

The Alliance Herald

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If the present session of the legislature desires to make a real hit with the public, it will lose no time in abolishing the infamous indeterminate sentence law and thereby put an end to the coddling of criminals in a misguided effort to reform them, instead of punishing them for their misdeeds and at the same time protecting society from them.
 Criminals these days, like the famed "rice christians," know which side of their bread is buttered. In a prison where every effort is made to encourage them to act prettily and put their best foot forward, in order sooner to gain their liberty, it isn't

surprising that good records are made. With such inducements, even the most sullen convict is apt to smile brightly whenever he sees the warden, the guard or a member of the parole board looking in his direction.
 It's no particular punishment to be in the penitentiary these days. At least it doesn't compare in hardship with a sentence of fifteen years ago. Convicts no longer wear stripes, their heads are not closely cropped, they have the best of food to eat and occasionally the band plays while they do it. No long hours, no worries over coal bills or other bills. It isn't considered proper to speak harshly to a criminal. His sensitive soul may suffer.
 The real test of the efficacy of the indeterminate sentence and the parole system is found after the criminal leaves the penitentiary. It's reasonable to suppose, not that he will endeavor to live straight, but that he will at least try to be circumspect, for lack of caution gets another sentence. Almost every day comes word of another prisoner who has violated his parole, or overstayed his furlough. Some of the state officers even express that these criminals do not keep their word.
 The indeterminate sentence law has not been a success in Nebraska. This

may be due, not to an inherent fault in the law, but to the tender hearts of those who have had the enforcing of it. However, the fact that the evil has been pronounced under several different administrations tends to the belief that the law itself needs changing.
 The court of Nebraska, the law enforcement officers of cities and counties, the newspapers and public sentiment generally are becoming aroused over the laxity with which paroles are apparently granted. Attorney General Davis has announced that he will recommend changes making paroles more difficult to secure. But where furloughs are granted, restrictions on paroles are of little avail.
 What is needed is a return to the old system, where the courts fix the limit of the sentence, and where a prisoner, by exemplary behavior, may cut down his sentence, not a seventh or a tenth, but just enough to make it worth working for. Judges who try the case, juries which bring in verdicts are better able to determine whether a prisoner should be allowed liberty than any three state executives, listening to the appeals of clever attorneys and the pleas of relatives and interested friends.
 Prisons can never be run on the same principles as Sunday school classes. The people of Nebraska are not in favor of continuing the attempt, with crime increasing every day and paroled offenders being responsible for a good share of it. The sooner the counsels of long haired men and short haired women are disregarded, the sooner will this part of the land of the free get back to a feeling of peace and security.

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