

## BOOK REVIEW

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### A Review of *Correctional Institutions*

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**REFERENCE:** Fox, V., *Correctional Institutions*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Route 9W, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632, 1983, 320 pages, no price listed.

*Correctional Institutions* is an ambitious, well-written, and well-documented book which should be of interest to practitioners, academics, and students in the criminal justice field. Dr. Fox's treatment of institutions is comprehensive and constitutes a source of useful information for a field that is in a state of crisis. The United States' prison population has more than doubled in the last 10 years to the point where we now have more than 400 000 persons incarcerated. In addition, more than 150 000 individuals are held in local jails and 70 000 juveniles are held in public and private juvenile facilities. This dramatic upsurge has resulted in severe overcrowding in these institutions and has strained existing resources to their very limits. It is incumbent upon all professionals working in the criminal justice system to have an understanding of the problems facing our correctional system and this text is an excellent beginning point.

Fox's text is divided into six major sections: the rise of institutions, physical plant, program and residents, special institutions, administration and management, and the future of corrections. Leading off with the initial chapter, Fox presents an historical analysis of the origin of institutions that aids the reader in understanding the role of prisons in today's society. The Quakers are generally credited with introducing the first "modern prison" in the United States in 1790 in Philadelphia where solitary confinement and meditation were thought to be the key to rehabilitation. At about the same time in Auburn, NY, a competitive system arose in which mandatory silence, forced labor, and harsh punishment were the rule.

The major thrust of the text is found in the section on the program and its residents, in which Fox attempts to address many of the most challenging of all correctional problems: maintaining custody of prisoners, the effects of institutionalization, prison industry and employment patterns, the classification and treatment of offenders, and their eventual release to outside society. Fox notes that many of the over 20 000 cases of litigation filed annually by correctional inmates result from custodial conditions and practices of institutions. When released from this artificial environment, Fox observes, prisoners who are not intentionally antisocial "have lost whatever potential they may have had to live in freedom."

Fox also addresses the great pressures placed upon correctional officers functioning within this closed society. Working on a day-in, day-out basis in such a "pressure cooker" environment, corrections personnel become isolated from the outside community and suffer from a host of psychological and social problems. Fox makes recommendations to reduce this ten-

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sion, including steps to eliminate the practice of housing correctional staff on the prison grounds.

In his section on special problems, Fox examines the unique problems faced by the 3500 jails around the country. A high percentage of the prisoners in these institutions are awaiting trial and are legally innocent. The author reviews the efforts of such professional groups as the National Institute of Corrections to upgrade the quality of professional and custodial staff and the programs within jails. He goes on to cover institutions for juveniles which present yet a different set of problems for our judicial system. The clear trend in the juvenile area is deinstitutionalization, which has been spearheaded by the State of Massachusetts which closed all of its juvenile training facilities in 1972. There is consensus today that only the most serious juvenile offender should be held in secure facilities and that most should be placed under supervision in community based facilities. Fox addresses, too, the needs of the female offender who, though comprising only about 5% of the adult prison population, merits special consideration by our male-dominated criminal justice system. This is particularly important given the rapidly increasing female crime rate.

Fox's chapter on institutions for mentally disordered offenders should be of special interest to the forensic science community. The author estimates that 6% of prisoners held in institutions have been adjudicated criminally insane; other researchers have estimated that as many as 35% of prison populations have serious mental problems. Fox goes on to recount the special legal and medical problems of handling mentally ill offenders, civilly committed dangerous offenders, mentally retarded delinquents, and sexual psychopaths. The role and effectiveness of the psychiatrist in a correctional setting is a sensitive topic which merits much more research.

Fox's concluding chapters address the problems of administering correctional institutions, the management of fiscal responsibilities, and the supervision of personnel. Prison wardens today no longer have absolute authority in their institutions as a result of stronger correctional officer unions, prisoners' grievance committees, and the intervention of the courts in establishing minimum standards for operating such institutions. Inasmuch as personnel constitute 85% or more of the prison budget, and the critical importance of competent staff in achieving correctional goals, the correctional administrator must give foremost attention to the recruitment, training, and retention of qualified staff.

My principal criticisms of the book fall in two primary areas: the first concerns the book's cursory treatment of such important issues as the struggle between prisons and the courts in complying with constitutional standards. As Fox notes, in 1981 there were 26 states that had portions or all of their institutions under court order or had been declared unconstitutional. Another important area meriting greater attention is the relationship between prison administrators and the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, particularly as this relates to the creation of legislation and policies regarding mandatory prison sentencing, issues of overcrowding, early release, and parole. I would also like to have seen greater attention paid to the debate between determinate and indeterminate sentencing, and the various classification programs being tested around the nation and their relative effectiveness.

All in all, though, these criticisms are minor when compared with the book's strengths: it covers all aspects of correctional administration; it is particularly strong in covering the historical background to present-day practices; it contains a fine bibliography and citations to more detailed studies on various topics; and the treatment of issues is practically always even-handed. Although written from a prison administrator's viewpoint, Fox tries to present all sides to an issue, particularly those of prison staff and inmates.

In concluding, Fox observes, "The viewpoint taken by the majority of correctional administrators is that prisons are overused and that many people in prison today do not need to be there." Society, our lawmakers, and our courts, on the other hand, are sending more and more persons to prison each day. It is obvious the prison administrator is on the horns of a dilemma and will be for years to come.