

Prison changes urged

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Prisoners allowed to go on work release must meet one of three criteria. They include: the inmate must be within one year of discharge from the penitentiary, he can be recommended by the Parole Board, the prisoner can be set for Final Board. This board considers applicants who are within six months of discharge.

Parrett said if the inmate meets one of these criteria, his application is reviewed by the Subclassification Committee. It's then passed on to the Parole Board for final approval.

Parrett said 100 of the prison's 1,016 prisoners are on work release. He said he would like to see the number on work release raised to 200.

Self-betterment programs

Parrett said other "self-betterment" community-based programs include an educational release program, which allows prisoners to attend the University of Nebraska, and the Sidney Program, which allows inmates to attend a technical college near that western Nebraska town.

Parrett said he has long and short range goals for the complex, but that he is not ready to discuss them now.

"Right now, we're trying to get on top of what we are currently doing, to maintain effectiveness in those areas and to expand them by having more of the prison population involved in the current programs."

Correctional Plan

He said further expansion of prison programs will be detailed in the Correctional Plan which will be submitted to the Legislature and Governor on Dec. 1.

Among penitentiary programs that Parrett said may be firsts in the nation are:

—Project Youth, where a panel of inmates speak to civic organizations and schools concerning the inmate's felony violations.

—The Checks Anonymous Program, which groups all those jailed for check-cashing felonies in weekly meetings. The inmates, through a fee they charge themselves, pay back the full amount of bad checks they have written to the particular business that received the check. Under the program, Parrett said the inmates also talk to business groups about the "pitfalls" in their check policy.

Not a 'hardliner'

Parrett said he is not a "hardline disciplinarian." But he said he would be the first one to reprimand an inmate for violation of a prison rule.

"If they violate a rule, they know me and know that they are going to have to answer to the Adjustment Committee," he said.

"But they also know that after the violation, it won't be held against them," he added.

Parrett said he tries to look at both sides of any argument or violation involving inmates and prison officials.

Regarding his overall philosophy of corrections, Parrett said that he "thinks they are salvageable persons. And we work toward that end to redirect them back into society to be constructive productive citizens."

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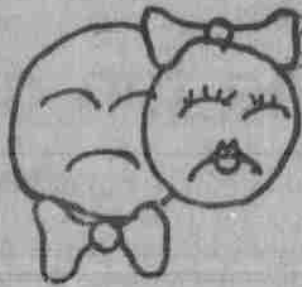
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