

# Women as High-Security Officers

## *Gender-Neutral Employment in High-Security Prisons*

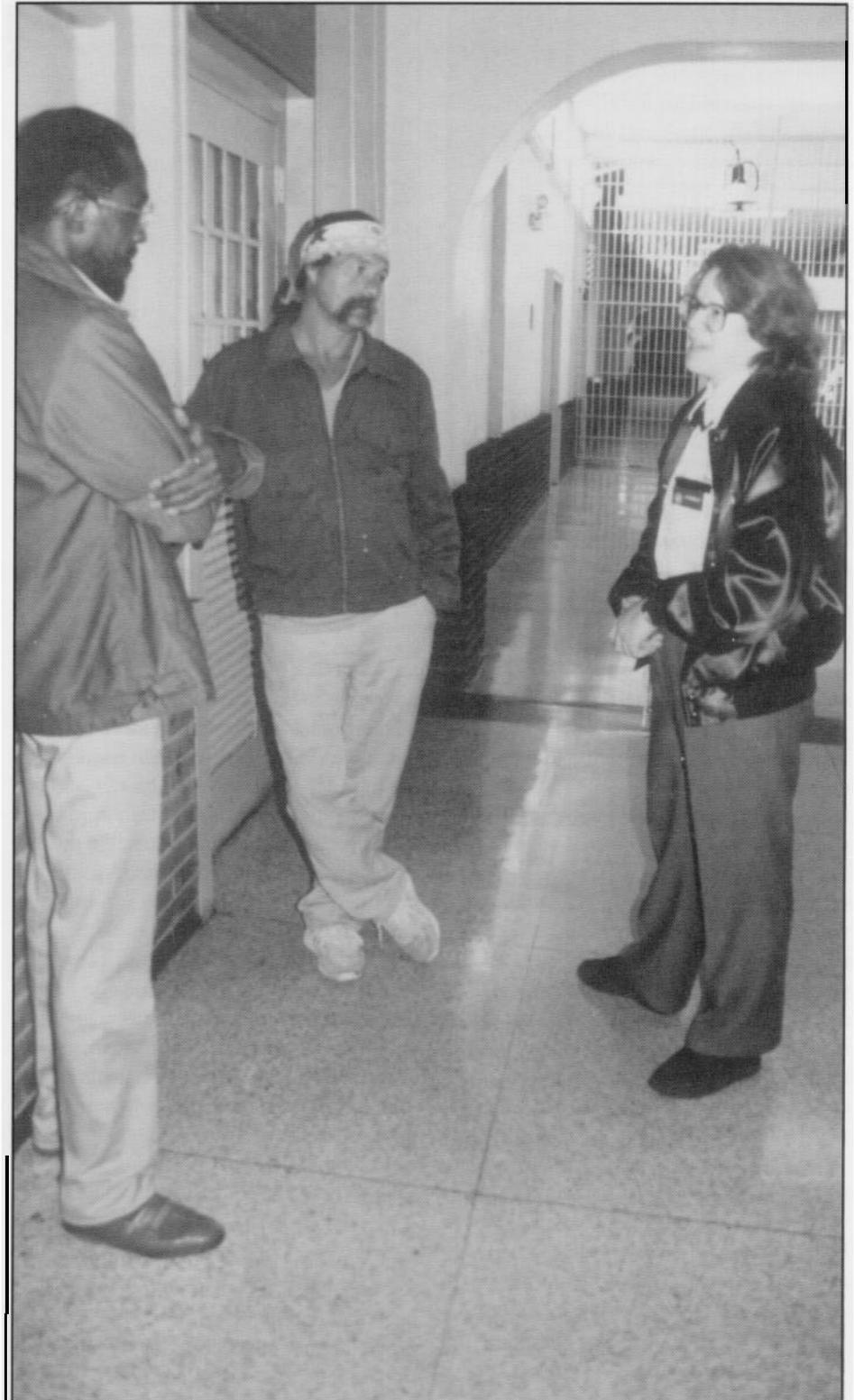
**Richard H. Rison**

Historically, women have been underrepresented in corrections. Those women who did work in corrections traditionally were placed in clerical or other support service positions, and some served as correctional officers. Few women have served in supervisory or upper management positions.

While gender bias in correctional facility employment certainly still exists, the situation has changed. The “new” correctional philosophy is that women should be hired, trained, and promoted to all positions—and at all security levels, including maximum security.

For years, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has had a gender-neutral hiring policy for all positions except correctional officers at high-security male institutions (penitentiaries). As a result, the Bureau has witnessed steady growth in the numbers of women in its workforce. In January 1992, the gender-neutral policy was extended to all positions, with full implementation expected by 1994 (BOP, 1991).

The trend toward gender-neutral hiring in maximum-security institutions is also evident in the State corrections. Forty-five States use women to staff at least one male maximum-security prison or unit. Twenty-four of these allow women to be eligible for all correctional posts; policy is gender-neutral with respect to hiring women in these settings. In 15 States, women are not permitted to work certain maximum-security posts; these usually involve supervising showers or performing strip searches. Seven States have highly restrictive policies with



C.O. Kimberley Hawley talking with inmates. Photo by Gary Espiau/ USP Lompoc

respect to using women to staff male maximum-security prisons. Of these, six States exclude women correctional officers from positions within housing units, and one State excludes women completely from maximum-security prisons (NIC, 1991).

Based on 20 years of experience as a correctional administrator and a lengthy review of the current literature, I have encountered several myths about women in the workplace.

# Women do not want to be promoted. They would rather follow than lead.

# Advancement for women is precluded by domestic issues, such as a lack of mobility and a preoccupation with child care.

# Women simply cannot do the work that men can do in correctional settings because they do not have the skills needed to advance in the organization.

These myths have caused me to reflect on personal experiences in which gender bias has occurred. For example, while warden at the United States Penitentiary, Lompoc, California, I was asked to comment on the possibility of women working in “contact” positions at the maximum-security level. At first, I felt women could not handle the pressures associated with a maximum-security institution. However, after reviewing the available literature on the topic, I changed my mind. It seems I was also guilty of gender bias.

Much gender bias rests on claims that women cannot perform in the higher levels of an organization because they do not possess the necessary skills. Although this may be the case at times,



*In 1978, Linda Allen became the first woman correctional officer at the U.S. Penitentiary, McNeil Island, Washington (now a State prison). She was one of only a few women to work as a C.O. in a high-security institution until recently.*

the argument is circular: many women do not possess the skills they need for advancement because these same myths and assumptions restrict them from obtaining the training they need.

As correctional administrators, we must recognize when we are dealing with myths. We must ask ourselves if we subconsciously encourage gender bias by selecting women primarily to fill lower-level positions. Do we provide adequate career counseling and planning to enhance the advancement of women? These questions must be considered if the “glass ceiling” that limits gender equity is to be removed.

## Legal issues

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on account of sex where gender is not a bona fide occupational qualification (“bfoq”). To prove a bona fide occupational qualification on the basis of gender the employer must show that gender is a qualification

“reasonably necessary to the normal operation of the particular business or enterprise.” The bfoq defense applies only when “the essence of the business operation would be undermined by not hiring members of one sex exclusively” (*Diaz v. Pan American World Airways*, 1971).

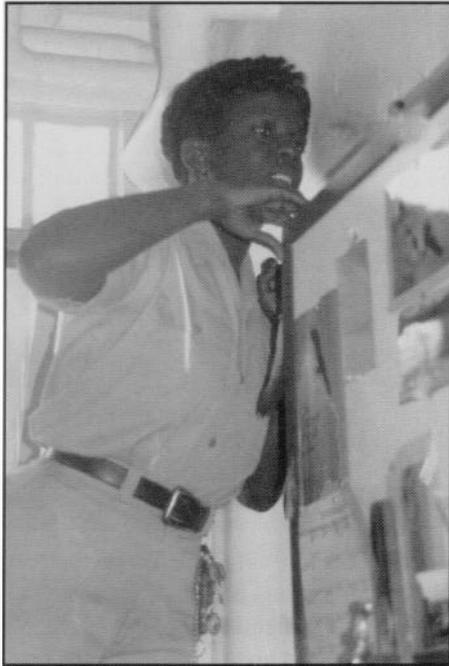
The traditional point of view on hiring female correctional officers is that their presence poses serious problems not posed by males. However, assumptions based on such stereotypes are not valid under Title VII.

