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The Impact of Prison Size on Prison Populations

Briefing Notes

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Correctional Service
Canada

Service correctionnel
Canada

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INTRODUCTION

In December 1978 the Federal Government announced the details of a new prison construction program. A previous accommodation plan to build smaller prisons for 150-200 inmates was replaced with a program which called for the construction of penal institutions with prison populations ranging in size from 400-450 inmates.

The factors which prompted this change in government policy were two-fold. First, large prisons were shown to be more cost-effective than small prisons both in terms of their operational and capital construction costs. Secondly, evidence from reports which examined the future capacity of penal institutions indicated that factors other than prison size were the primary determinants affecting prison behaviour.

It should be stated from the onset that opinions vary as to the optimal size of penal institutions. As David Farrington indicates in his paper "Institutional Capacity : Prison Size and Program Success", some people have argued that prison populations should not exceed 300 inmates. In 1971 the Mohr Committee argued for 150 inmates while in some U.S. states the figure suggested has been around 1,200-1,500 inmates. The concern of the Correctional

Service of Canada with the costs and benefits of operating smaller prisons is by no means unique. In 1968 the Report of the English Advisory Council on the Penal System entitled "The Regime For Long-Term Prisoners In Conditions of Maximum Security" stated:

"In a small prison there would be less variety of people and of activities than in a larger one so that some of the necessary ingredients of a liberal regime would be lacking. Some facilities that ought to be available in a long-term prison, might not be available in a small prison for 100 or 120 prisoners simply because they would cost too much." (p. 15)

Later in their report, the Advisory Council make their position more forcefully:

"We cannot ignore the fact that the capital cost per place at the proposed new prison for 120 inmates is unlikely to be less than 25,000. This is several times greater than any figures mentioned to us for the capital cost per place in any other new prison either here or in foreign countries. Nor does the cost differential stop at capital cost: with a prison, as with any other institution, there are obviously some economies of scale, and the running

costs per prisoner of a small prison for 120 prisoners are prima facie likely to be greater than for a prison for 400 prisoners. The industry in a larger prison is likely to be more efficient and more profitable". (p. 26)

In this paper the penological issues surrounding the debate over the future capacity of Canadian prisons are briefly outlined. The various arguments supporting the construction of smaller (150) rather than larger (450 inmates) prisons are examined. Studies undertaken on prison size by the Correctional Service of Canada are also reviewed. Finally, the Federal Government's position is summarized with an accompanying rationale presented on the appropriate size of penal institutions which is based principally on empirical findings from both national and international research.

PRISON CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

PRESENT PROGRAM

By 1984 - 10,026 cells would be in place.

Total increase in cell capacity - 1,095 (This would result from the construction and renovation of 3,994 and the closing of 2,899 cells.)

Cost - 280 Million(\$70,000 per cell)

PREVIOUS PROGRAM

By 1984 - 11,765 cells would be in place.

Total increase in cell capacity - 2,834.

Cost - \$503 Million (\$106,000 per cell)

PRISON SIZE: AN HISTORICAL REVIEW

1. 1938 Archambault Commission - The concept of rehabilitation was officially recognized as a major penological goal. The Commission made no reference to prison size notwithstanding the fact that some institutions contained in excess of 600 inmates, (e.g. St. Vincent de Paul 936, Kingston 737).
2. 1956 Fauteux Report - The Fauteux Committee did not address the subject of prison size other than to state that "no institution ought to contain more than 600 inmates."
3. 1960 - The Correctional Planning Committee recommended that penal institutions should contain 400 - 450 inmates. Ten institutions were built on this model size including Cowansville, Collins Bay etc.
4. 1969 - The Canadian Committee on Corrections commented that large prisons were impersonal institutions. However, in an appendix to that report, the Chairman, Mr. Roger Ouimet stated that an institution containing 460 inmates would be appropriate provided it was subdivided into living-units for not more than 60 inmates.
5. 1971 Mohr Report - The Mohr Committee (Solicitor General, 1971, p.p.14-16) argued that living-unit groups should range from 10-15 inmates. Their rationale for this position was as follows:
 - a) A group of this size will avoid the over-intensification of relationships that would result from smaller groupings.

- b) The negative aspects of the traditional inmate sub-culture may be eliminated in groups of this size, enabling staff to work with the inmates toward positive goals.
- c) The intimate knowledge of each inmate acquired by an involved staff identified with the living-unit groups should ensure a thorough diagnosis of his program requirements and thus offer him a good opportunity to progress toward transfer to reduced security.
- d) Security will be enhanced because the staff's awareness of the characteristics of all inmates comprising these groups should make predictions of behaviour easier and provide an opportunity to take effective steps, with the assistance of the inmate group, to counteract undesirable behaviour.

