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THE ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN TEXAS

Corrections Education in Texas Paying Off

EDITOR'S NOTE

Fact: The prison population in Texas has grown 112% in the last 10 years.
Fact: The general rate of recidivism is 32 to 33 percent; with six or more units of college work completed, the rate is cut to 16%.

The Texas Department of Corrections has been in the news during the past year for the reason represented in the first fact -- too many people and no place to put them. As a portion of the TDC personnel are working on the immediate problem of space, the educational personnel continue to work on educating the inmates so they will want to lead useful, productive lives when released. Education is a vital part of the rehabilitation program at the TDC. Work is the other essential ingredient. One costs the taxpayers money -- the other saves them money. Because the TDC inmates produce so much of their own food and materials, the cost of maintaining one inmate per day is \$9.58, compared to the national average of \$35.00. Even though the education program costs initially, it saves in the long run -- give a person the will and skill with which to become a productive member of society, and hopefully, they won't return to the public dole as an inmate of the TDC. As is evidenced by the second fact: with six or more credits of college, the recidivism rate is cut in half. Education is paying off in the TDC, thanks to efforts of committed leaders and educators.

The Advisory Council had an opportunity to meet these leaders and educators during its May meeting in Huntsville. The group visited the Windham School System at the invitation of Council member and Windham System superintendent Dr. Lane Murray. The visit was very interesting and informative and we felt ACTIVE News readers would like to know some of the facts, figures and philosophies of the people who play a pivotal role in the Texas penal system.

Some facts about the inmate population:

As of May, there were 33,788 persons incarcerated in Texas prisons; 1,500 of these were female.

Ethnic break-out: white - 38%, Mexican-American - 21%, black - 39%.

Educational facts:

Of the 33,788, approximately 16,000 are in school. The average educational achievement is the 7th grade.

Approximately 85% of Texas' felons are school drop-outs and many are illiterate. Over 40% of the inmates are under 25 years-of-age. Windham Schools provide academic and vocational classes to inmates who are not already graduates of an accredited high school.

Classes are conducted in 19 prison units spread over 243 miles. Inmates who achieve less than a fifth grade equivalency on a standardized test are required to attend school at least six hours a week. Others are released from work to attend classes on a voluntary basis leading to the GED and/or high school diploma and thus to the junior college program. Graduation exercises are held three times each year with over 2,000 graduates annually.

Since Windham's inception, the faculty has increased from eight adult basic education teachers to 149 professional academic teachers, 90 vocational teachers, 15 Title I teachers, 43 special education teachers and a professional staff of 89. All are certified by

the Texas Education Agency.

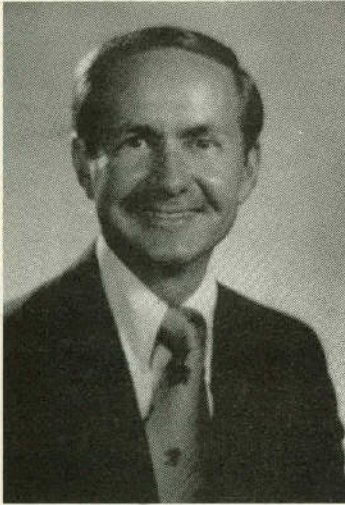
Academic teachers instruct students in the areas of language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, health, physical education, music, art, speech, drama and modern dance. In addition to the regular program, certified special education teachers work with the mentally and physically handicapped inmates.

Vocational programs offered are occupational orientation, industrial cooperative training and industrial training in drafting, auto body repair, auto mechanics, farm equipment repair, electrical trades, building trades, cabinetmaking, culinary arts, meat cutting, radio and TV repair, refrigeration and air conditioning, sheet metal, upholstery and furniture repair, welding, floriculture, cosmetology, barbering, home and community services, horticulture, masonry, painting and decorating, plumbing, electronics and others. The vocational programs are becoming competency-based.

The Windham School System was established in 1968-69 and is the first education system of such scope to be established within a statewide prison system. In December 1976, Windham received full accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, thus becoming the first correctional education system in the United States to achieve such status from a regional accreditation agency.

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HUNTER, MICHEL TO LEAD ACTIVE

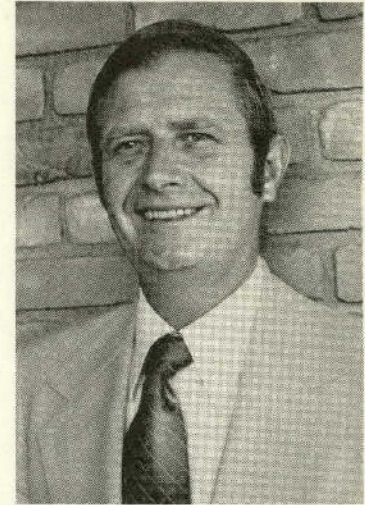


Dr. Robert Hunter
Chair

Dr. Robert Hunter of Abilene has been elected to chair the ACTIVE and Mike Michel of El Paso was chosen as vice chair. The two leaders were elected at the June 23-24 meeting of the Council in Austin. Dr. Hunter succeeds Dr. Jacinto Juarez of Laredo and Mr. Michel follows Dr. Hunter.