Women employees have brought claims against various State correctional systems, alleging that regulations establishing gender restrictions for “contact” positions (such as correctional officer) limit their opportunities for career advancement.<sup>1</sup>

The argument made in claims by inmates has been that the presence of correctional personnel of the opposite sex in contact positions violates their privacy rights. The courts have usually rejected this argument.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Garret v. Okaloosa County*, 1984; *Dothard v. Dawlinson*, 1977; *Gertrude Csimadia et al. v. William Fauver et al.*, 1990; *Hardin v. Stynchcomb* 1982; *Gunther v. Iowa State Men’s Reformatory*, 1980; *Barbara Diamete v. Arthur Wallenstein*, 1990.

<sup>2</sup>*Smith v. Fairman*, 1982; *Johnson-Bey v. Foster*, 1990; *Truman v. Gunther*, 1990; *Merritt-Bey v. Sotts*, 1990; *Michenfelder v. Summer*, 1988. In some instances, however—*Forts v. Ward*, 1980, for example—courts have supported inmates’ privacy claims. For instance, in a recent decision (*Jordan v. Gardner*, 1993), the Ninth Circuit held that searches by male officers of women inmates were sometimes traumatic due to prior sexual abuse, and potentially violated the Eighth Amendment.



impermissible. The pedestal upon which women have been placed has all too often, upon closer inspection, been revealed as a cage. We conclude that sexual classifications are properly treated as suspect, particularly when those classifications are made with respect to a fundamental interest such as employment (*Sail'er Inn, Inc. v. Kirby*, 1971).

The same arguments are still being offered in favor of the combat exclusion laws that prohibit the assignment of women to aircraft or naval vessels engaged in combat missions (Bendekgey, 1991). Correctional case law relative to women in high-security prisons may offer potential for challenging the exclusion laws in the military.

The important trend in these cases is the increasing number that deny the “bfoq” defense to prison administrations. None of the 1990 cases were dismissed on the basis of security concerns that might justify gender-based restrictions in a correctional setting. A policy of barring women from work as correctional officers in high-security prisons would appear to render the agency subject to allegations of discriminatory hiring. In 1971, the California Supreme Court summarized well the position that must be taken in corrections and in the larger world:

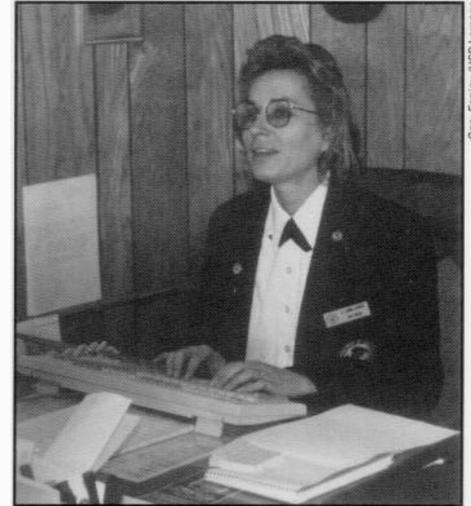
Laws and customs which disable women from full participation in the political, business, and economic arenas are often characterized as “protective” and “beneficial.” Those same laws and customs applied to racial and ethnic minorities would readily be recognized as invidious and

### Implementation strategies

States implemented their gender-free hiring policies—from the mid-1970’s through late 1991—for a variety of reasons, ranging from recognition of equal opportunity issues and requests by women officers to open up high-security positions, to union pressures and court mandates.

Some simply announced with no fanfare that all positions would be opened to women applicants on a certain date, while others carefully phased women into various positions. The evolutionary process began with women being initially used in noncontact positions and gradually moving into cellblocks. As indicated, many States resisted change until they were under court mandate, and then relied on the courts’ decisions to guide their implementation (NIC, 1991).

According to a 1991 study by the National Institute of Corrections, most agencies did not develop any formal or informal implementation plans when they



*Above. Special Investigative Supervisory Technician Joyce Lane preparing an investigative report.*

*Left: Warehouse worker Cathy Dunston conducts a cell search.*

began to use women in correctional positions. The only States that did, Ohio and New Jersey, did so as a result of court decisions. A 1984 agreement with the court in Texas also served as a de facto plan; New York did not develop a formal plan, but its process was in line with an agreement between the Department of Correctional Services and the union.

Most States did not provide any special training during implementation—either to newly hired women or to other staff. Several States did offer relevant training covering some gender issues, including E.E.O.C. requirements, sexual harassment, and special orientations for female staff working in institutional settings.

There was little special support—such as mentoring programs and support groups—for the first women introduced into maximum-security prisons. Such

programs have since been developed in some States. The NIC study previously mentioned cited California as the major example of a State with a women's liaison mentoring program (at Soledad and Folsom prisons). In Minnesota, an association called Women in Criminal Justice is cosponsored by the Department of Corrections. Other State mentoring programs are limited.

A major issue that faced women staff in high-security settings was resistance from both male staff and administrators, based primarily on the sense that women need protection and wouldn't perform well in emergencies, thus threatening the agencies' safety and security interests. Agencies almost universally encountered resistance—whether subtle or overt—from male officers and supervisors when they began to use women in maximum-security settings. Resistance was especially strong in older facilities with firmly established “old boy” networks, where women at times were intentionally set up for failure. In most cases, these problems were dealt with one-on-one or by simply reiterating the new policy in staff meetings. This approach met opposition head-on by announcing that the policy was in effect and was not to be questioned. In nearly all cases, resistance faded as women proved themselves capable of handling all positions. Generally, safety and security concerns did not materialize (NIC, 1991).

Inmate resistance, while present, was not as prevalent as staff resistance. Male inmates' initial objections to having women in maximum-security housing units usually focused on privacy, although some simply objected to women giving them orders. As mentioned, recent court decisions have not upheld privacy arguments.



*Officer Velparita Gilchris passes by showers with doors that were added to protect inmates' privacy.*

Physical plants had to be modified as women began working in maximum-security settings. Yet, for the most part, such modifications were minor, involving added bathrooms for women officers or privacy screens in inmate showers.

In reviewing the implementation of gender neutrality in high security institutions, several common themes stand out as action areas for administrators:

- Develop a plan and optimize the time frame for implementation.
- Provide training and communications.
- Anticipate staff resistance.
- Phase women into maximum-security posts.
- Review organizational structures for job equality (Alpert and Crouch, 1991).

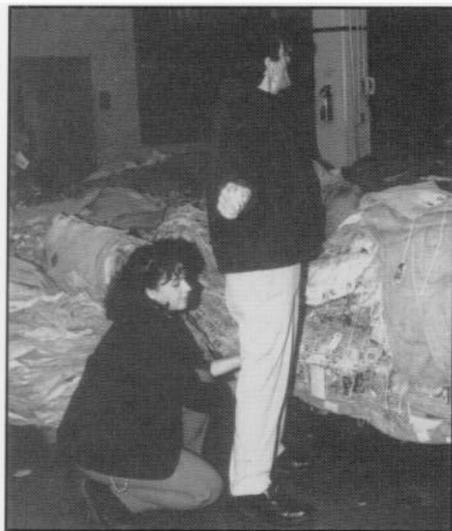
### Employment findings

The trend toward gender neutrality in correctional officer positions has produced largely positive results:

- The literature overwhelmingly cites women's calming influence and their ability to control without using force as unpredicted benefits of this transition. Central to security arguments are observations that women defuse critical instances with less force, less violence, and less tension (NIC, 1991).
- Women offer a new work pool; correctional rosters can now be increased with this supplemental workforce. This complements the findings of the Hudson Institute that “Workforce 2000” will grow slowly, becoming older, more female, and more disadvantaged (Johnson, 1987).
- There is some evidence that the women's presence has made the male officers more attentive to assignments and that women are more observant and attentive than male officers.
- The major emphasis from all literature on women correctional officers in high-security facilities involves organizational structure. It focuses on the inequities, lack of clearly defined upward mobility, and underrepresentation in the higher ranks as major areas that need attention (Stewart, 1979). Rosabeth Moss Kanter notes that women behave differently in organizations not because of sex differences, but because of the structural characteristics of their roles—i.e., they rarely hold positions of power. Kanter concludes that organizations must seek to expand opportunity and mobility, and empower people by balancing the representation of women throughout the organizational structure.

