee wish to sincerely thank the representatives of the Attorney-General's Branch and the administration and staff of the above institutions for the amenities and courtesies extended, and more important, for their willingness to co-operate in our project. We hope that our frank questions were not embarrassing and that they were accepted in the same spirit that they were given.

It should be noted that there is a considerable difference between Institutions (1) and (2) and Institution (3) for the following reasons:

1. (3) is largely a private institution and can dictate and change policies, and try innovations and experiments with little interference. As a treatment centre, it can be selective and accept only those who are considered to be amenable to treatment. Moreover, it can discharge at any time those who do not respond to treatment.
2. (1) and (2), being public institutions, have little choice. They must accept the children who are directed there, release them when directed, and, in the varied intervals, do as they best know how.

In the Committee's discussions, other institutions were also compared, e.g. Kiwanis Children's Institutions, Oakhill Boys' Ranch, Edmonton Detention Centre for Boys and Girls, Protestant Home for Children (Edmonton), Marydale Treatment Centre, and others.

Before proceeding, it should be recognized that in the Province of Alberta, the whole idea and concept of Juvenile Corrections is in its infancy, comparatively speaking. With a population made up of many ethnic groups, ideologies and philosophies, it is difficult to evolve a clear-cut policy and purpose in a few years. Much credit is due to those who have pioneered the field in Alberta and have made substantial progress. At the same time, it is only realistic and economical of time and money to examine

carefully the experiences and progress of others in the same field in different parts of the world over a much longer period of time in order to benefit from their mistakes and from their achievements. It must be admitted that we are lagging behind current knowledge and objectives in the area of juvenile corrections.

### FINDINGS

These observations of the committee are not intended to be a complete list nor are they listed in any priority of significance. They are confined to the two governmental institutions - Bowden and Alberta Institute for Girls - since these are owned and operated by the public at large.

(a) Lack of a Clearly Defined, Long-Term Policy and Purpose

Is it a "corrective" institution or mainly a "restrictive" one? What are we trying to do for the child - teach him to obey laws and respect authority, or to prepare him to take a useful place in society?

(b) Confusion over the Lines and Roles of Authority

Who determines the policy of the institution? Could there be better coordination among the Attorney General's Department, the Juvenile Offenders Branch, the Superintendent of Correctional Institutions and the Provincial Child Welfare Branch? Authority must also assume responsibility.

(c) Too Much Penal Atmosphere

Still evidence of the prison setting, e.g., uniforms for administrative staff and personnel.

(d) Lack of Necessary Segregation According to an Established Classification

At Bowden, for example, boys are placed indiscriminately into large open dormitories.

(e) No Clear Objectives Evident for the Training Program

A general attempt to follow the curriculum of the Dept. of Education which is designed largely for the normal child.

(f) A Paucity of Trained Professional Personnel

(g) Need for an Increased Program of In-Service Training for Staff

(h) Lack of Available Information on Many of the "Inmates"

Frequently, there is extensive and valuable information compiled before the child

arrives at the institution, which can be of great assistance to the staff. This occasionally is not made available, or if so, arrives after considerable delay.

(i) Need for More Careful and Scientific Assessment before Committing a Child to a Correctional Institution

(j) Desirability of More Members of the Opposite Sex on Staff in Both Institutions

Otherwise, how can the children learn to live with people?

(k) Unfavourable Attitude of the General Public to These Institutions

This is alarming. The general concept seems to be one of defeatism - "the last resort" concept. "Send them there when everything else has failed". "They will probably come out worse than when they went in". "Too bad - but what else is there to do?".

Correctional Institution??

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is our desire to concentrate on a smaller number of recommendations which are considered to be of major importance rather than submit a lengthy list of dubious value.

Before doing so, however, it may be well to include a premise which is now generally recognized as fundamental in the field of juvenile corrections. Nearly all committed children show sociological and psychological damage. For this reason, they require a program aimed at re-structuring their attitudes if any long-term desirable effects are to be achieved. It is not the behaviour of the child in the institution that really matters so much as his behaviour when he goes out into the world again. Important though it is to provide good teaching, recreation, a healthy day-to-day routine of activities and consistent discipline, the basic need is for therapy to overcome anti-social behaviour and cultivate healthy new attitudes. To provide only the former is to assume that a child's delinquency is due simply to a lack of training and activity, whereas in fact, it is symptomatic of deprivations and disturbances that can only be reached by individual counselling and group therapy. The external discipline imposed on him by the institution will not necessarily make him more capable of self-control when he leaves unless his basic problems are overcome.