The new chair is vice president of Abilene Christian University. Since his appointment to the Council in 1978, he has served on the Adult Education and Special Services Committee, Steering Committee, Task Force and was elected vice chair to fill Dr. Frank Hubert's unexpired term in 1979 and again in 1981.

Mr. Michel is assistant superintendent for vocational education in the El Paso ISD. He was first appointed to the Council in 1979 and has just been reappointed for a full three-year term. During this time, he has served on the Industry/Education Committee and played a key role in the design, printing and dissemination of the two bumper stickers unveiled at last year's inservice meetings as part of the Secret Project and serves as chair of the Council's Ad Hoc Committee on curriculum reform.



Mr. Mike Michel
Vice Chair

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U.S. Criminal Justice System is Broken Down

The Advisory Council was addressed by both the former and current Directors of the Texas Department of Corrections. Dr. George Beto was the TDC Director until 1972, when W. J. Estelle took over. Dr. Beto is one of the most prestigious and respected experts in corrections in the U.S. and abroad and is the person most responsible for the creation of the education system in the TDC. He is currently the Distinguished Professor of Corrections at Sam Houston State University.

Dr. Beto began by explaining why inmates are allowed only six hours of schooling a week: "You can do more in prison education than you can on the street. When you have a structured environment, you can accomplish more. You don't have truancy problems...you don't have the PTA on your back...you don't have discipline problems. There is high motivation, because the alternatives to going to school are much less pleasant. Prison education programs waste less time than you do in the average public school."

Dr. Beto stated that he was very proud of the creation of the education system at the TDC. "There is not a prison in America, including the Federal Bureau of Prisons, that does as much educationally as does the Texas prison system. Texas has more people enrolled in college programs than the rest of the prisons in the U.S. and the Federal Bureau of Prisons combined. Texas can be proud of what they do educationally in prisons. The vast part of the result is due to the work of Dr. Murray," Dr. Beto said.

"Most people receive their image of prisons from the late, late show. They see James Cagney going to the electric chair screaming, or they see George Raft

standing in the dining hall at Stateville and beating a plate on a table trying to precipitate a riot. They get the impression that prisons are full of highly abusive, dangerous people, and they aren't. All you have in American prisons and state prisons generally, with some minor exceptions, are the poor and the stupid. Shortly before I retired, I asked our research section to develop a profile of the average prisoner which they did. I think it generally prevails today. There may be some variations. At that time, they found that 96 percent of the prisoners were school dropouts, 20 percent were illiterate, 60 percent came from broken homes, and between 40 and 50 percent had no substantial record of employment. The average IQ was 80, and 20 percent were mentally retarded. The average grade level of achievement by test, not by what they said, was the fifth grade. The most significant statistic is that 98 percent of the prisoners would again walk the streets as free men and women.

Dr. Beto stated, "I used to say the Criminal Justice System in America is breaking down, and I qualify that now. It is broken down. Our Criminal Justice System in the United States has flat broken down. Of all of the felonies committed in the United States today, only three percent will result in arrest, and one and one-half percent in incarceration. That means that 97 percent are either unreported or undetected. Ninety percent of all cases are settled by plea bargains.

"We get the impression from our civics books that if you commit a felony in the United States, you are tried by a jury of your peers. Occasionally we have a trial by jury, but it is like a morality play. We put on one now and then to show the natives that the

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system is working. But it is not working. So it is a fact that the Criminal Justice program is not breaking down...it is already broken down.

"I have said that 98 percent of those in our prisons will again walk the streets, and if you are going to make any contribution to their living constructive and productive lives, you must do three things with them: One, establish a work program that approximates that on the streets, and includes an eight-hour day with quality and production control. Two, teach them discipline -- for their own good and the prison system's...you can't run a prison on participatory management. Third, I think there has to be heavy emphasis on education. I have an immigrant's child's belief in education. I don't have to prove that education is good. It is like gold. I think education is intrinsically good. You can accomplish more in the prison with a good educational program than you can on the streets. So I believe that you ought to emphasize education in the prison, and I have seen it do some good."

No Let-Up Seen in Prison Growth

Mr. W. J. Estelle, current Director of the TDC, was introduced by Dr. Murray as a "friend of education. He has been most supportive and challenges us to improve our procedures and techniques in education." Mr. Estelle has been recognized by his peers in the American Correctional Association by receiving the prestigious E. R. Cass Award. He is much sought-after as a speaker on themes pertaining to prisons and corrections throughout the United States.

