

BOARD OF CORRECTION MEETING  
Commissioner McGrath's Office  
Friday, October 30, 1970  
3:00 p.m.

In attendance:

Wm. Vanden Heuvel, Chairman  
Com. George F. McGrath  
Messrs. Schulte, Dribben, DeMonte, Rivera and Satterfield and Rev. Wilson  
Mesdames Mrs. Rose Singer, Nyrka Torrado Alum  
A.L. Castro, Public Affairs Officer

Mr. Vanden Heuvel opened the meeting. He introduced the new members to the Commissioner. It was noted Mr. Rivera and Rev. Wilson have to be sworn in by the Mayor. He expressed the Board's willingness to work closely with the Commissioner on solving the pressing problems faced by the Department. He added that among the first matters to be tackled by the board is an investigation of the Julio Roldan suicide.

Commissioner McGrath spoke of work now underway to improve conditions in the Tombs. He noted he and Mr. Charles Rangel had talked with inmates a week prior to the second riot. He cited the difficulty in getting replacement for furniture destroyed. He mentioned that the Tombs (and other jails) are presently "tense" and contact between Correction Officers and inmates is being kept to a minimum. He cited that the men are in a lock-in situation, however each warden has been instructed to loosen the restrictions gradually and in accordance with the best interest of each institution.

Among the principal changes being worked on is phones so inmates can make unmonitored outside calls. The objective is to put one phone in each quadrant. There are 40 phones on request now. There will be no rigid rules regarding their use. Inmates can call Long Island and New Jersey is needed. Part of the funds for these phones (and other badly needed services and equipment) may come from LEAA (Legal Enforcement Assistance Act)--a Federal program. It was suggested that phones on long jacks be utilized so they can be taken by Correction Officers to cells when required. Mr. Vanden Heuvel assured the commissioner he would cooperate fully to secure funds needed for these services and would intercede with the Telephone Company to expedite installation of said equipment. The Commissioner said we now have phones in the detention pens and it is hoped this service of unmonitored phone calls can be extended to all detention institutions in the very near future. The LEAA funds will cover such purchases as communications systems, safety gear and riot equipment.

*4 phones to be installed immediately in the receiving area of the Tombs.*

The Commissioner explained in detail the need for the present lock-in. He noted that all institutions which rioted had to be repaired. These repairs may exceed 2.4 million dollars. Likewise, each institution had to be thoroughly searched and huge quantities of weapons were uncovered. The Correction Officers are still concerned about being taken hostage.

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The Commissioner also clarified the situation regarding "no reprisals" for rioting inmates. He stated that he, representing the Department of Correction, had promised he would bring no actions against the inmates. This promise he kept. However, he cannot promise amnesty in the name of the city or mayor. This matter is for the District Attorney in Each county to decide. The indictments now being returned have been sought by the District Attorneys. Likewise, Mayor Lindsay made no promises, other than to tell inmates he would meet with them, if they released the hostages. He did so. The Commissioner emphatically stated no physical reprisals have been taken against the rioters or their leaders.

The Commissioner pointed out all members of the board are welcomed to visit the institutions. However, he stated that it might be best to inform the Warden before coming so suitable arrangements can be made. Identity cards will shortly be given. It is necessary the board members provide the Department with photographs (1-1/2" x 1-1/2").

When asked about what the Department's future policy towards riots will be the Commissioner pointed out that he favors quick action to release hostages and restore normalcy to the institutions. Delays, he said, aids the militants and troublemakers and compounds the difficulty in dealing with inmates and restoring security. The experience during the last riots was that the longer the inmates were in control the more additional ~~ad~~ issues crept up. It is now our intention to move in rapidly as we did at Rikers Island when the ARS (one cellblock) rioted. Not necessarily haphazardly, but with a well planned take over operation. Naturally this may not work in every case, but it appears to be better than prolonged waiting.

The best prevention for riots, the Commissioner stated, is a better personal relationship between Correction Officers and inmates. We don't necessarily need more officers and actually doubling the staff won't guarantee that there will be no riots. The best preventative is a good ~~ta~~ alarm system, proper CO training, good rapport between inmates and COs. The COs know they have a risky job. That is what they are paid for.

When asked if the Department needs a buffer between COs and inmates the Commissioner said no. He works closely with the COBA and its officers to see what can be done for getting better rapport between the man in uniform and the inmate.

The commissioner welcomed the visits of clergy to inmates and volunteers willing to work to help solve the inmates problems. However, he stated that volunteers must be highly motivated people because the work is not easy. He counseled the Board to work with the chaplains and to invite them to Board meetings so that they can learn the problems inside the institutions as the chaplains encounter them.

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The Board then discussed the Angela Davis situation. Mr. Castro pointed out that Miss Davis's isolation from the prison population, has been done for her own safety and that the Womens House of Detention is in an area (Greenwich Village) which is not ideal and which severely limits the security of the institution.

Mr. Satterfield and Rivera were anxious to know if we were violating her civil rights by holding her apart from the rest of the prison population.

The question of who is in charge at all times was raised and the Commissioner pointed at that all the time there is someone on duty or immediately available by telephone to command. However, he stated that the Warden or his deputy on tour is in charge and is empowered to act accordingly should there be an incident in his institution. Each institution head is encouraged to act independently as much as possible in these affairs. The Commissioner stated that frequent visits are being made to the institutions by his staff and that he is meeting with the institution heads periodically to solve common problems. He stated the next meeting would be held Monday at 10:00 a.m. Mr. Satterfield stated he would like to attend. The Commissioner welcomed him and any other member who might want to attend.

During the meeting Mr. Schulte stated that there should be a Liaison officer to work with the courts and the inmates. This man would help expedite the paperwork and explain the procedures to the inmate.

Mr. Vanden Heuvel stated he would like to have more lawyers get into the act to help in reviewing bail and expediting cases. He stated he would meet with the Chaplains and social workers to get their advice.

Mr. Vanden Heuvel selected a committee of Board members to study the security situation in the detention jails. He named Messrs. Dribben, Rivera and DeMonte to the subcommittee.

The Board adjourned and set the next meeting on Tuesday, November 3rd, at 277 Park Avenue, Room 2520 (Mr. Vanden Heuvel's office).

Respectfully submitted,

Rose Singer, (Mrs.)

~~Secretary~~