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## PAROLE AN INSTITUTION OF THE FUTURE.

B. W. BROWN.<sup>1</sup>

The parole system is a relatively young institution. Yet despite serious opposition and inevitable obstacles attendant on pioneer work, it has received the unqualified approval of more than thirty States and enthusiastic support from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, England, France, Belgium and Prussia. (See editorial in last number of this JOURNAL.)

After such an encouraging advance during the past decade, it is high time for the parole system to attain more thorough standardization. Some progress has been made along this line through the interchange of experience between different States but that much remains to be done can be readily seen from the following facts. The proportion of men conditionally liberated to the prison population varies from zero to 30% as between different States; the sum spent on supervision annually varies from \$1.00 to \$60.00 per man; the ratio of parole officers to men in their charge runs from 1:40 to 1:800. There is no approach to uniformity among the States either as regards the organization which has the power of parole, the class of prisoners eligible, or the time when they are eligible. Very few States record and publish an analysis of the causes of delinquency. In short, the parole institution has not been standardized.

Now there are other values besides uniformity and it must constantly be borne in mind that the experience and suggestions of institutions in one locality are applicable to those in another only so far as there is an essential similarity of conditions in the two localities. This article, therefore, is merely suggestive on certain points. It does not advocate either sudden increase or decrease in the number of paroles; it does, however, call for action based on the most comprehensive facts available.

*Overhead Administration.*—Who should exercise the power to parole? Massachusetts and Indiana have separate boards for men

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and women. Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska and Washington parole men through the State board of penitentiary or prison commissioners (this is suggested for Texas by the secretary of the prison board); Rhode Island and South Dakota through the State board of charities and corrections. New Jersey in 1913 transferred the power to parole from the board of inspectors as in Pennsylvania to a local prison board. At present a bill is before the New York legislature, also, to create local boards of parole. Illinois and Missouri combine pardon with parole functions.

Among the several States which now have independent boards, there is wide divergence of opinion as to its proper composition, while many States parole prisoners altogether independently of the prison administration, among States which have taken recent action on the subject, Connecticut, New Jersey, Minnesota, North Dakota, Arizona, and Indiana (woman's prison) have included the Warden in the board; New Jersey, Nebraska, North Dakota and Indiana include a physician on the board; Massachusetts and New York a member of the State prison commission. Minnesota in its last legislature added the superintendent of the reformatory to its parole board. Michigan in 1913 conferred on the Warden power to rescind paroles. On the other hand, the New Jersey department of charities and corrections (1913 rep't) deplors this general tendency: "The law of last winter that constituted the principal keeper, the chaplain, and the physician of the State prison as a board of parole was ill-advised. The executive officers of the prison should not have a voice in the release of prisoners." This is interesting in its bearing on the recommendation of the International Prison Congress in 1910: "(c) That the board consist of at least one representative of the magistracy, one of the prison administration, and one of the medical profession." New Jersey also takes exception to limiting responsibility of boards, as is done in Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey and Texas, by leaving final authority in the hands of the governor. "It is a question whether the governor should be expected to approve the paroles granted by the board, which approval must be largely perfunctory and make the governor to a degree responsible for the paroles granted."

So many component elements enter into the success or failure of parole administration that it is not possible to attribute a definite proportion of success to any given type of overhead organization. Of States having fairly similar forms of control, Massachusetts reports greater success than Indiana; Wisconsin than Minnesota, etc. Perhaps all that can be generalized is this: as far as the size of the State

and the degree of specialization of its administration warrant, power to parole should be vested in an independent body, devoting its time exclusively to parole, and not in a board which by reason of other pressing responsibilities, is compelled to regard it as a side issue of minor importance.

*Supervision; by Whom?*—Several systems of parole supervision are in use. The foreign method is to control through the police to whom the men report at stated intervals, and this is employed with much success in Canada. These are federal police, however, and the plan does not commend itself in this country although it suggests that something is wrong in our lack of co-operation between the police and the parole systems. The usual practice in this country has been to attach one or more parole officers to each penal institution. This is open to the objection that in a large State where the men are necessarily scattered, supervision is correspondingly loose. New York supplements this by paroling men to the prison association, a voluntary organization; France has had a similar method of turning men over to guardian institutions which receive ten cents a day for each one conditionally released for the time that his sentence would last, unless that allowance exceeds one hundred francs. In 1912, Minnesota adopted the voluntary co-operation system, about 200 citizens acting as advisers to men on parole. So far as possible a man of the same religion and nationality is assigned each prisoner, and the plan has met with some success. Many States require a first friend for each prisoner released, but this worked a hardship sometimes when the prisoner was not able to secure one. Pennsylvania in 1913 specified that in such cases the board should provide a first friend, and Michigan, the same year, passed an amendment that “any sheriff, under-sheriff, deputy sheriff, chief of police, or truant officer shall upon the request of the governor or advisory board, act as first friend and advisor for paroled prisoners.” In Idaho, sheriffs of each county act as parole officers for prisoners paroled to their respective counties.