### Areas for future research

Women are now being incorporated into high-security correctional facilities in most States and in the Federal Bureau of Prisons. This is an important area for



Officer Leslie Severit "shakes down" an inmate in a UNICOR plant that repairs U.S. postal mailbags.

future research efforts. Issues to be examined include:

- The effects of different administrative structures on the recruitment and placement of women in corrections.
- How unionization in a corrections system affects the hiring and advancement of women.
- Organizational practices—formal and informal—that contribute to or constrain the career commitment and aspirations of women.
- The conditions under which employment rights of women might be in opposition to male inmates' privacy rights.
- How institution "key indicators" differ before and after implementation of gender-neutral environments, with a focus on inmate/staff behavior.

- Whether staff/inmate resistance to change forms measurable patterns.
- Reasons for unsuccessful gender adjustments, if any.

Correctional agencies would do well to make the development of cooperative work relationships between men and women a major focus of the training and recruitment programs, and develop plans for advancing women along higher-level career paths throughout the organization.

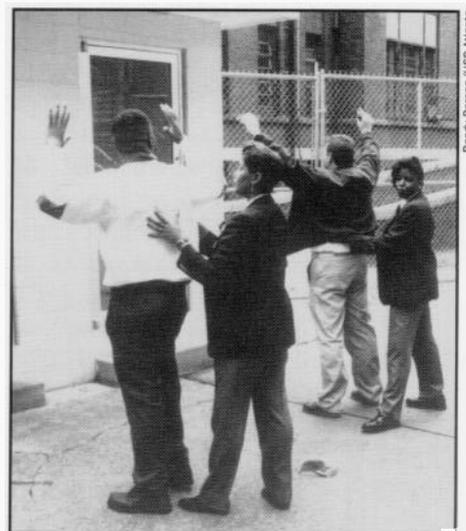
### Conclusion

Gender neutrality in employment is a critical responsibility of correctional administrators. Arguments against women in corrections in general—and in maximum-security institutions in particular, as I have attempted to show—are not persuasive. Both Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) law and the concept of "reasonableness" in hiring and other personnel practices mandate equal treatment; carrying these out is another part of our responsibility as public administrators. The premise should be clear; restricting women to only certain positions in correctional facilities of any security level has no merit.

Correctional administrators can learn from current literature on gender differences in the workforce. The policy of increasing the representation of women as correctional officers in high-security facilities has largely been implemented with very little planning. However, there is almost universal agreement that the resistance to this change and the projections of failure are unfounded. ■

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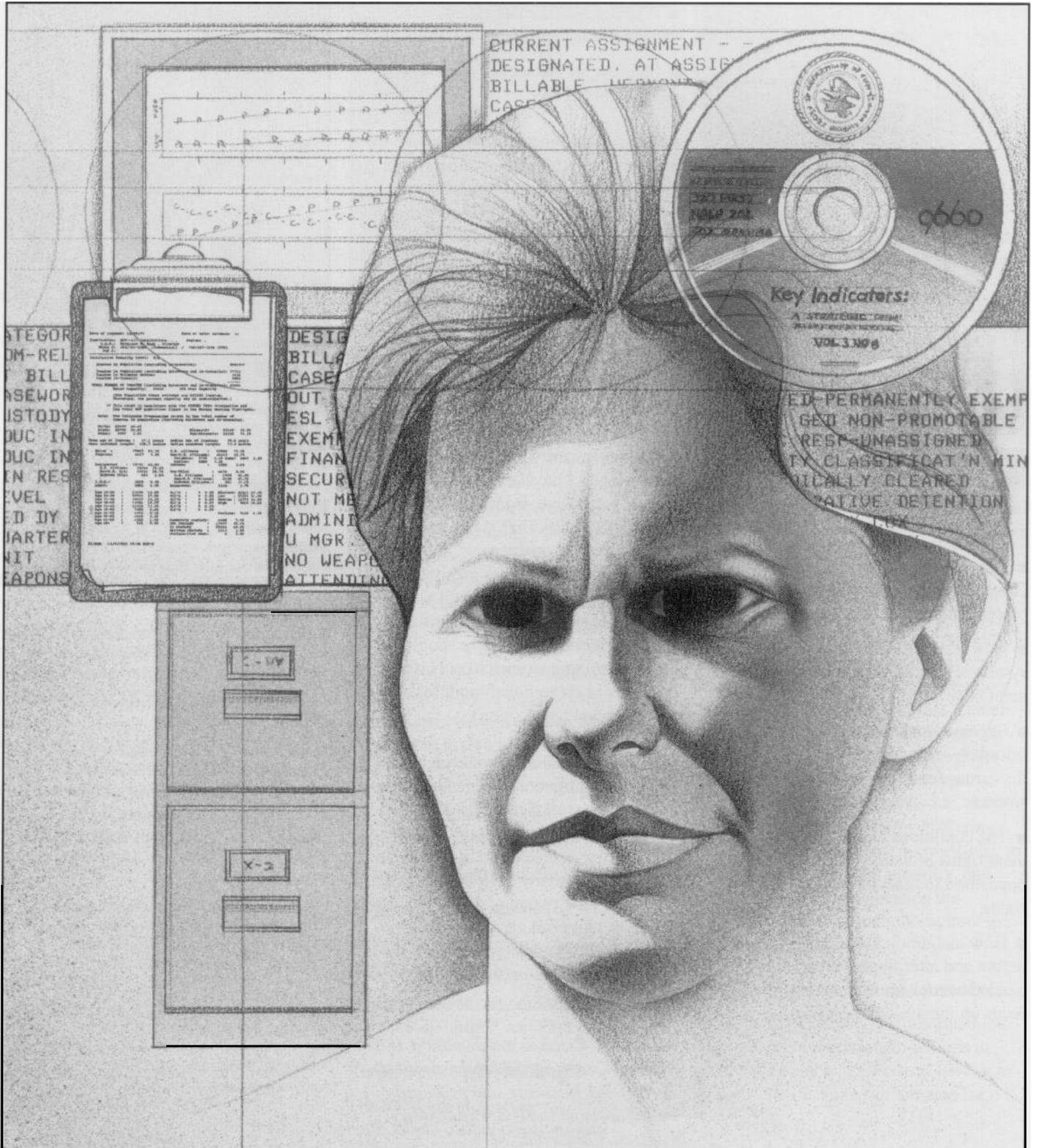
*Richard H. Rison is Warden at the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners, Springfield, Missouri, and previously was Warden at the U.S. Penitentiary, Lompoc, California.*



Officers conducting pat searches upon inmates exiting metal detectors. Left, Officer Juel Hawkins; right, Officer Michelle Charles.

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# Information as a Management Tool

*Sharla P. Rausch*

Like most State systems, the Federal prison system has been undergoing a period of unprecedented growth. In October 1984, it housed 25,919 inmates in 44 institutions. As of July 1993, it was functioning at 42 percent over rated capacity with 78,571 inmates in 71 facilities<sup>1</sup>—with projections of 120,670 inmates by the year 2000.<sup>2</sup> Despite crowding, rapid expansion, and an increase in the percentage of new (and inexperienced) staff, the Federal prison system continues to run safe, orderly facilities free of court intervention or the assignment of special masters. This success has been attributed to good management (DiIulio, 1989a; DiIulio, 1989b; Allen, 1989; Fleisher, 1989; N.Y. State Dept. of Correctional Services, 1989).

An “information-oriented” approach has become a crucial element of proactive management during this period of growth and change. Three years ago, that approach was implemented sporadically at best—mainly by those managers already comfortable with using information. The importance of information in making management decisions was made clear by J. Michael Quinlan, then-director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons:

Managers who are used to making decisions “by feel” will find that they must make use of research findings and powerful information-gathering systems in their daily work. Evaluation must become a part of every Bureau activity, not just because it improves our efficiency, but because it ensures a wiser use of public resources (Quinlan, 1989: 14).

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The Bureau has developed several innovative tools for making well-informed management decisions. The acceptance of one of these tools was highlighted at a meeting 3 years ago in which the Bureau’s executive staff—the director, assistant directors, and regional directors—discussed institution strengths and weaknesses while examining data for the first time housed in a PC-based information system, known as the Executive Staff Management Indicators Module. Participants included people who previously had little experience with computers, but who recognized that this module provided them with a powerful tool.

This article discusses several such “tools” that not only facilitate the daily operations of correctional institutions, but enable managers at all levels to access data to help them make decisions.

## SENTRY

SENTRY, the Bureau of Prisons’ online inmate information system, is designed to ease the daily tasks performed by institution staff. In little more than a decade, SENTRY has grown from an inmate population monitoring system, which included location, work status, housing and custody assignments, and other relevant information for every

inmate. It has added modules for property accounting, litigation, administrative remedies (inmate grievance procedures), and disciplinary tracking, to name a few.