I. **That** a program be devised and used to inform the general public of the financial savings that can be made through effective juvenile correctional institutions. Long term incarceration is very expensive.

There are ample valid statistics available to show the cost to the taxpayer of having to support a criminal over a lengthy period. There is no doubt that a dollar wisely expended on an individual at an early age to correct anti-social behaviour will save the expenditure of many future dollars needed to meet the costs of police, courts, hospitals, doctors, transportation, penal institutions, etc. for the care of the criminal and many of his offspring. Add to this the monetary gain from a productive citizen. If the voting public were fully aware of this there would be little difficulty in getting their full support towards a constructive juvenile corrections program.

II. That a realistic effort be made to define the role and the lines of authority and responsibility among the governmental departments and branches concerned with Juvenile Correctional Institutions, namely the Attorney-General's Department (J.O.B., Superintendent of Correctional Institutions, Probation Branch, etc.) and the Department of Public Welfare.

III. That the definition and purpose of a Juvenile Correctional Institution be agreed upon and accepted by all those mentioned above as a future guide and objective. One suggested definition, "An institution to provide custodial care and specialized treatment for the juvenile offender which is not provided in the community setting."

IV. That there be an immediate enlargement and up-grading of professionally trained staff.

This is not to detract in any way from the good work of many of the present staffs who are dedicated and capable, and who have developed considerable skills in handling aberrant children. But in all walks of life, the need for professionally and technically trained persons is recognized. To deny this is "penny wise and pound foolish". A program of in-service training can be very effective. Several professions can be and should be utilized, e.g., the Doctor, the Nurse, the Psychologist, the Specialist Teacher, the Social Worker, the Sociologist, the Criminologist, the Psychiatrist. These do not

necessarily need to be on regular staff. They can be employed as Consultants or on a part-time basis. A salary must be commensurate with ability and availability. It is ridiculous to bemoan the fact that establishments created for positions have not been filled if the salaries and conditions are less attractive than those offered by competing organizations. The physical plant is important, but it is only as good as the people who operate it.

- V. That Assessment Centres or Clinics or Diagnostic Teams be established and utilized before committing a child to a correctional institution. There may be alternatives more beneficial such as carefully selected foster homes, other treatment centres, private institutions, hospitals, etc.
- VI. That a careful study be made to obtain the best type of educational and instructional facilities required for a correctional institution. Besides complementing the overall treatment program, it might be advisable to consider a form of "Pre-Employment" program now employed in school systems to make it more realistic to the student and provide skills useful to his preparation for employment.
- VII. That a carefully selected policy of "segregation" is desirable and necessary in some instances. While the final objective should be to prepare the child to go out and take his place in a complete society, there are stages in the treatment process where it is essential to combine children with some degree of similarity rather than bunch them into a conglomerate group where each individual can disseminate his particular brand of anti-social behaviour or deviant skills to the entire body. Groupings should be made with the following in mind: age, intelligence, maturity, academic status, emotional disturbances, psychotic tendencies, level of destructiveness, sexual deviations, etc. The success of therapy is placed in jeopardy if the group is too diverse in its needs.
- VIII. That a definite policy should be formulated for after-care. To simply discharge a youngster from an institution is a "sink or swim" policy. This is not to suggest that this is the present policy,

but for lack of staff and a unified after-care program, too often the child is left largely to his own resources. There should be a concerted effort to fit him back into the family setting if this is feasible. There should be a realistic attempt to fit him into a further training program, or into suitable employment if this is available and he is ready. There should be provisions for his maintenance until he becomes self-supporting. Otherwise, what are his alternatives? Perhaps a "pre-release" preparation should be a part of the institutional program.

- IX. That a new or different institution (or institutions) other than the present Bowden is urgently required for boys, preferably near a large urban centre where the many requisites are available. While this has been proposed for some time, it is understood that action has been postponed pending the decision of the Federal Government to establish a new uniform age for juveniles. Unfortunately, there is a dire need for a new boys' correctional institution now and it is not realistic to postpone or delay it further. There is no necessity for erecting a large permanent building designed to provide facilities for a definite number of years. Experts now favour a series of smaller units offering sleeping and general living quarters for approximately 12 - 15 children, built around a central administration and heating unit. These can be increased and modified as the need arises.

(Signed) W.S. Duggan

P.S. There should be a recommendation urging more staff of the opposite sex and the reasons why. This could be in a separate recommendation or included in the one relating to staff (IV).