The Mohr Committee asserted that:

"It is essential for an institution of this kind that the communication network is not fractionalized and remains responsive to situations as they develop. Many programs introduced into institutions previously, have failed for this reason. A large institution cannot possibly have the kinds of information-sharing which are necessary to prevent both negative inmate and staff cultures. The Working Group has come to the conclusion that an institution for about 150 inmates represents the maximum number for a viable program and recommends ten living-units for a program capacity of 120 inmates. With room for 12 inmates in the orientation unit and 12 in the

transfer unit, the total institutional capacity would be 144."

Similar views were expressed by W.T. McGrath (1965, p.p. 152-152), then executive Secretary of the Canadian Corrections Association, (now called the CAPC) and also a secretary to the Canadian Committee on Corrections (1969) and the Mohr Committee, (1971):

"The appropriate size for an institution depends on the program and the type of inmate for which it is intended. In most instances, it is preferable to keep it as small as possible and in any case experience and research studies indicate that the maximum size should be three hundred inmates."

7. 1974 Strategic Accommodation Planning with specific reference to the Canadian Penitentiary Service Five-year Capital Construction Program. -- This report supports the recommendations contained in the Mohr report and argues in favour of the smaller prison.

"The new five-year construction program envisions the planning of smaller and more specialized institutions that are more flexible to adapt to the continuous development of rehabilitation programs. These smaller institutions are expected to enhance rehabilitation programs and obviate the criticism raised against existing facilities. The institutions constructed since 1960 have an accommodation rating of approximately 436. The future major institutions are planned to have a population from 150-200 inmates." Strategic Accommodation Planning with specific reference to the Canadian Penitentiary Service Five-Year Capital Construction Program (Faguy Report) Ottawa, 1974, p. 14.

8. 1977 Penitentiary System in Canada (Parliamentary Sub-Committee Report). The Parliamentary Sub-Committee endorsed the concept of building smaller prisons but added a qualifying statement that institutions for 200-250 inmates may be clustered together. The population capacities resulting from the various combinations would range from 400, 450 to 500 inmates. It would appear from the Sub-Committee's perspective that an institution for five hundred inmates is not regarded as being excessively large.

4. Prison Construction: Some Questions and Answers

- a) IS THERE ANY TRUTH TO THE STATEMENT THAT THE SIZE OF A PENAL INSTITUTION IS THE MAJOR CAUSE OF DISTURBANCES AND PRISON OFFENCES?

Response - No. Evidence from a statistical analysis of over 60 English prisons confirmed the fact that the size of the prison is not the major variable in preventing prison violence. Contrary to expectations the data showed that the frequency of offending per inmate actually increased in the smaller prisons. These findings were obtained regardless of the nature of the offence (major, minor) suggesting that factors other than prison size are responsible for prison violence. (D.P. Farrington, Bureau of Management Consulting, 1979)

Data from a statistical analysis of 15 Canadian Penitentiaries varying in size, location and security level found no correlation between prison size and the frequency with which inmates commit prison offences. The study (based on data obtained from September 1977 - September 1978) found no correlation in the frequency of offending between penal institutions:

- a) varying in size and similar in classification level
- b) varying in size and varying in classification level
- c) similar in size and varying in classification level
- d) similar in size and similar in classification level

(D.T. Davies, Correctional Service, Canada, 1979)

OFFENCES PUNISHED IN CLOSED PRISONS IN ENGLAND AND WALES IN 1977 (MALES ONLY)
 VERSUS SIZE OF INSTITUTION*

Size of Prisons	Number of Prisons	Total Population	Avg. Pop'n. Per Prison	Total Offences	Avg. Offences Per Prison	Avg. Offences Per Prisoner
200 or less	13	1743	134.1	3308	254.4	1.90
201-300	13	3172	244.0	4949	380.7	1.56
301-400	11	3696	336.0	5580	507.3	1.51
401-500	9	4100	455.6	5889	654.3	1.44
501-750	8	4669	583.6	4854	606.8	1.04
751 or more	11	12463	1133.0	11238	1021.6	0.90
TOTAL	65	29843	459.1	35818**	551.0	1.20

* From: Home Office Prison Statistics, England and Wales, 1977 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1978/. Table 9.2 Offences punished and punishments awarded to males, 1977.