Mr. Estelle's comments: "Just 10 years ago our prison population was 16,000. This morning your prisons are holding 33,788, and there is no letup in sight. There are many reasons for this build-up in prison populations, and you, as our guests, are representatives of the community that sends these people to prison. As a staff we have no quarrel with that because it is you and your neighbors who are going to have to decide who needs to be in prison and who is safe to keep in your community. If you want to lock up 100,000 people, that is your business, but you are going to have to pay the bill. There are no free lunches. As you send people to prison, you should also be prepared to send the money to take care of them.

"Of all of the things we have tried in corrections, there is only one thing that has consistently paid off, and that is increased opportunities for education. By the very nature and definition of our population, most of them are not university candidates. They are the kind of people that make this country's economy work, given the opportunity, because they are the people who produce things with their hands which is the real basis of our economy. We have to train people to produce products and services. A few years back we almost sacrificed that concept on the altar of higher education. We have to have some higher education, but the backbone of our economy are those people trained in vocational programs. Eighty-five percent of the people you send to prison are school dropouts. You and I have either let them drop out or pushed them out or kicked them out, or they have voluntarily let themselves out. The reason doesn't really matter. They did not take advantage of the opportunity they had to develop their potential.

"For a nation that believes in universal education, to admit that 85 percent of the people in the largest prison system in the country are school dropouts is some kind of commentary on our commitment to that concept of universal education...and it doesn't take a mental giant to understand that a disproportionate number of dropouts end up in trouble. Then we are working at the wrong end of the spectrum. We should be giving more attention to the cause rather than having to spend so much on the effect. We have not made that commitment yet. Most of you have been saying the same thing most of your professional careers, and you will have to just keep saying it. You may feel like a voice in the wilderness, but we as citizens of Texas must come to a real decision point. We are going to say that we are not going to spend any more money on prisons. There has to be a cheaper, better, more effective way of dealing with this situation. We don't seem to get too excited about long-term, down the road kinds of return strategies."

Mr. Estelle stated that his stock answer to the heavyweight critics of the prison system is to ask where they were as a critic 20 years ago when these kids were not getting the kind of attention, love, care, and education that they needed to stay out of prisons and jails. "Nobody seems to get excited about that strategy because it is just one child at a time, one juvenile at a time, one adolescent at a time that drops out. They come from the thousands of neighborhoods around the state to create a population of nearly 34,000 in your Texas Department of Corrections.

"We have some goals for our inmates regarding education. We would like to have 75 percent involved in our educational program, be it academic, vocational, or a combination of both. We would like for every one of them to have a GED or a high school diploma before leaving the prison, and we would like to be assured that at least 75 percent have an employable skill when they leave the system. This means support from people like yourselves. We hope that you gain an understanding of this need and can help others understand it."

When asked about education only being given six hours a week, Mr. Estelle replied, "We support education, but we also support the work ethic. We have to deal with the inmates as adults. They may not act like adults all of the time, but they are and must be treated as such. The work ethic must be stressed, not at the expense of an education, but to make them value that education more. These inmates need to understand that there has got to be a better way for them to make a living than some of the things we require them to do as part of their work experience, and we don't need to apologize for that.

"The bill attached to any education program is growing, and if we reach the goals which we enumerated a minute ago in reaching 75 percent of the population, it will require additional expenditure of funds. The Texas Education Agency has been just super in recognizing the uniquenesses of this particular kind of educational program, but we cannot get along with any less budget or with any less standards of excellence in this education program than any other. We would appreciate your support of Dr. Murray and her staff and faculty, but you are not doing it just for us. You are really doing it for yourselves, and I think

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the investment will pay large dividends just as it does with your own children. Even though our inmates get it a little late in life, it is important that they get it and not come back to prison."

Council Tours Facilities

The Advisory Council toured three units in the Huntsville area. The first was the Ferguson Unit, which houses the male first offenders, ages 17-21. There are approximately 2,500 incarcerated in this unit and all are required to attend school at least one day a week. The group visited the vocational labs and shops, the library and classrooms, and the broom and mop factory.

The second stop was the Huntsville Unit, better known as "The Walls." An outstanding aspect of this operation was the media center, which produces most of the curriculum materials for the Windham System.

The Wynne Unit houses the Records Conversion Facility, which might be one of the best kept secrets of the TDC. The facility operates on a 24-hour schedule and handles records from various state agencies and converts them into three major setups: file system in alphabetical and numerical order, conversion to magnetic tape or conversion to microfilm. Fifty-two different state agencies are now being served through this facility. Last year, Data Entry put fifty-five million images on magnetic tape.

The facility handles the vehicle registration files for Texas and mails out twenty-two million renewal

notices annually.

NOTE: There were many more interesting facts that could not be included in this report. Comprehensive minutes were produced of this meeting and tour and a copy may be requested by writing or calling the ACTVE Office.

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* F I N A L N O T I C E *

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NEWS FLASH:

The Commissioner of Education, Raymon Bynum, announced his intent to name Dr. Paul Lindsey to fill the position of Associate Commissioner for the Department of Occupational Education and Technology. Dr. Lindsey, who is presently Director of Vocational Industrial Teacher Education at Southwest Texas State University, will come on board August 1.

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