

NEWS

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*****Violence in prison.

DALLAS--The role of research in prison life is the same as that of "a flashlight in the dark," says Dr. Jerry Mabli, regional director for research, U.S. Bureau of Prisons, South Central Region. Mabli will serve as moderator for a panel on violence and prison life May 4 in the Student Activities Building, Tarrant County Junior College.

Mabli believes that research is needed in this area because "we know very little about incarceration and its effect on people." The long-range goal, however, is pragmatic: the end product of a prison term is a convict who has returned to the streets. And it must be remembered that currently 300,000 inmates are serving sentences in state and federal prisons, he says.

The psychologist is currently involved in researching the system by which persons convicted of crime are assigned to various prisons. These decisions have been made in arbitrary ways in the past, but the Fort Worth researcher is now looking at setting more objective criteria, thus making the system fairer and more efficient by making better decisions about which prisoners go to what types of institutions.

The Federal Correctional Institution in Fort Worth, where Mabli has his office is a low-security prison. A great number of the inmates are there for white-collar crimes. Often these prisoners are accused of living country-club lives.

"No matter how nice it might appear," Mabli is quick to reply, "it is still a prison. It's true that we do not denigrate nor do we brutalize the prisoners: we try to treat them as human beings. But that doesn't make it a country club--it makes it a tool of society.

"I believe that the vast majority of citizens in this country would not want us to run the prison in a cruel way. And I have yet to see the citizen that would change places with the prisoner, even if he does call it a 'country club.'"

first add prison violence

Appearing on Mabli's panel will be Dr. Richard Fenker, Texas Christian University psychologist, who will discuss violence in prison from an environmental viewpoint and Bruce Jennings, a former offender who works as an art consultant in a New York prison. Jennings will talk about his experiences and the role of his work in reducing violence. Also, a current prisoner from the Fort Worth institution who has a personal history of violence will compare violence in several prisons in which he has served time.

The program will be the last of the Violence in America symposia this spring, sponsored by the Department of Psychiatry, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas, its psychiatric services at John Peter Smith Hospital and the Elmwood Foundation, the latter two located in Fort Worth. The other four symposia have been on the Dallas health science center campus.

Opening session will be a series of videotapes, Conversations With Violent Men, with Leland Wino, an ex-offender and Zen disciple. A documentary, The Killing of the Father, will also be shown.

Major addresses for the day will include "The Sociobiology of Aggression," Dr. David Barash, pioneer in the new field of sociobiology, from the University of Washington; "Responsibility Revisited: Working With the Violent Offender in Prison," Stephen Chinlund, chairman of the New York State Commission of Corrections; "Ethical Problems of Control of Violence," Marvin Levich, professor of philosophy and vice president-provost, Reed College; and "Violence Discovered," Dr. Warren Sussman, chairman of the Department of History at Rutgers.

The movie, The Onion Field, will show at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. in the Student Activity Building on May 3 only. Art and photography exhibits in connection with the program will be open May 3 as well as May 4. There is no charge for the exhibits. Admission to the symposia is free to TCJC students and costs \$3.00 for the professionals and the general public. These events are also slated for the Student Activities Building.

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