All modules were added in response to operational needs. For example, the sentence monitoring function was added to increase accuracy and staff efficiency in computing sentences. That Bureau staff perform an average of 750,000 SENTRY transactions each day testifies to its usefulness. SENTRY has made staff increasingly aware of the benefits of automation; they continue to automate functions that facilitate the running of Bureau institutions.

Because the information from systems such as SENTRY, HRMIS (its counterpart for staff information), and discipline-specific databases is integral to operations, it is also useful for identifying what is important to prison managers.

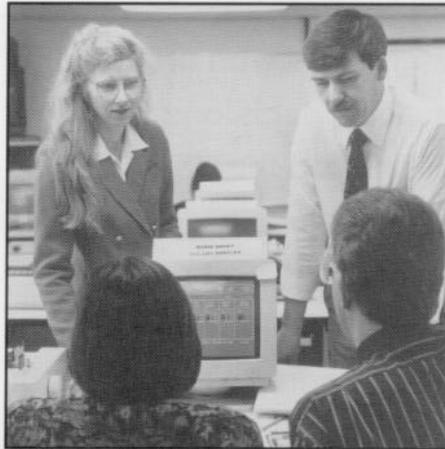
The weakness of such systems as SENTRY for management planning purposes is also their strength as daily operational systems—with the exception of some historical information, they are a “snapshot” of information at one point in time. Their data are constantly being overwritten as changes occur. To examine information over time, it is necessary to take these snapshots and pass them on to another system that can store them and provide users with easy access in various aggregations. The Bureau of Prisons has developed the Key Indicators/Strategic Support System for this purpose.

## Key Indicators/Strategic Support System (KI/SSS)

KI/SSS is a PC-based management information system that gives users access to a range of information on

inmates, staff, and financial operations. Much of the information on inmates is from SENTRY and includes demographic, misconduct, administrative remedy, furlough, community corrections, education participation, population, capacity, admissions and discharge, sentencing/classification, and other data. Obligations, expenditures, staff overtime, and medical overtime are included in the financial section. The staff section houses demographic, turnover, performance appraisal, and tenure data, as well as results from the Prison Social Climate Survey—a comprehensive set of questions regarding staff perceptions of institution safety and security, inmate quality of life, staff work environment, and staff personal well-being. (This survey has been administered annually, since 1988, to a stratified random sample of staff at each institution. For more information about the Prison Social Climate Survey, see Saylor, 1984.)

KI/SSS provides managers with access to a range of information that can be used to address questions (for instance, does an increase in escape rates suggest problems with institution security?) or as context for these indicators (inmate demographics, crowding, and staffing levels as background for escape rates). In most cases, these data exist for each month over a period of years, enabling trend analysis. The information is presented in tables and graphs and structured so that users can compare information over time and across institutions, security levels, and regions. Because it is easy to make these comparisons, managers are better able to identify similarities and differences between institutions and examine why they exist (for more information regarding the development and implementation of KI/SSS, see Saylor, 1989, and 1989b, and Gilman, 1991).



*Jeanne McVerde, Regional Computer Services Administrator, North Central Region, and Dave Freeman, Accounting Assistant Administrator, Food Service Training Center, Aurora, assist in computer instruction at the Management and Specialty Training Center, Aurora.*

KI/SSS also contains several specialized modules, such as the Executive Staff Management Indicators Module mentioned above. This module contains information identified by the Bureau's executive staff as important to help determine whether areas of institution operations should be examined more closely. This includes such items as institutional capacity and inmate population, inmate classification, assaults on staff and inmates, escapes, and staff perceptions of their work environment. The module is further tied to the Bureau's strategic planning efforts by organizing the information according to the organization's goals of population management, human resources management, security and facility management, correctional leadership and effective public administration, inmate programs and services, and development of partnerships.

Much of this information is taken from data sources already resident in KI/SSS, and also includes other data representing various disciplines not currently included

in KI/SSS. Each warden reviews the Executive Staff Management Indicators Module information for his or her institution and provides comments to the regional director for use in interpreting the data.

This process has a number of benefits. First, it has resulted in the organization of relevant information in a way that is used to assess programs and institutions; second, it is a fairly open process in which wardens are able to see and comment on what their "bosses" are examining. In several instances, their comments have resulted in modifications to the data provided to the executive staff. Finally, this process has helped demystify data by presenting them in a more easily understood manner. Managers are better able to assimilate the data and apply them to decision-making.

However, while KI/SSS is invaluable for providing information on the performance of programs, institutions, institution security levels, regions, and the Bureau overall, it does not indicate why these may or may not be functioning well. Much of that information is provided by discipline-specific program reviews and the Institution Character Profile, both developed under the auspices of the Bureau's Program Review Division.

## Program Reviews

Program reviews are conducted using discipline-specific guidelines developed and refined during the management assessment process. These guidelines provide very specific instructions to the reviewers as to which of the discipline's functions should be examined, as well as the steps for doing so. Although the

program review teams originate from the Program Review Division in the Bureau's central office, guidelines are developed by administrators from the relevant disciplines.\*

A negative program review may result from any number of causes—inadequate resources, staff inexperience, lack of training, or inadequate guidance from supervisors and written policy. Identifying these causes enables reviewers to make specific recommendations for improvement. Tracking the occurrence and reasons for program weaknesses across a number of institutions enables the Bureau to identify program-specific problems, as well as more global causes, such as staff inexperience.

The Program Review Division provides a quarterly cumulative summary of these findings that is used by Bureau managers to determine whether any problems (or potential problems) exist in their own programs. This summary also identifies exemplary programs and information on external review activities relevant to managers.

Program reviews also identify programs or procedures that are exemplary and should be replicated. As is the case with negative findings, this information will be communicated to administrators for use in refining programs, identifying needs, and allocating resources.

\*In addition to the reviews coordinated by the Program Review Division, field staff, using the same evaluation guidelines as the program review teams, conduct their own evaluations. Such self-evaluations are required at least once in each year that a program review is not conducted, but institutions are encouraged to conduct them more frequently.



Matthew Borkoski

*A program review team visits the Federal Correctional Institution, Petersburg, Virginia. Left to right: Program Review Examiner W. Bob Bryce, Warden Carolyn Rickards, and Accounting Supervisor Darlene Ely.*

In sum, data in KI/SSS are used by managers to identify possible problems and to help them ask questions, while the program review process identifies where a program may be faltering. However, it is possible that procedural breakdowns may not immediately appear as a problem. Ideally, program reviews will allow problems to be resolved before they have any noticeable effects on the program.

### Institution Character Profile

Institution Character Profiles were designed primarily as a management tool for regional directors and their wardens, and as a better means of communicating what is going on in institutions.

Institution Character Profiles are conducted for each institution at least every 3 years by a review team composed mainly of administrators from the regional office. The process entails visiting the institution; interviewing staff and inmates; recording observations on a range of topics related to morale, professionalism, and communications;

interviewing relevant department heads and program administrators; examining community relations (through observations and interviews with the community, local law enforcement, and so on); and examining relevant institution documents (e.g., training plans, budgets, and staff turnover statistics).

Information from the Institution Character Profile also is examined in conjunction with other information discussed previously. The different data sources combine to give the regional director and Bureau director a more complete picture of the institution.

The Institution Character Profile not only provides a better understanding of the institution; it gives a better understanding of the context for other information (such as that found in KI/SSS). This can be particularly useful when determining resource needs.

## Management Assessments/ Strategic Planning

All of the tools discussed above are important to the Bureau's management assessment and strategic planning processes. To a large extent, good management decisions are based upon good data. By providing good data, the Bureau's information systems and program evaluations help ensure the quality of decisions.

■ Program administrators from the Central and Regional Offices routinely perform management assessments in their particular disciplines (such as health services, education, correctional programs, or financial management). On a continuous basis, line staff are encouraged to help identify issues and forward them through their institution's administration to their regional administrator for consideration at the assessments. If significant deficiencies are found, program review guidelines are strengthened in those areas; in some cases, issues arise that cross disciplines, and must be presented to the Executive Staff for resolution or inclusion in national strategic plans.

