

Fall 1927

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Recommended Citation

Preliminary Announcement of Purpose and Program of National Conference of All Crime Associations and Committees Called by the National Crime Commission, Washington, November 2nd and 3rd, 1927, 18 *Am. Inst. Crim. L. & Criminology* 325 (1927-1928)

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EDITORIALS

PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT OF PURPOSE & PROGRAM OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ALL CRIME ASSOCIATIONS AND COMMITTEES CALLED BY THE NATIONAL CRIME COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 2nd & 3rd, 1927.

While associations, state and national, such as the National Prison Association, have, for years, been making intelligent study and recommendations on the reduction of crime, it was not until a recently aroused public demanded that immediate and practical steps must be taken to reduce the number of crimes of violence, that there was any considerable number of State and City Commissions or Committees organized to study the entire question and not only initiate practical remedies but to carry them into effect.

The National Crime Commission, believing that the widely varying character of the action needed to reduce crime in the different states required local bodies of this kind, has encouraged their formation in every way in its power and closely watched their work. It is the feeling of the Commission that much good has been done, but that the efficiency of these bodies would be very greatly increased were they brought in close and constant contact, not only with each other, but with the work along special lines that has been done by (a) societies interested in penal reformation; (b) by the invaluable studies on criminal codes of the American Law Institute and the American Bar Association, and (c) the legislation which is recommended yearly by the Commissioners on Uniform Laws. The most practical way to bring this about appears to be a general conference of all these bodies and the National Crime Commission has, accordingly, undertaken to call them together in Washington on November 2nd and 3rd.

A preliminary announcement of this meeting was made in September, at which time the Commission made public a letter from the President of the United States expressing his warm approval and sympathy with the proposed Conference.

Owing to the prominence of the speakers and the difficulty of arranging satisfactory dates, the definite announcement of the time and general program has been delayed in its publication. This is a preliminary announcement and will be followed as soon as possible

by a more detailed program, giving the speakers' names and other information.

General Purpose of the Conference

In addition to making the Crime Commissions and Committees acquainted with each other and arranging for the constant interchange of information, the National Crime Commission believes that if the great fraternal and business organizations of the country can be brought in touch with these local Crime Commissions and thus learn something of their work and aims, they will prove powerful allies in influencing public opinion and the various state legislatures to act on such recommendations as they may make.

We are already assured of the formal attendance of representatives of most of the great fraternal organizations of the country such as the Masons, Mystic Shrine, Knights of Columbus, Moose, etc., and of large business organizations including Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, Kiwanis, National Credit Men's Association, etc. These representatives will explain to the conference something of their organizations and the practical way for the local associations to secure their endorsement and support.

The third purpose of the gathering is to take advantage of this general assemblage of interested bodies to discuss several outstanding crime problems which are common to all states. For this purpose we have been successful in securing eminently qualified speakers, nationally known, to present briefly the special topics, after which will follow what is hoped to be a very valuable open discussion on the part of all those present. These special subjects will include—

1. Uniform State legislation and possibly national legislation as well, to eliminate, as far as possible, the receiver of stolen goods. A Committee of prominent business men, representing all parts of the country, has been working with fine public spirit, on a preliminary report which will be presented at this meeting.

2. The problem of reducing the large number of second offenders by providing prisoners with practical training, which will enable them to abandon illegal ways of livelihood, commonly known as the "prison labor problem," will be made the subject of an afternoon session.

3. The necessity for securing nationwide criminal statistics by legislative action of the various states, and of greatly expediting the splendid work which has already been done by the police chiefs and others in connection with the U. S. Attorney General's office, toward the creation of a National Bureau of Criminal Identification easily ac-

cessible to all parts of the country, will be taken up at the last session, at which the Director of the Bureau of Census and the head of the Criminal Identification Department of the Department of Justice will explain to what extent the national Government can help in this problem.

4. A special Committee of the National Crime Commission has been working for two years on a study of the extent to which the mental condition of prisoners should be taken into consideration and one of the sessions will be devoted particularly to the presentation by eminent psychiatrists of the entire field, with particular explanation of the Massachusetts Law requiring a psychiatric examination of certain persons accused of crime, and the actual working of this law in practice.

This Journal will publish a report of the discussions and proceedings of the Conference.

ROBERT H. GAULT.

IDEALS OF THE AMERICAN PRISON ASSOCIATION

F. EMORY LYON¹

In view of the fact that the principles of the American Prison Association were promulgated fifty-seven years ago, it is worth noting how fundamental and far-seeing these principles still remain. Of all the organizations that have since been formed, looking to the amelioration of crime, it would be difficult to find one with a more comprehensive program, and stated so briefly. The objects of the Association as set forth in its constitution read as follows:

1. The improvement of the laws in relation to public offenses and offenders, and the modes of procedure by which such laws are enforced.
2. The study of the causes of crime, the nature of offenders, and their social surroundings, the best methods of dealing with offenders and of preventing crime.
3. The improvement of the penal, correctional and reformatory institutions throughout the country, and of the government, management, and discipline thereof, including the appointment of boards of trustees and other officers.
4. The care of, and providing suitable and remunerative employment for paroled and discharged prisoners and probationers, and especially such as may have given evidence of reformation.

¹Supt., Central Howard Association, Chicago; Associate Editor of this Journal.

