

# Prisoners Human, Big Bill Insists

By W.W. EDGAR

Peering out of the window of his huge office at the Detroit House of Correction, Supt. Bill Bannan pointed with pride to the vast acreage of farmland where some of the prisoners were working and smiled a smile of satisfaction.

"Prison work sure has changed since the day I got it," he said. "In fact, I have seen a complete change and the end still isn't in sight. It took quite a while to convince some of the top officials that prisoners still are human beings and should be treated as such if we are to do our job properly."

"IT'S A FAR cry from the old days when prisoners were sent 'down in the hole' in solitary confinement or were tied by the wrists and sometimes even horsewhipped."

Continuing the comparison, he pointed out that it long had been the custom to gear all the prison rules to the "tough" guys, and every-one suffered.

"We made many mistakes in those days," he went on, "and one of the worst was isolating the prisoners. We kept them from having contact with the outside world, never thinking that if we lived in China for five years we'd act like Chinamen."

According to the Dehoco chief, the first big change came when the new corrections law was adopted in 1957. Instead of concentrating on the "tough" guys, more time was spent in a program to rehabilitate the inmates.

"This started the cycle the other way," he went on, "and now we have all sorts of athletic programs and educational opportunities. And just a few weeks ago, we graduated our first class of women with high school diplomas."

OVER THE years, Supt. Bannan has earned the reputation of being one of the best penal authorities in the country and a man who knows where he speaks.

In the comparatively short time he has been the head man

at Dehoco, he has raised the institution to fourth place in the national rankings and has his eyes focused on further improvement "if they let me alone."

Returning to his desk Bannan chuckled as he recalled his start in prison work.

"Back in the mid-20's, jobs were hard to come by," he said, "and I took a position with the Ypsilanti Reed Furniture Co. Little did I think at the time that the door was opening to a career as a prisoner official."

His duties at the time were confined to cost accounting and bookkeeping. This type of work, he explained, got him inside the walls at the Michigan Reformatory at Ionia where he took a job as chief clerk.

LATER ON he moved up to the rank of deputy warden and remained in that post until July 10, 1952, when he moved over to Jackson as warden of the big Southern Michigan Prison.

He instituted many changes at Jackson and was one of the first wardens to permit prisoners outside the prison walls, before he came to Dehoco in 1962.

We started with a band, and we used to go outside for concerts. This had a tendency to make them better prisoners."

It is his philosophy—and he is winning many followers—that a rehabilitation program is the main function of a prison.

"It gives the prisoner a new outlook on life, and he doesn't leave here bitter," the Dehoco chief added.

There still are too many coming back, but this just proves that we still have a big job to do. They aren't returning in the numbers they used to.

ACCORDING TO Big Bill, one of the main reasons prisoners come back is that the general public hasn't learned to accept them.

"I firmly believe that when a man—or woman—has paid a debt to society, their past should not be held against them. They deserve a chance to go right."

"And the general public had better learn to accept them."

because we are turning out a better person than ever."

At this point he picked up a picture from his desk. It was a picture of the first graduating class in the educational program co-sponsored by the Plymouth Community School District.

"There was a time when something like this would have been deemed impossible. And, don't forget, we're just starting."

SINCE BILL has been at Dehoco, he has ruled against erection of any big walls and has instituted a recreation program that includes gardening.

Members of the Plymouth Garden Club pay visits during the gardening season, and the prisoners' contacts with the outside world are tremendous.

The only thing that ruffles his feelings (these days) is the fact that the Wayne County commissioners are attempting to send the overflow from the County Jail west to Dehoco by means of leasing some of the buildings.

"It won't work," he points out, "because they are two different types of prisoners and the law will not permit their mixing."

He also is perturbed that the

Detroit Common Council, in a plan to balance the budget, is considering reducing the herd of livestock on the farm and even selling part of the farm itself.

This farm is a real asset," Bill explained. "It helps to teach the prisoners work habits—something not many of them had when they came here. And they'll need those habits when they leave."

And the Common Council wouldn't help the budget much if they ordered all of our cows and pigs sold."

The Dehoco Chief chuckled at the thought of it.

"WE'VE COME a long way in the treatment of prisoners," he concluded, "and instead of selling the farm and the livestock, we would do well to get more."

And we'd improve penal institutions a great deal, too, if we cut them in size. The actual situation would be a house population of 600 to 700 without walls."

"If you happen to get some tough guys, treat 'em tough, but educate the others."

With this philosophy, Bill Bannan has come a long way, too, since he took that first job at Ionia back in 1927.



(HAROLD JULIAN, a United Auto Workers leader from Farmington, was one of the throng of 2,800 who got to meet Sen. Edward Kennedy when he appeared at a fund-raiser in Southfield for Sen. Philip Hart (D-Mich.). Hart's wife, Jane, is in the foreground. Julian was a 19th Congressional District delegate to the 1968 Democratic national convention. (Observer photo)



PLAYING UNUSUAL ROLE -- Accustomed to dealing with human beings as warden of Jackson Prison and now superintendent at the Detroit House of Correction, William (Bill) Bannan, finds himself in the role of a caretaker of Dehoco farm stock that includes a herd of cattle and a large sty of pigs. Asked to reduce the herd and stys as a means of balancing the City of Detroit budget, Bill is putting up a fight to keep his "pets," claiming there are many better ways to balance the budget. (Observer photo by Vince Witke)

## Smile and And Win \$2,500 Spree

Smile pretty for the camera-man and you might win a shopping spree worth \$2,500. That's the invitation being offered Observerland youngsters who are 14 years of age and younger.

The invitation is being extended by Montgomery Ward's Wonderland store in cooperation with the National Association of Department Store Photograph Studios who established the contest in 1953.

ANY CHILD 14 or under is eligible. Selection of the winners will not be based on beauty alone, contest officials said. Personality and character depicted in the child's photograph will also be taken into consideration.

Arrangements for entering can be made by contacting the

Montgomery Ward Wonderland store's portrait studios. Entry photographs can be taken anytime before Aug. 8. Contest judges will include radio-TV personalities Lorne Greene, Merv Griffin and Goldie Hawn.

### New Location For Dog Show

The Pontiac Kennel Club is moving its annual summer all-breed dog show and obedience trial to the country. The show will be Sunday, Aug. 16, at Lakewood Farms in White Lake Township. The site is on Bogie Lake Rd., two miles south of Highland Road (M-59).

The indoor polo stadium at Lakewood will house the all-day show.

For the last three years the summer show has been at Waver Field in Pontiac. The new location offers all-weather show facilities and ample parking. Nearly 1,400 dogs are expected to be entered. About 90 different breeds will be represented. Premium lists and entry forms are being prepared by Bow Dog Show Organization of Detroit, general superintendent for AKC licensed show, and will be mailed soon.

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<b>CHERRY HILL PLAZA</b> Cherry Hill at Inkster Rd.	<b>FARMINGTON</b> Plaza	<b>7-GRAND</b> Shopping Center	<b>TELE-CRAFT</b> Shopping Center	<b>7 MILE</b> at Evergreen	

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