** These offences were distributed as follows:

Disobedience	11603
Unauthorized transactions/articles	5230
Disrespect/Inpropriety	4827
Wilful damage to property	2591
Assaults	1128
Attempted escapes	136
Escapes	130
Mutiny	1
Other offences	10172

(Prepared by D.P. Farrington, November 1978)

STATISTICAL DATA ON PRISON OFFENCES

IN CANADIAN PENITENTIARIES

SEPT. 1, 1977 - SEPT. 30, 1978

INSTITUTION	SECURITY CLASSIFICATION	AVG. PRISON POPULATION	TOTAL OFFENCES	OFFENCES (CONVICTIONS)	AVG. OFFENCES PER OFFENDER
Agassiz	Min	52	65	60	1.15
Sask Farm Annex	Min	48	12	12	0.25
Westmoreland	Min	63	31	31	0.49
Pittsburg	Min	66	8	8	0.12
Landry Crossing	Min				
Bowden	Min	127	186	172	1.35
William Head	Med	131	249	224	1.70
Millhaven	Max	274	1163	1069	3.90
Matsqui	Med	295	746	644	2.18
Dorchester	Max	351	630	590	1.68
Collins Bay	Med	373	853	777	2.08
Springhill	Med	392	1032	1004	2.56
Archambault	Max				
Stoney Mountain	Med	410	782	721	1.75
*Saskatchewan	Max	332	515	447	1.34
T O T A L		2914	6272	5759	1.97

Based on data provided by O.I.S.

Prepared by Darryl T. Davies
January 12, 1979

* Figures based on the average yearly prison population for Saskatchewan Penitentiary (522) but excludes inmates held in protective custody (190). With the latter figure included the average offences per prisoner is 0.35.

b) WHAT ARGUMENTS HAVE BEEN ADVANCED IN CANADA TO SUPPORT THE CONSTRUCTION OF SMALL INSTITUTIONS?

Proponents of smaller institutions have argued that prisons with smaller populations (150-200 inmates) are more effective than larger institutions (400-450 inmates), in:

- (1) neutralizing the adverse effects of the inmate sub-culture
- (2) increasing positive interaction between staff and inmates
- (3) reducing the number of prison disturbances
- (4) diagnosing, classifying and treating offenders.

However, none of the correctional reports (Fauteux 1956, Correctional Planning Committee 1961, Ouimet Report 1969, Mohr Report 1971, Faguy Report 1974) examined the effectiveness of institutions according to prison size. For example, they did not provide:

- (1) empirical data on the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs in penal institutions of varying size.
- (2) comparative data on the estimated differences in operational and capital construction costs between large and small institutions.
- (3) evidence to show that the "presumed" benefits of small institutions (150-200 inmates) could not be applied with equal success in larger institutions with a capacity of 400-450 inmates.

- (4) evidence that prison disturbances are more frequent and the impact of the prison sub-culture more pronounced in larger (400-450 inmates) rather than smaller institutions (150-200 inmates).
- (5) evidence to show that larger prisons (400-450 inmates) are less effective in lowering recidivism rates and rehabilitating offenders than smaller institutions.

There is no research evidence to support the assumption that large institutions with 400-450 inmates will experience more disturbances or foster more prison offences than institutions with 150 inmates. There are other more important factors which have been identified over the years by criminologists as the major precipitating forces behind prison violence and unrest.

For example:

- (1) The characteristics of the inmate population
 - the average age of offenders
 - the type of offence resulting in imprisonment
 - the criminal history and previous institutional experience of inmates in the prison population.

- (2) The management style of the institution
 - lack of fairness in granting T.A.'s
 - inconsistency in dealing with inmates by prison staff
 - the lack of adequate grievance procedures for inmates
 - the excessive use of solitary confinement for problem inmates
 - administrative indifferences to inmate concerns regarding prison condition (i.e. restrictions on visiting privileges, inadequate recreational facilities, sub-standard food).

- (3) The denial or revocation of full and day paroles.

- c) IS CANADA THE ONLY COUNTRY OR JURISDICTION ADVOCATING 400-500 INMATES AS THE APPROPRIATE SIZE OF PENAL INSTITUTIONS?

Response - No. The California Department of Corrections has proposed that penal institutions should contain 400 inmates if they are to be administered efficiently and effectively. Other states such as Florida and Oklahoma have opted for institutions with a population capacity ranging from 400 to 600 inmates.

- d.) ARE THE ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING THE SMALLER INSTITUTIONS
SUBSTANTIATED BY CURRENT FINDINGS FROM CRIMINOLOGICAL RESEARCH?

Response - No. Empirical Research in both England and the United States has consistently demonstrated that treatment programs are ineffective in lowering reconviction rates, prison disturbances and endorsement of the inmate code.

For example:

- (1) After carefully reviewing the results from 231 studies, Robert Martinson concluded that vocational and educational training, individual or group counselling and therapeutic correctional environments, have no appreciable impact on an inmate's prison behaviour or future criminality. In fact, the data show that over 60% of offenders are reconvicted within two years which suggests that any treatment effects which may result are of a limited duration. (see: What Works? Questions and Answers About Prison Reform, The Public Interest, 1974; The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment: A survey of Treatment Evaluation Studies).
- (2) A study of a medium-security prison was undertaken by G. Kassebaum, D. Ward and D. Wilner for the California Department of Corrections. Treatment varieties included voluntary group counselling, compulsory group counselling and the use of small (12-15 inmates) and large (50 inmates) living units.