■ Strategic planning empowers Bureau staff in their day-to-day work by ensuring a two-way flow of information. Line staff identify critical issues, not only through management assessments, but also by forwarding issues directly to the Central Office for consideration by assistant directors. Conversely, once Bureau goals are established by the Bureau's Executive Staff (based on input they receive from the field), supporting action steps are developed by regional and institutional program managers. \*

\*For additional information regarding the Bureau's strategic planning process, see State of the Bureau 199 1.

## Conclusion

In what DiIulio calls "The New Old Penology" (DiIulio, 1991), there is an emerging consensus that the major factors determining the extent to which prisons are safe, secure, orderly, just, and humane institutions are not so much what sort of cards the institutions are dealt but how they are played. In other words, the types of inmates, the size and age of the physical plant, the abundance (or lack) of resources, the degree of overcrowding, or other such variables do not necessarily determine whether an institution operates smoothly. What matters most are the variables of organization, management, and governance.

But which of the many management variables actually make the most difference? It is easier to identify examples of good management than to discover just what makes them successful. This article has described a number of administrative tools developed by the Bureau of Prisons to manage its facilities more efficiently, effectively, and responsibly. With the exception of SENTRY, these tools are still in the research and development stage; continued use and feedback will result in further refinements consistent with the Bureau's management styles and needs. To the extent this occurs, the use of information will become a natural part of management, thus enabling the Bureau to manage proactively during a period of immense growth and tight resources. ■

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*"The Right Tool for the Job: Strategies for Making the Use of Information a Natural Part of Management," presented at the 1991 meeting of the American Society of Criminology.*

## Notes

\*Source: KI/SSS (Volume 4, No. 8).

\*Figures, provided by the Office of Management Support, Administration Division, Federal Bureau of Prisons, are as of December 1, 1992.

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# Grand Designs, Small Details

*The management style of James V. Bennett*

*John W. Roberts*

In October 1960, Federal Bureau of Prisons Director James V. Bennett returned to Washington after a 2-month trip around the world that included stops in France, Greece, Italy, Egypt, India, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Japan. After wading through the stacks of reports that had accumulated in his absence, and talking by telephone with his wardens, Bennett drafted a memorandum—whimsically entitled “A View From a Traveler”—which he sent to the Bureau’s top executives. In the memo, Bennett critiqued a number of Bureau programs and procedures that he “had sort of taken for granted” previously, but which he could see in a new light after having been away from the office for so long.

Many of his observations and suggestions were extremely focused—criticizing, for example, the perfunctory interview given a prospective employee, suggesting that too many staff members were overweight, and recommending a limit on the amount of gasoline allowed in institution trucks to make it impossible for inmates to steal them “and highball out for parts unknown.” In fact, in many of his memos of the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, and throughout his career, Bennett tended to pay great attention to small details, as he personally admonished staff not to keep pets on the reservation, expressed concern that inmates were permitted to watch too much television, suggested that institutions cease awarding cigarettes as prizes in inmate athletic competitions, and objected to what he considered the unnecessary duplication of inmate files.

The preoccupation with details may have seemed an anomaly. During his 27-year administration as director of the Bureau, Bennett was best known for his visionary



James V. Bennett, 1960, near the end of his long career as director. Photos courtesy of BOP Archives.

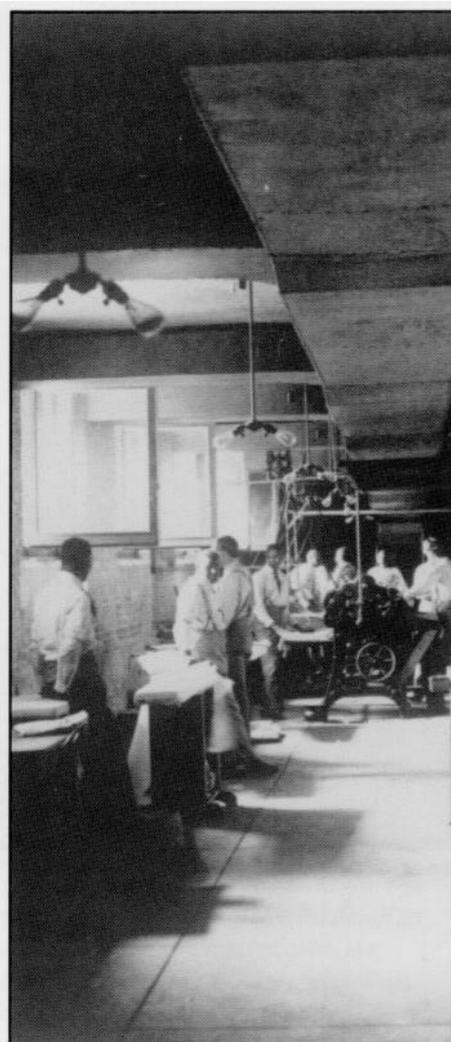
philosophy of corrections and as one of the most determined exponents of rehabilitation programs—what later became known as the “Medical Model.” Bennett’s greatest goals—all of which he achieved—included reducing institutional regimentation, building clean, open, and modern institutions, developing meaningful work opportunities for inmates, improving educational and vocational training programs, providing diagnostic and counseling services, and instituting halfway house programs. During his last decade or so as director, Bennett delegated most day-to-day operations to his assistant directors—Myrl Alexander, Fred Wilkinson, Albert Evans, and Frank Loveland—so that he could devote much of his time to criminal justice issues that went beyond prison administration, such as gun control and sentencing reform. Throughout his career, Bennett clearly was alert to “big picture” issues.

Yet he tried never to lose sight of minute details. In fact, Bennett’s mastery of details helped him realize some of his grand designs. Bennett began his Federal career as a specialist in government administrative methods, and his early first-hand analysis of Federal prison administration furnished him with the guiding principles he used to manage the Bureau. Out of that experience, in turn, he devised a theory of administrative management that could be applied not just to prison operations but to any public service enterprise.

From 1919 until he became assistant director of the new Bureau of Prisons in 1930, Bennett was an investigator and later chief investigator of the Bureau of Efficiency (the predecessor agency to the

present-day Office of Management and Budget). In that position, Bennett studied the management techniques practiced in Federal agencies and recommended improvements. For example, he made an extensive study of the Justice Department’s filing system, and proposed a complete overhaul.

In the mid-1920’s, the chief of the Bureau of Efficiency offered Bennett the choice of undertaking an investigation either of Federal prisons or of the Veterans Administration’s supply procurement systems. Bennett chose



prison, and studying prisons, he wrote later, “was probably the decisive experience of my early career.” His survey of prison conditions helped him frame his philosophy of correctional goals and prison management.

In his report to the Bureau of Efficiency in March 1928, and in subsequent testimony to a congressional committee, Bennett detailed the deplorable conditions he found at the United States Penitentiaries at Atlanta, Leavenworth, and McNeil Island. Overcrowding was severe—eight men crowded into cells designed for four, and inmates sleeping in dark, poorly ventilated basements or relegated to makeshift living quarters in the prisons’ warehouses. Sanitation was atrocious, there was little meaningful work to occupy the inmates, and there were no rehabilitation programs to speak of.

Bennett was quick to defend the prison administrators of the day, explaining that they did all they possibly could with the limited resources at their disposal. Nonetheless, he considered the prevailing conditions to be virtually inhumane and totally unsuited to the rehabilitation of offenders, which he believed to be the paramount goal of corrections.

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*Left: In the 1920’s, Bennett found inadequate factories and a lack of meaningful work in Federal penitentiaries.*

*Right: Recreational programs were subsidized by Federal Prison Industries, which Bennett helped create.*

*Far right: Under Bennett, the first assistant director for Federal Prison Industries, new factories were built (such as this one in Leavenworth) and work opportunities for inmates were expanded.*

Surveying the wretched conditions in the early Federal prisons helped Bennett define his prison philosophy. He would seek to eliminate overcrowding and idleness, to build clean, new prisons, and to develop worthwhile educational programs, wholesome recreational programs, and productive industrial programs. Further, he would classify inmates by program and security needs to help bring about their individualized treatment. Ultimately, he would gear prison architecture, programs, regulations, and staffing to the rehabilitation of offenders. As he said years later, “the ultimate criterion of corrections is the prevention of recidivism.”

To achieve these visionary goals, Bennett also needed a management philosophy. Just as his corrections objectives grew out of his early prison survey, so did his management style. In his report to the Bureau of Efficiency and his congressional testimony, he articulated several management principles upon which he would rely for the remainder of his career. Those principles included central direction and oversight, an emphasis on personnel issues, stewardship of resources, and openness to innovation.



