

FRIDAY, JULY 29, 1949

PRISON CAMP ETHICS

The system of punishment in vogue at State prison camps, as brought out in a Rockingham trial this week, has many obvious flaws. But it is a good deal easier to pick out the defects than it is to prescribe a remedy.

The facts apparently were not contested in the trial. The prisoner, one Clarence Lett of Anson County, said "I wish I had a case of beer" as a beer truck passed a work gang. Speech on the work gang is a violation of the prison department regulations.

On Saturday afternoon Lett had been released. It is ordered that he be "strung up" from 30 to 60 hours without food. Inspector A. A. Webb asked Carpenter, with good reason, "would you like to know what you would have done if approval from Raleigh had ordered Lett to be handcuffed for four hours when he had already been punished for 64 hours and released?"

Kyle Matthews, State Prison Inspector, and superintendents from the Union and Montgomery prison camps testified that handcuffing is a form of punishment, and that it was the accepted practice to begin the punishment before getting a ruling from Raleigh.

But that doesn't mean that all of the superintendent's regulations are just. The Raleigh director says that 30 to 60 hours limit is clearly too stringent for the rather insignificant offense.

The incident was investigated by Sheriff Carl H. Holland of Richmond County who swore out the warrant for the superintendent of the prison camp, Ned L. Carpenter. Carpenter was found guilty in records court on a charge of cruel and unusual punishment and fined \$25 and costs, appealed to Superior Court, and a jury returned a verdict of guilty. Defense attorneys have announced they will appeal to the State Supreme Court.

By any measure of decent and humane treatment, the handcuffing of a man to bars for 64 hours without food following by even a half-way road to work, still without food, is inhuman, barbarous, and excessively cruel. Such a sentence simply cannot be justified.

Yet, the rules and regulations of the State Prison Department permit local superintendents wide authority in enforcing these and other accepted methods of punishment. The rules require the superintendent to notify Raleigh of such infractions, and then abide by the length of time as determined in Raleigh. But as a matter of practice, the superintendents go ahead and mete out the punishment, and then notify Raleigh.

In this case, a letter from Raleigh arrived on Saturday afternoon after Lett had been released. It is ordered that he be "strung up" from 30 to 60 hours without food.

As long as North Carolina requires its prisoners to perform manual labor, or indeed as long as they require them to be confined to any set of regulations for a prison establishment, there must be means of punishment. The means of punishment must be disciplined. He cannot run rough-shod over prison regulations.

But that doesn't mean that all of the superintendent's regulations are just. The Raleigh director says that 30 to 60 hours limit is clearly too stringent for the rather insignificant offense.

Nor does it mean that our prison establishments, subject to politics and low salaries as most State departments are, has been able to attract the right men as superintendents of the various road camps. A great deal depends on the personality and ability of the man in charge.

It would seem essential that Governor Scott either undertake personally, or appoint a commission of expert penologists, to investigate the Rockingham incident, and to survey the whole State prison set-up. The Lett case might be an isolated incident, but it is apparent that the system can, and perhaps does, permit many other such incidents which reflect on our great progressive State.

With the step-by-step campaign of ideas and matter-of-fact Communism, without it, we would not have carried out our great postwar relief program, the military aid to Greece and Turkey, the European Recovery Program, and the North Atlantic Pact.

What troubles us is that we have not yet won the fight against Communism. As Secretary Acheson put it yesterday, we are now at the halfway mark, and it is no time for turning back. We may risk losing all our accomplishments if, at this delicate stage, we begin scrapping among ourselves.

The bipartisan foreign policy coalition of each of us, and we ought to have access to differing ideas.

At the same time, the bipartisan policy has been of great service during a most critical stage of our history. Without the unanimity it has given us, the world, we would not have been able successfully to reinforce our military victory.

BI-PARTISAN POLICY THREATENED

GROWING opposition to the Military Assistance Program and Senatorial blocking over ECA appropriations raise the disturbing prospect that the bipartisan foreign policy has just about reached the end of its unmitigated existence, and that we are in for another era in which foreign policy will be just as much a political football as domestic policy.

Perhaps it is inevitable. After all, there is no logical reason why foreign policy should not be decided by a majority vote across this great land. America thrives on discussion and on the free and open examination of conflicting ideas. Now that we are the No. 1 power in the world, our foreign policy is very much the concern of each of us, and we ought to have access to differing ideas.

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TOO LITTLE AND TOO LATE?

THE other day in Raleigh Utilities Commission Chairman Stanley Winborne told Charlotte's City Attorney that his group simply didn't have the manpower or the funds to carry out the program of investigation of the Duke bus operations here.

In that connection, we note with interest the following little item from Under the Dome column of the Raleigh News & Observer of yesterday:

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'Pass Friend, Pass Friend, Pass Friend—'

Joseph Slop



People's Platform

Cement Prices Challenged

CHICAGO (AP)—The American Cement Association has four people enrolled who are members of Alcoholics Anonymous. It seems that the teacher of this class is a student of these individuals and... (text continues)

Committee's Influence

CHARLOTTE (AP)—There is a must for every red-blooded American... (text continues)

Murders and Lynchings

SPRING PINE (AP)—The police department has been... (text continues)

King Alcohol Losing Out

CHARLOTTE (AP)—It is an encouraging thing to see the sale of alcoholic beverages slipping and falling over the nation... (text continues)

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

WASHINGTON (AP)—White House jester to the President of the United States... (text continues)

European Cigarette Deal

HAPPY Harry would profit from one mistake, he might be forgiven, but he doesn't. The general also would be... (text continues)

Merry-Go-Round

QUIET, middle-of-the-road Guy Gabrielson, GOP... (text continues)

Trouble in Burma

Joseph Slop

HERE as elsewhere in Asia, the Communist revolution is... (text continues)

What Goes On Here?

NEW YORK (AP)—The United States has been... (text continues)

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WATCH THAT ROBIN!

WE have labored alone and virtually unsupported in our occasional efforts to prove to sentimental humans that the kingdom of birds extends largely to annoy and abuse us. But the profits continue to accumulate. Incidents multiply daily in which bold and contemptuous winged creatures flout man's tireless efforts at friendship or meet at his dogged animality.

It is our reluctant conclusion that birds have studied and adopted for their own every revolting human trait that has come under the microscope. Conclude your testimony on this score comes from Illinois, where a legislature tried this Spring to pass a bill which would restrain cats from defending themselves against birds.

It seems that Ohio's robins are prone in the Fall to gorge themselves on berries of the tartarian honey suckle and the curator of the city's natural history museum is warning citizens of what this may mean for the robins.

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