A form of supervision which would provide for closer control and which deserves at least a fair trial in the near future is that strongly advocated both in New York and Illinois: supervision of paroled men by local probation officers. Mr. T. M. Kilbride, Clerk of the Illinois board, writes: “I would suggest that probation officers be appointed in each county to work with the parole officers, for under existing conditions, each parole officer has entirely too many prisoners under his charge.” This is in harmony with the statement of the New York board in 1913.

“Each of the State prisons are allowed only one parole officer.

This commission believes that the general supervision and direction over paroled persons should be vested in a central State authority. The State probation commission seems the most available. The nature and methods of parole and probation are similar and the two systems can be developed together. A large number of probation officers have been appointed within the State, and probation officers in local areas, such as cities and counties, should also have oversight of resident persons on parole."

This seems from many standpoints the most reasonable suggestion yet advanced, as it insures close and immediate supervision, minimizes traveling expenses, and offers a strong, systematic basis for what must ultimately develop into an important branch of preventive social work.

*The Degree of Supervision.*—That lack of supervision is the great weakness of the present system is emphasized by the officials of Maine, Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois and New York; the national committee on parole for the Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology at St. Paul in 1914 reports: "To several of the committee the greatest defect in the parole system is the shortage of parole officers. It is thought there should be at least one to fifty." A study of results attained thus far sheds some light on this point. The federal board attributes its success directly to this feature. In the following comparison, the relation of close supervision to success is suggestive.

State.	Ratio of Officers to Paroles.	% Making Good.
North Dakota .....	1- 40	96
Arizona .....	1- 55	94
Texas .....	1- 40	90
South Dakota .....	1- 45	93
New Hampshire (\$300 only, 1914).....	1- 55	66
Idaho (sheriffs supervise).....	....	80
Wyoming (warden) .....	35	90
Illinois .....	1-100	84
Indiana .....	3-250	74
Pennsylvania (2 officers, 2 clerks).....	900	85
Massachusetts—Men .....	1-200	..
Massachusetts—Women .....	1- 75	..
New York (3 officers and charity organ.) .....	....	79
California .....	1-302	85
Kansas .....	1-325	80
Iowa .....	1-200	70
Nebraska (no officers).....	....	80
Minnesota .....	1- 75	74
New Jersey .....	1-809	80

While many diverse elements enter into the success or failure of a parole system, the above figures indicate clearly that *no State with a low percentage of supervision attains a high percentage of men making good on parole.*

*Comparative Expenditures*—The feasibility of more complete and uniform supervision of paroles is amply proven, also, by a statement of the per capita cost of supervision annually in the different States.

State.	Annual Cost.	Number Paroled.	Cost Per Man.	% Making Good.
New Jersey .....	\$ 393	809	\$ .48	80
Kansas .....	1,000	325	3.00	80
New Hampshire .....	300	55	6.00	66
Pennsylvania (E. Dist.) ..	8,000	900	9.00	73
Colorado .....	3,048	302	10.00	80
New York .....	17,639	1,363	13.00	79
Illinois .....	15,000	1,000	15.00	84
South Dakota .....	750	45	17.00	93
California .....	17,500	647	27.00	85
Federal .....	11,145	251	44.00	91
Maine .....	1,066	22	48.00	85
Texas .....	1,800	32	56.00	90
North Dakota .....	2,400	40	60.00	96

The significance of this comparison seems to be quite generally recognized by all students of the problem except members of the legislatures. The committee on discharged prisoners of the American Prison Association in 1912 reported: "From the economic standpoint it is extravagant for the State to expend a considerable sum of money in the care and training of the prisoner during imprisonment if after his release the State expends little or no money on the period of parole or rehabilitation of the prisoner." The same protest is voiced by the New York Prison Association in these words: "It is the height of folly for the State to expend but a few dollars at the most in the supervision of a paroled prisoner when it expends very properly from \$150.00 to over \$200.00 a year for the care of prisoners within prison walls." If the reports of State parole officers are reliable (and they are the most reliable facts we have on the problem) we have reached this point; *that good results with the parole system can be secured by the payment of a very moderate price.* If the state appropriates the money with due regard to honest and sensible expenditure, more men can be paroled and more men relatively can be encouraged to make good on their honor.

*Analysis of Delinquent Cases.*—It is not enough, however, merely to increase the quantity of supervision; as a preliminary to reducing

the failures, there must be careful analysis and record of the factors which cause prisoners to violate their paroles.