## Central direction and oversight

From the outset, Bennett stressed the need for central direction and oversight. It was necessary to create “a coordinated system of Federal correctional institutions,” he said in his report for the Bureau of Efficiency, and shortly thereafter he told the congressional committee that Federal prison administration should enjoy the status of “an independent bureau in the Department of Justice.” Resolving the Bureau’s status was imperative if prison officials were to



have the authority to make long-term plans and the power to implement them.

Bennett knew that it could take years for a single piece of legislation to get through Congress, followed by a year or more to secure the first appropriation for a new program or institution, and only after all that had taken place could substantive planning begin. In his congressional testimony, the future director argued strenuously that if Congress laid down general principles and then maintained control primarily through the appropriations process, the Bureau would be freed of the cumbersome requirement to obtain specific legislative approval every time it needed to activate a new prison or develop a new industrial product line. Planning would then be far more efficient and plans could be carried out in a more timely fashion.

That theory was put into practice when Congress established the Bureau in 1930 and gave it a broad legislative mandate to build new institutions and to implement appropriate programs for inmates. Sanford Bates, who served as director from 1930 to 1937, and Bennett, who was assistant director under Bates and then succeeded Bates as director, used that mandate to build the prisons that alleviated the terrible overcrowding of the 1920’s and to develop the classification, education, and counseling programs geared toward the “individual treatment” of offenders that Bennett believed was essential to his goal of rehabilitation. Those accomplishments might have been impossible had there been no mandate and instead legislative consent had been obligatory on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, Federal Prison Industries—which Bennett masterminded—received legislative authority in 1934 to open new plants, develop new product lines, and

market products to Federal agencies without having to obtain congressional permission for each initiative. That authorization enabled Bennett to expand industrial programs to keep pace with the growing prison population.

Thus, the establishment of the Bureau and the incorporation of Federal Prison Industries changed top Federal prison officials' relationship with Congress by giving them greater authority and more independence. It also changed their relationship with field staff by conferring upon them the responsibility to set direction for the entire prison system. Before the Bureau's establishment, the various Federal wardens operated their institutions almost independently of each other and with minimal direction from their nominal superiors in Washington. Even after the Bureau came into existence, Directors Bates and Bennett had to struggle to establish discipline over the agency's components. But the law creating the Bureau set down the lines of authority—with the director clearly at the top—and during his administration

Bennett adopted many tactics to exert control and give direction.

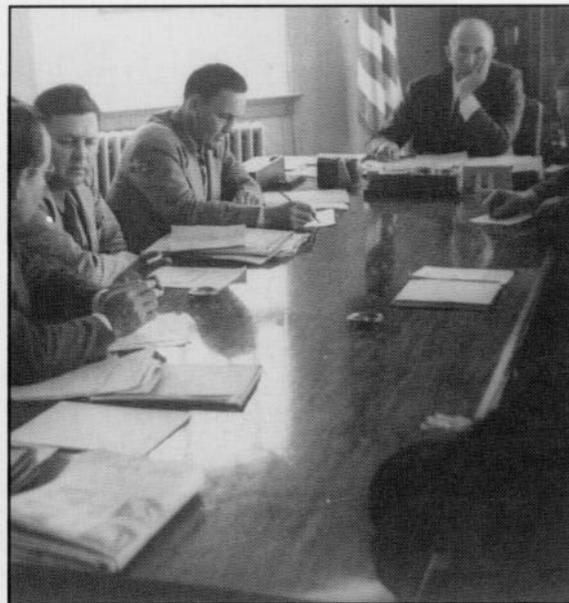
For example, under Bennett, the Bureau became more policy-driven than ever before. In 1942 it codified its agency-wide policy system in a volume exceeding 800 pages. Officially titled the *Manual of Policies and Procedures*—but better known as the “door stop”—it contained thousands of directives in all disciplines and was updated and revised continually.

Bennett adopted other means to coordinate policies, make his orders known, and educate staff. In 1937 he inaugurated periodic wardens' conferences, giving wardens throughout the Bureau an opportunity to exchange ideas, learn new methods, and be advised face-to-face by Bennett. Once or twice a month, Bennett sent what he called “round-robin” letters or “encyclicals” to all his wardens, in which he issued orders, clarified instructions, shared information, and explained policies. In addition, during Bennett's tenure the Bureau developed a series of

in-house publications, such as the *Progress Report*, the *Bulletin Board*, and the *Field Operations Newsletter*, to keep staff at all levels abreast of new developments, aware of new techniques, and in line with system-wide policy.

Finally, better methods of oversight were introduced during the Bennett administration. In the late 1940's, Assistant Directors Myrl Alexander and Frank Loveland developed the “team visit” concept—the precursor of modern program reviews. Alexander and Loveland each headed up teams of 5 to 10 members, including specialists in accounting, food services, custody, education, farming, industries, medical services, personnel, and so forth. Future Assistant Directors H.G. Moeller and John J. Galvin served as the inmate classification specialists on Loveland's and Alexander's teams, respectively.

Teams traveled (usually by car) for 2 or 3 weeks at a time, and visited three or four institutions. They would spend 3 to 5 days at each site, each specialist auditing



*This page: Team visits helped ensure proper administration of Federal prisons. At far left: Assistant Director Myrl Alexander speaks at a team closeout during a visit to USP McNeil Island, c. 1948. At left: At the same meeting, Warden P.J. Squire listens at the head of the table.*

*Right: Bennett (fifth from left, first row) at the second annual wardens' conference, held at Springfield, Missouri, in 1938. Bennett instituted wardens' conferences to communicate policy more effectively and encourage innovation.*

operations in his or her area. The team would present findings and recommendations to the warden and key staff at a closeout on the final day of the visit, and then would file a report with Director Bennett. Bennett would review the reports and refer them—after adding his own comments—to the warden. Team visits were an important tool for maintaining correctional standards and administrative control.

Bennett remained committed to the idea of oversight. In 1956, in a speech at George Washington University to the Institute of Correctional Administrators, he outlined the essential factors to be considered when “appraising a prison” and emphasized that if inspections were to be reliable, then inspectors had to see everything first-hand—they should attend discipline hearings, sit in on classification meetings, examine records, interview inmates, inspect the hospital, and review everything else they could.

He had been shocked by the unsanitary conditions he had noted at Atlanta and

Leavenworth during the 1920’s, and in his speech at George Washington University 30 years later he showed that cleanliness was still one of his chief concerns. Prison inspectors should make sure that “good housekeeping prevails,” he said; there could be “no excuse for sloppiness.” Staff should be neat and orderly in appearance, and inmates “reasonably well-clothed.” Because “nothing [was] more important to the morale and well-being” of an institution than the quality of food service, Bennett also admonished prison inspectors to note kitchen conditions and ascertain that the food was both appetizing and clean, whether menus were changed regularly, and whether vegetarian meals were available for those desiring them. Lastly, inspectors had to appraise the overall institutional climate—specifically, the morale and attitudes of officers and inmates alike.

The absence of a strong, centralized administration was one of the causes of the unfortunate state of affairs Bennett discovered in Federal prisons in the

1920’s. Bennett and others believed that having a strong prison bureau in Washington could go far towards rectifying many shortcomings. Not only would a bureau be in a stronger position to compete for appropriations, but it would have the authority from Congress to make important decisions, and a chain of command would be in place to enforce those decisions. As director, Bennett used his authority to plan necessary expansion of the system and to commit the Bureau to programs of individualized treatment of offenders. He then used wardens’ conferences, round-robin letters, the *Manual of Policies and Procedures*, and several publications to convey his policies and goals to the field, and relied upon team visits and other forms of monitoring to ensure that his programs were being put into effect properly.

### Personnel issues

One of the most troubling drawbacks that Bennett identified in his 1928 study of Federal prisons was that top officials had



too many responsibilities and too few staff. Penitentiary wardens confronted “tremendous” administrative problems, Bennett wrote. They had responsibility for purchasing enough supplies for the subsistence of more than 3,000 people, ran a farm and a large industrial operation, maintained custody over the inmates, and sat on the institution’s parole board—all with “a pitifully small amount of assistance.” Bennett continued: “The same problems which face the warden are presented in a magnified and concentrated form” to the Justice Department’s superintendent of prisons, who nominally was in charge of Federal prison administration before the creation of the Bureau. In his testimony to Congress a few months later, Bennett stated that he did “not know of any harder job in the Government service or anywhere else than running the Federal prisons,” and that it was “physically impossible” for the superintendent of prisons to give detailed attention to all his tasks.