The steadfast manner in which the Association has held to the fulfillment of these principles, and the things already accomplished to that end, is no more remarkable than that the standards thus set forth are still in advance of actual accomplishment in this field. The interesting fact about the present situation lies in the more practical and concrete discussions in the Annual Prison Congress.

While the earlier meetings were largely consumed by lengthy reminiscences, and at a later period all controversial questions were taboo, especially in the official resolutions, now the entire program is ordered on a forward looking basis, and known shortcomings and abuses in prison conditions are unhesitatingly set forth for consideration.

This was characteristic of the Prison Congress held at Tacoma, Washington in August. For example, Dr. Hastings H. Hart, who had previously criticized the Government for boarding out federal prisoners at less than cost; this year held his ground against the comeback by the new head of the Department of Prisons, who was present at the conference. Dr. Hart was also Chairman of the Committee on Resolutions, and the closing declaration, unanimously adopted by the delegates, condemned the McNeil's Island Prison as unsuited and poorly equipped for its purpose, and recommended that the site be abandoned, and that a new institution be built elsewhere.

Mr. Wm. Franklin Penn, the 1927 President of the Association, presented many concise and practical suggestions on the crime question, at the opening session. In his address, Mr. Penn traced the general improvement in prison conditions throughout the world and said that as a result of this he was now more interested in what produced criminals than he was in the prisoner himself.

"The root of the evil in the prison system of the United States is the failure to co-ordinate the system of the 48 states. And I must confess that the federal government itself falls behind many of the states instead of leading the way," he said.

"I advocate the formation of state commissions in each state to keep in touch with the system of other states and unify prison operation.

"It would be then possible to assemble national statistics regarding the cost of crime which would be staggering to the taxpayers.

"This practice would reduce taxes, remake men and put happiness where misery now exists."

Among his recommendations were:

Work for all prisoners at a reasonable wage.

General adoption of the indeterminate sentence.

Reasonable restriction of the sale of firearms.

Divorcing court procedure, prison management, law enforcement and prosecution from politics.

Abolition of technicalities as a basis for delaying court trials.

Fewer peremptory challenges of jurors.

Conviction on the vote of 9 out of the 12 jurors.

Abolition of capital punishment.

One outstanding address, which commanded exceptional attention by reason of its earnestness and wisdom, was given by Dr. Frank Moore of New Jersey on the subject of "Adjustment." He said:

"Adjustment is the solution to crime, and when society is able to adjust its criminals, it will be able to combat crime.

"There is much to this problem beside imprisonment, punishment, education and training. The criminal is out of adjustment with society. Everyone must become adjusted to the conditions that surround them, and the whole process of civilization is that of man adjusting himself to other men and to the laws of nature.

"Should society relentlessly condemn and pitilessly punish men because society is still too stupid to know what is the matter with them?

"Many men are tempted to fall by trying to get what everyone else seems to acquire so easily in this age of fast and luxurious living.

"The criminal must be redeveloped and his views on the rights of other men must be altered. It is our problem to make criminals safe to live among us.

"The support of a friendly arm to a man who stumbles is of far greater accomplishment than all the lashes that can be laid across his back."

Still another high spot of the Congress was the address of Mrs. Mabel Walker Wildebrandt, Assistant Attorney General, given before a large audience at the Tacoma stadium the closing session. The points here quoted from the press will give a meager idea of what was really a masterful oration:

"Truth, which we are all seeking, is to be found only through experimentation.

"If each of you who are charged with the practical responsibility of restraint and training of large numbers of offenders will try out various methods with your body of prisoners and the best facilities which you are able to obtain, the prison congress could become more than it is today.

"It could be a great bureau for the exchange of information, not for beautiful, advanced, costly and possibly unworkable theories, but for actual laboratory reports of methods of instilling morale and fresh mental outlook in prisoners, types of labor and industries that have been installed and the way they have been made to pay.

"Prisons and jails should be subjected to a psychological cleanup just as a generation ago physical cleanup was demanded so that the man who, upon release might go forth with a contagious antisocial mental state may

be released in wholesome attitude towards society. If that is not possible in every case, at least the virulency of his psychology may be eased and he may leave prison with as little danger of contaminating others as may be possible.

"We do not yet know the causes of crime well enough to prevent them. As yet, our efforts to reduce it must be regarded as in the experimental stage.

"We do know that idleness in prisons is a breeder of antisocial psychological states and that extreme, harsh or unusual punishments breed vengeance.

"Overcrowding in prisons breeds not only physical but mental perversions. The only thing which will offset its harm is hard work outside the cell block.

"Valuable as all study may be, I look for the real solution of the problem to the men whose knowledge of psychology has been acquired in the hard knocks of experience, whose experience has been tempered and ripened into understanding and whose mental outlook has been kept lifted above the dull routine of feeding and locking prisoners."

While the question of the mental health of prisoners was interspersed throughout the discussions, there were no section meetings under the auspices of the psychiatrists, and few of these specialists were in attendance.

The section on Juvenile Agencies, on the other hand, was very much in evidence, as usual in recent years. Prisoners' aid and after-care work attracted exceptional interest in two well attended and lively sessions.

For next year's meeting, Kansas City, Missouri, was selected, and Mr. E. R. Cass of New York, the well known General Secretary of the Association, was elected as President. With his experienced leadership and a central place of meeting, it is believed a large and an important Congress will convene.