So far as evidence can be secured, no greater success with men is attained by States which parole only first termers than by those States which parole older offenders or those committing more serious crimes. Wyoming and Pennsylvania point with some surprise to the fact that the habitual criminals paroled have uniformly made good; several boards have been successful in liberating on their honor, men who have committed the most serious offenses, including murder. As the problem is psychological rather than statistical, neither the proportion of the prison population released nor the absolute number on parole, under normal supervision, indicate anything as to delinquency. So far as studies of these failures have been reported (the best work has been done in New York and Illinois) three dominant causes seem to operate—returning to the old habits and environment; failing to retain work; mental defectiveness. As to the first, Pennsylvania reports “Of the 83 prisoners returned during 1914, 21 were returned for alcoholism or about 25%.” Similarly the Wyoming report for 1914 states: “Those who were returned for violating their paroles were either whisky or dope fiends.” Washington officials in their 1915 report make this significant statement: “We find that the one great influence for evil that we are continually fighting in parole work is the atmosphere that surrounds the bar-rooms and cafes in our large cities. Most of the men who comes to us owe their downfall to this influence.” That the old environment of the city is too strong for a considerable proportion of those found delinquent on parole is attested also by this striking fact. Assuming that North Dakota, Texas, Nevada, Wyoming, South Dakota, Arizona and Canada fairly represent rural conditions and that New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois and California represent sections in which the urban conditions are prominent, on the average *the proportion of delinquents is three times as great in the urban as in the rural sections.* The French system of placing more than fifty cities on a list of places forbidden to discharged convicts, while it may have diminished the temptation to delinquency, has interfered with the employment of paroled men so seriously as to render it inadvisable. Special provision for oversight of men returned to the temptations of city life must be made to eliminate this large factor in delinquency.

The second factor, failure to retain work, without question, also is a prolific source of delinquency. The report of Joliet, Illinois, for a 15-year period ascribes 35% of its delinquencies to “leaving employment without permission.” Elmira, New York, advances a similar ex-

planation which is echoed by Iowa, Washington and Minnesota, the only other States which report analysis of their delinquent paroles. Failure to retain work may be due to lack of trade-teaching facilities in prison. Iowa in 1914, complains of this condition. New York seems to have minimized this deficiency; out of 100 delinquent cases studied, 86 had received trade instruction and of that number, "only 7 who secured positions at their trades were unable to hold them by reason of lack of experience." Failure to retain work may be due, again, to inability to place men in a suitable trade. Minnesota reports that "persons who have special clerical pursuits have not been so readily placed on parole as the common laborer, especially the farm hand." Washington in 1915 suggests: "If the State could furnish some place of employment, it would be a great assistance until suitable positions could be found elsewhere. If we had such a place, the excuse so often heard, 'I got up against it and had to have money,' would not be a valid one. Since 1911, prisoners, in many instances, have preferred to work out their paroles at the road camps and get their final release after nine months' satisfactory service." Closer personal investigation of every prospective employer of prisoners is called for by the parole agent of New Jersey. A third explanation of failure to retain work lies entirely in the character of the prisoner himself. The Elmira study defines it generally as instability. Out of the 100 cases investigated, 60 of the men ascribed their change of employment to "too hard work," "small wages," "being lazy," "not liking their work." While it is evident that the first two causes assigned for failure to retain work are primarily social, this last factor is individual and can be met only by more rigid discrimination in paroling men.

This discrimination is the more necessary in the light of the third main element distinguishable in delinquency which seems to have been detected and analyzed only in the New York studies, notably in that made by Dr. F. L. Christian. This factor is the *mental deficiency* of the men who fail on parole. "Of the 100 examined, 55 were classed as mental defectives upon their original reception at the reformatory." Of this number the failure of 37 was directly attributable to mental deficiency. Without question, this calls for psychopathic examination of applicants for release as definitely as there is call for such examination in the courts.

Other elements enter into delinquency which cannot be discussed here. It is unfortunate that with the exception of the States cited above, no provision is made for carrying out the important recommendation of the Committee on Statistics at the last National Prison Congress to secure records of the history and progress of dis-

charged convicts, as far as obtainable, with an effort to discover preventable reasons for the failure of those who do not succeed.”

To every candid observer it must be evident that the parole system, just coming into its own as an organic entity in harmony with the most advanced ideas on the social treatment of crime, offers both to society and the criminal hope for the future which prison walls can never afford. What other institution, new to criminology or any other social field, can sustain the claim that it has produced better results for less than one-fifth the cost of its predecessor? One might logically say to the opponents of parole that until the state spends on the oversight of men out of prison the equivalent of what it spends on men in prison, conditional release has not been given a fair trial. It is to be hoped that the growing significance of this institution will call forth increasing support which will be merited by conservative, systematic progress.