Bennett’s solution was two-fold. First, the responsibilities of the superintendent (later, the director of the Bureau) and the wardens had to be limited; in particular, they had to be relieved of their demanding parole responsibilities so they would have more time for prison administration. That was accomplished in 1930, by legislation that created a single, independent United States Parole Board to replace the individual parole boards at each Federal prison. Second, Bennett called for more staff to be hired. He cited the lament of the solitary physician at Leavenworth: “To ask one man to function as penitentiary physician is a manifest unfairness. I know of no village in America of 3,200 souls that has but a single doctor.” For purposes of compari-

son, Bennett pointed out in his congressional testimony the inequity of having a single division of 200 employees within the Washington office of the Veterans’ Administration to administer a hospital system with 20,000 patients, whereas the superintendent of prisons had a staff of only 18 in Washington to administer a prison system with more than 18,000 inmates.

Bennett’s intent to place realistic limits on the responsibility of top officials carried over into a general commitment to rational organization that conformed “to good business principles.” Defining job responsibility throughout a prison by having an appropriate organization plan, he wrote in *Federal Probation* in 1944, was essential if each employee’s abilities were to be mobilized and if overlapping assignments and conflicting authority were to be avoided.

The way staff were configured influenced the effectiveness of programs.



Recognizing that more sophisticated inmate programs required more sophisticated staffing patterns, the Bureau started moving in the 1950’s toward the “treatment team” concept. Representatives from all disciplines—correctional officers, caseworkers, and senior staff—worked together more closely in their supervision of inmates. By the early 1960’s, a “Cottage Life Intervention” system developed by Myrl Alexander put interdisciplinary teams in charge of supervising specific groups of inmates at one of the Bureau’s youth facilities. Those new structures led to the development of the unit management system, which became standard by the 1970’s. For Bennett, treatment teams and Cottage Life Intervention promoted interaction, information sharing, and coordination of activities among staff; they also put staff in a better position to carry out the advanced programs that were part of Bennett’s individualized treatment emphasis.

Ultimately, good prison management in Bennett’s view depended on a good staff. “Every institution,” he said, paraphrasing Ralph Waldo Emerson, “is but the lengthened shadow of some man or men.” The success of Bennett’s foremost policy goal—individualized treatment—rested upon the knowledge and professionalism of individual staff members. Also, he worked with the first director to bring about, and during his own administration continued to extol, the nonpolitical, merit-based selection and promotion of officers. As he would have remembered well from his initial study of Federal prisons, early wardens were political appointees, a fact that engendered a host of problems. Only “under a genuine merit system,” Bennett said,

could staff enjoy the independence and the job security they needed to make objective decisions, propose innovations, and carry out their assignments.

Finally, Bennett recognized that the hardest job of prison administration was to recruit and develop staff. His commitment to training and a merit system reflected that conviction, as did his commitment to one other important goal: better pay for correctional officers. “In most American [penal] institutions,” he wrote in 1954, “the pay of prison officers is nothing short of scandalous.” If “their worth as measured in pay received [is] satisfactory,” he wrote 10 years earlier, then more qualified individuals would be attracted to a career in corrections. Yet pay for correctional officers frequently lagged behind that of other law enforcement officers who possessed equal skills and faced similar hazards.

In 1955, Bennett complained bitterly to Attorney General Herbert Brownell that

higher salaries for commensurate work lured “not a few” correctional officers to accept positions as deputy United States Marshals. Thus, said Bennett, the Marshals were receiving staff who had been trained at the Bureau’s expense. At higher levels, too, pay was inadequate. In the 1950’s some Federal wardens held Civil Service ranks as low as GS-11, despite the fact, said Bennett, that “there are few positions in the Government requiring the breadth of experience, the diversified abilities, the long hours, or the hazards that are inherent in the position of a Warden.” Well into retirement, Bennett continued to argue that prisons were understaffed and prison staff underpaid.

It was not enough for top staff to champion the concerns of line staff. As Bennett told a Brookings Institution conference in 1958, line staff had to “know you’re fighting their battles” for higher pay and civil service protection [emphasis added].

Ironically, Bennett did not always succeed in making staff aware that he was fighting their salary battles. Because Bureau budgets were so tight, Bennett was forced to hold grade levels down even as he was trying to persuade the Attorney General to raise them. Bennett’s executive assistant, Lawrence A. Carpenter, recalled that the low salaries sometimes fostered staff resentment towards Bennett.

### Stewardship of resources

Except for demanding higher pay for Bureau staff, Bennett tended to be very conservative on spending matters. According to Bennett’s long-time assistant director and eventual successor, Myrl Alexander, Bennett monitored the Bureau’s budget very closely. He “maintained a consistent flow of interest in expenditure of appropriated funds, from their initial development and justification on through the actual expenditures,” and “invariably” reviewed the reports of financial auditors. His fiscal caution was encouraged by the severely limited budgets the Bureau received during his administration, but Bennett was able to use economic restraint as a tactic to achieve program goals.

Bennett’s frugality may have derived in part from his flinty Yankee upbringing. Myrl Alexander once suggested that his predecessor’s “sense of responsible stewardship of public funds” actually “grew out of the New England Yankee tradition.” The son of an industrious but not terribly prosperous clergyman, Bennett remembered the many economies his family practiced during his boyhood—stewing salt pork, saving pennies in a souvenir teapot from



Staff recognition and training were important priorities for Bennett. At left, he presents an award to a staff member, c. 1949; above, Bennett speaks at a training conference for jail inspectors. Myrl Alexander is next to him.

Niagara Falls, and stoking the furnace with one shovelful of cinders for every shovelful of coal. Later, Bennett worked his way through Brown University in Rhode Island as a butcher's boy on weekends in a Providence market at 15 cents an hour, saving "everything I was given or could earn."

Undoubtedly of greater significance was the fact that frugality was forced on the Bureau by a chary Congress. The House of Representatives' Appropriations Committee customarily pared Bureau budgets to the bone. Although Bennett had many friends on Capitol Hill—Representative Emmanuel Celler and Senators Edward Long, Roman Hruska, and Thomas Dodd among them—an influential Appropriations Committee member, Brooklyn Congressman John J. Rooney, was one of Bennett's adversaries. In a 1974 interview, Bennett recalled that Rooney had been "a young prosecutor when he was elected to Congress. He considered his job as the head of the Appropriations Subcommittee to prosecute everybody who came before him, including me, and cut us back everywhere along the line."

At committee hearings, Rooney grilled Bennett on budget requests both large and small, once insisting upon a protracted justification of the Bureau's modest intention to hire 1 new chaplain, 1 classification officer, 2 junior stewards, 3 mechanical engineers, 1 garage mechanic, and 13 correctional officers during the course of fiscal year 1959. Rooney "always delivered himself of a tough message," said Bennett, and preached "economy sermons"—on the record—to the Bureau.

Yet perhaps the most important aspect of Bennett's policy of cost containment was that he used it to achieve program goals, thereby turning an apparent disadvantage into a plus. He helped bring about a modern prison system by arguing that modern prisons could be less expensive than old-fashioned prisons.

Bennett's objective was to replace the handful of massive, populous, Bastille-like prisons that predominated prior to the 1930's with a system of smaller, open, less restrictive prisons. Moving to such institutions was critical to his philosophy of individualized treatment. Smaller prisons meant the possibility of specialized prisons that could provide targeted rehabilitation programs; open prisons meant fewer bars, fewer walls, and, in Bennett's estimation, greater dignity for the inmate and greater likelihood of successful readjustment after release.

Starting when he wrote his report for the Bureau of Efficiency and lasting throughout his career, Bennett's hole card in

seeking to bring about such a prison system was that it would be vastly more economical than maintaining a system of traditional penitentiaries. For instance, by having a network of prisons across the country rather than just a few, the Government could house inmates near their homes and would not have to spend nearly as much on inmate transportation.

Bennett was unwavering on custody issues for those inmates who required tight security. No prison in the system received greater attention from Bennett than the U.S. Penitentiary at Alcatraz, California, which was the Bureau's most secure facility. But Bennett's ideal prison was the Federal Correctional Institution in Seagoville, Texas—the "prison without walls," he called it, with a strong programming emphasis and lack of regimentation—which he claimed was "living proof that there may be no need to build costly cell blocks except for a few chronic escape artists, a few desperadoes, and a few who have lost all hope." To win support, he pointed out that that type of institution could be built for one-half or even one-third the per inmate cost of constructing a traditional penitentiary. The sorts of prisons Bennett wanted reflected his correctional philosophy, but also his fiscal prudence.

