

# Why Dehoco Chief Opposes Jail Plan

By W.W. EDGAR  
Seated at his large mahogany desk at the Detroit House of Correction, Supt. William ("Bill") Bannan, who boasts more than 40 years of experience in penal institutions, shrugged his shoulders and admitted that frankly he was puzzled.



THESE THREE DEHOCO barracks are being eyed by Wayne County to house its overflow of county jail prisoners. (Observer photo)

## Dehoco's Caseload

Date <u>4-15-70</u> <u>19</u>									
MEN					WOMEN				
Court	A.M.	IN	OUT	P.M.	A.M.	IN	OUT	P.M.	TOTAL
Out County Charges									
Federal					2			2	2
Municipal Ordinance	35	6	5	26	3			3	89
State	12			12	211	3	1	213	225
County	615	29	15	629	56		3	53	682
Detroit Ordinance	56	1	9	48	24			24	72
Total	768	36	29	775	296	3	4	295	1070
REC. HOSPITAL MEN	3	WOMEN			4	TOTAL			7

latest plans of the Wayne County Board of Commissioners for relieving the overcrowded conditions in the county jail by transferring as many as 280 "prisoners" to Dehoco as soon as possible and by leasing three barracks to obtain the necessary facilities at an estimated cost of \$929,000.

"I've been around a long time," he said, "and have seen many things. But this is the strangest that ever has happened, and frankly I'm puzzled."

AS HE SAT there, Bill turned in his chair, looked out the window at vast acreage in the area and protested, "Why are they messing around out here? We have a good program - rated fourth best in the country - and they (the commissioners) should leave well enough alone."

"If they want to do anything," he went on, "they should do what we did some years ago at Jackson prison. We built two large barracks and did it for less money than they are considering spending out here."

"The county owns most of the land along Beck Road, between Five and Six Mile Roads, and it could build the barracks over there and leave Dehoco alone."

Bannan explained that the barracks at Jackson were built for about \$400,000 some years ago and that, even with the increased costs of construction, they could be duplicated on county property without causing any upsetting of the Dehoco program.

"The thing that puzzles me," the amiable Dehoco boss continued, "is that I have not heard from Mayor Roman Gribbs or the City Council about any plans for accommodating prisoners out here."

"THE COUNTY lads are out here, sort of snooping around, to see what we have. But I don't hear from the City of Detroit that owns the place, and none of us are downtown shopping around the County Jail."

"On top of that," he went on, "I have never been asked my opinion of the overcrowding problem or the plan to lease our cottages."

"After all, I've only been in the business for 40 years, and you don't get one of those things," pointing to the Edgar R. Cass Award he received in 1957, "for sitting on your hands."

"All the Commissioners are doing," he continued, "is putting a bit of salt on a rash and not getting at the virus."

Bannan fondled the papers in his hands as he related that the county-commissioners were told they were making a mistake when they built the addition on the County Jail downtown seven or eight years ago.

"They have the prisoners housed like animals," he pointed out. "They have no type of recreation or means of getting any exercise or breathing outdoor air. The prisoners should be treated like humans. After all, that's what they are—even though they have erred along the way."

HE POINTED to the program he has installed at Dehoco as a comparison.

"I am a great believer in outdoor recreation for the inmates," he went on, "and even though the city loses money in the operation of our Dehoco farm, the money is well spent. It teaches the prisoners work habits—something they didn't have when they came here. And this lesson alone is worth all the money that is spent in erasing the farm's deficit."

With considerable pride he also revealed that he has installed an indoor recreation

program with shuffle board courts and card tables in the basement.

"I am a firm believer," he said, "that the best corrective method is to keep them out of their cells as much as possible."

BUT GOOD AS the system is, Bannan vows that he is opposed to a dual program whereby the "prisoners" from the county jail would be mixed with his "convicts."

"This just wouldn't work," he pointed out, "because there are two different elements. The man or woman who is convicted of wrong doing and sentenced is a much different person from one who is waiting trial and pondering his fate. These are the type that cause the most trouble... and therefore, it would be bad to mix them."

"And another thing," he asked, rather pointedly, "they are going to feed the transfers and what are they going to do with the women? You can't have a caterer without spending a great deal, and we can't use our facilities."

"And the women?—they couldn't be housed in any of three barracks they're talking about. We keep the women a safe distance from the men at Dehoco, and the county would have to do the same—fence or no fence."



WILLIAM BANNAN talks about his work at the Detroit House of Correction. (Observer photo by Vince Witke)

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