By both design and necessity, then, parsimony was a hallmark of Bennett's administrative style. "From the first day of the fiscal year," he wrote to his wardens in July 1947, "we must bend our utmost to save every penny." In 1952 he observed, "There is no institution or department in the entire system that doesn't have problems springing from a lack of funds. Our appropriations are very carefully guarded and there is no 'fat' anywhere." Wardens and business managers responded so well, however,



that more than once Bennett reminded them that in their eagerness to save money they should not “take any foolhardy risks” or go beyond “a peril point.” He asked to be told of critical areas that were underfunded so that he could secure funding “essential to the safety and well-being” of Bureau facilities. “We will find some way to maintain our defenses,” he wrote, no matter how severe the budget cuts.

Bureau personnel came up with imaginative ways of getting by on restricted budgets. Bennett himself instructed institutions with farms to grow as much produce as they could—to lease additional farmland, if possible—and to share surplus goods with other institutions. He also encouraged institutions to avoid “duplication of services.” As an example, Bennett suggested that institutions that maintained machine shops for the prison itself, for the Prison Industries factory, at the powerhouse, and for vocational training, could consolidate them under one roof. Business managers, meanwhile, husbanded resources and scrounged for free or inexpensive materials.

The controller at Alcatraz, for instance, said he “spent a great amount of time and effort searching other agencies for their surplus property and obtained substantial

quantities of valuable and useful items,” mainly from military posts. When the Maritime Service deactivated 21 vessels, he obtained their stock of provisions for use at Alcatraz and at other Bureau institutions. Another time he discovered a barrel containing surplus components for direct current motors, and he persuaded officials at the agency that owned the equipment to give it to Alcatraz. “I recall being very proud of the fact that the BOP operated as economically as reasonably possible,” wrote the Alcatraz controller, “while other agencies seemed less concerned over the source of their funds.”

### Openness to innovation

In his very first involvement with prisons—the Bureau of Efficiency study—Bennett championed innovation. While hardly the only person calling for Federal prison reform, Bennett made his start in corrections with a broadly based appeal for restructuring Federal prison administration and for adopting progressive new programs for inmates.

Throughout his administration, Bennett continued to champion innovation as a management tool. He lashed out against “lid-sitters” who were content with the status quo and who failed to identify or remedy problems aggressively. Complacency in a prison setting, he pointed out, meant that “explosive or dangerous institutional” problems could be overlooked until it was too late.

Instead of complacency, Bennett advocated “a ferment, lively experimentation, [and a] lack of ‘doing-things-this-way-because-it’s-always-been-done-so’” attitude. He urged administrators to “keep abreast of developments in the management field,” to experiment and conduct research, and to undergo critical self-appraisal. He advocated “brainstorming sessions—retreats—conferences—executive development—[and] talent scouting” to generate “creative ideas.”

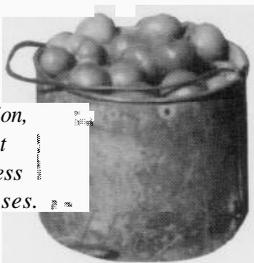
Accordingly, Bennett himself generated or supported a host of new ideas and projects. Not all were implemented. For example, in 1939 he called for the Department of Justice to establish a Crime Control Unit that would carry out research and provide assistance to States geared toward applying the insights of social work, psychiatry, and education to crime prevention initiatives at the local level. Bennett’s proposal was not adopted, but it was emblematic of how he tried to devise new solutions not just to the problems of corrections but to broader issues in criminal justice.

Bennett did succeed, however, in implementing many innovations. He was a key player in perhaps the most critical innovation in Federal prison history—the creation of the Bureau of Prisons. His “individualized treatment” concept

*Left: The day room at FCI La Tuna, Texas, c. 1952, an example of the better living conditions that Bennett implemented.*

*Far right: Bennett was proud of the “prison without walls,” FCI Seagoville, Texas.*

*Right: Throughout Bennett’s administration, farming was important for alleviating idleness and reducing expenses.*



involved adoption of numerous programs in classification, education, and counseling. Bennett was assistant director for industries in 1934 when Federal Prison Industries was founded—a milestone in the Bureau's development. Even late in his career, Bennett was strongly in favor of new initiatives. A pilot project begun under Bennett in 1961 to test the halfway house concept led to the creation of community corrections. Shortly before he retired in 1964, the state-of-the-art supermaximum-security penitentiary he helped design at Marion, Illinois, was activated. And at the time of his retirement, planning for the Bureau's leading-edge institution at Butner, North Carolina, was well under way.\*

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In 1962, in a speech at the Brookings Institution, Bennett observed that careers in public administration carried with them many satisfactions. One did not enter the field for the money, of course. Further, public administrators were “surrounded by regulations” and were

never “immune from public scrutiny.” But public administration also offered an “opportunity to do something constructive and meaningful,” brought the “adventure” and “excitement” of developing and experimenting with new programs, and permitted one to “make decisions” and “get things done.” Public administrators, Bennett continued, could win promotion through merit, meet interesting people, and be a “part of history.”

Bennett started his career not as a prison administrator but as an expert on public administration. Just as he tended to see the problems of corrections within the broader context of criminal justice issues, so he viewed prison administration within the larger framework of public administration. Drawing on his decades of experience in managing a major Federal agency, Bennett in 1961 outlined for the American Society of Public Administrators the problems and goals of managing any sort of public institution where inmates, patients, wards, or other

residents were confined. At base, the principal challenge amounted to satisfying a variety of constituencies, each of which had different needs and expectations.

The public, said Bennett, wanted institutions to provide protection and the convenience of being “able to forget the problem because it has been turned over to an expert.” The “boss”—whether a mayor, governor, or board of directors—wanted tangible evidence of success and an absence of problems and criticisms. The regulatory office wanted efficiency, economy, and adherence to rules. The profession-at-large wanted adherence to professional standards and “an approved approach with approved personnel.” The inmate or patient wanted “individuality or self respect,” assistance, and “to get out.” And the administrator in charge of the institution wanted the best staff, the best facilities, and the best operating budget he or she could acquire, to carry out the assigned mission successfully, and “to leave a mark on the field through research, new ideas, or contributions.”

Bennett tried to accomplish these goals by stressing central direction and oversight, personnel issues, stewardship of resources, and innovation. And he clearly achieved his stated goal of leaving “a mark on the field.”

*Left: Bennett accepting a Presidential Award for Distinguished Civilian Service from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1959.*

*Right: Bennett speaks at the dedication of FCI Butner, North Carolina, 1976.*

\*Marion was designed to be the replacement for Alcatraz, the Bureau's first supermaximum-security institution. Marion's original mission, however, was that of a youth facility, so that the Bureau could operate the institution and work out any design flaws before incarcerating more dangerous adult offenders there. Marion then operated for several years as a maximum-security penitentiary, before being redesignated a supermaximum-custody institution in the late 1970's.

Butner was not opened until 1976—12 years after Bennett's retirement. Bennett had long advocated such an institution, however, and planning for Butner began while he was still director. Lack of funding delayed the construction of the institution (see Robert L. Brutsche and John W. Roberts, “A Working Partnership for Health Care,” *Federal Prisons Journal* 1 (Fall 1989): 32-8.



Some scholars of public administration have argued that agency heads enjoy comparatively little influence over the actual programs, philosophies, or operations of their organizations. As Professor John J. DiIulio points out, however, that was not the case with Bennett. According to DiIulio, Bennett had an enormous impact upon the Bureau—developing and instituting new programs, showing sensitivity to staff needs, forging alliances with politicians and opinion makers, besting bureaucratic rivals, and burnishing the Bureau's public image. The success of the Bureau, in DiIulio's estimation, was due in no small measure to the personal strengths of James Bennett.

In many respects, Bennett focused on details and functions: penny-pinching budgets, legislative processes, minute points of supervision, internal newsletters and other forms of communicating with staff, and institutional sanitation. But by attending so closely to such details, Bennett was able to cultivate a prison system that achieved his much larger goal of individualized treatment. And as much as Bennett and the Bureau evolved during Bennett's tenure as assistant

director and director, Bennett's insights, concerns, and philosophical orientations almost always could be traced back to his initial study on Federal prisons produced in the 1920's. In turn, many of the management principles he enunciated continue to be valuable nearly 30 years after his administration came to an end. ■

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