- The research was conducted in a prison system that is considered to be the most progressive in corrections, and in the most up-to-date prison in that system in terms of physical plant and staffing.
- The inmates studied were neither the more intractable offenders confined in maximum security prisons, nor were they the good Treatment potential men found in first term, minimum security institutions.
- A sufficiently large study population (a sample of 968 offenders) was used to permit adequate statistical analysis.
- Random assignment of subjects was made to the various Treatment and control conditions.
- Contamination of the sample groups was kept at a minimum due to the physical structure of the institution.
- Also evaluated was a group counselling condition, especially included for this study, in which group leaders were given training beyond that which present resources of the Department of Corrections could afford.
- Follow-up was extended for an unusually long period of time (two years) to take into consideration long-term effects of Treatments.

The authors found that "contrary to the expectations of the Treatment Theory, there were no significant differences in outcome for those in the various Treatment groups and the control group. Furthermore, contrary to sociological expectations, participation in group counselling and community living did not lessen even the limited endorsement of the inmate code, nor did it result in a demonstrable decrease in the frequency of prison offences".

A study in California compared living units varying in size (12-50 inmates) located in an institution which was subdivided into four separate quadrants. The quadrants (with the exception of one which was not included in the study) each contained 600 inmates. Each quadrant was further divided into separate inmate groupings as follows:

- Quadrant A: 450, 150,
- Quadrant B: 300, 300;
- Quadrant C: 600 inmates

Living units were formed in each inmate grouping and then examined on a number of variables. The evidence indicated that regardless of the size of the living unit or the size of the quadrant there were no significant differences in the frequency with which inmates commit prison violations or are subsequently re-convicted. (G. Kassenbaum, D. Ward, D. Wilner: Prison Treatment and Parole Survival: An Empirical Assessment, New York, Wiley, 1971.)

3. In a systematic analysis on the effectiveness of sentencing for England's Home office Research Unit, one criminologist wrote: "Where rehabilitative measures in institutions are concerned, there is little evidence that sending young offenders to one or other of the different institutions that are available for them makes any difference to reconviction, and not much reason to suppose, for youthful or adult offenders, that the most progressive and up-to-date places have any more effect than traditional and seemingly harsher prisons.
(S.R. Brody, 1976, The Effectiveness of Sentencing, H.M.S.O.)
4. A study by A.J. Fowles for the Home Office Research Unit found no empirical evidence to support the value of intensive prison Welfare Treatment. A sample of 304 cases was randomly allocated to experimental and control groups. The experimental group received considerably more prison Welfare Treatment from social workers. The results indicated that more intensive interaction between welfare officers and inmates did not produce significantly different results between the experimental and control groups in lowering reconviction rates. (A.J. Fowles, Prison Welfare, H.M.S.O., 1978)
5. In a detailed analysis of rehabilitation programs, David Greenburg (1977) concluded "Here and there a few favourable results alleviate the monotony, but most of these results are modest and are obtained through evaluations seriously lacking in rigor. The blanket assertion that "nothing works" is an exaggeration, but not very much.
(D. Greenburg, The Correctional Effects of Corrections: A Survey of Evaluations, in Corrections & Punishment, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, California, 1977.)

6. Many criminological studies in recent years show that reconviction rates do not decrease notwithstanding the types of treatment that have been employed within the prison setting. (A.J. Fowles, 1978, Cornish and Clarke, 1975, Bretta Kyvsgaard, 1977; Gordon Hawkins, 1976, Bottoms and McClintock, 1973; Kassenbaum, Ward and Wilner, 1971 et al). As Leslie T. Wilkins once observed: "The least that it is possible to do to offenders the better the outcome". (1969)

7. The growth of criminological research in the last 20 years has, however, cast significant doubts upon the ability of custodial regimes to reform those who are subject to them; it is freely admitted that the old paternalistic principle of imposing a rehabilitative regime is neither successful nor socially justifiable. (Report of the Advisory Council on the Penal System, H.M.S.O. London, 1978).

As S.R. Brody has commented in *The Effectiveness of Sentencing* (p. 27) 1976:

"It has often been shown that recidivism is not reduced merely by sentencing offenders to an institution where attempts will be made to understand them and to encourage them to understand themselves".

Other studies which support these conclusions include:

- (A) Open Prisons: Howard Jones and Paul Cornes,
Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977
- (B) Criminals Coming of Age, A.E. Bottoms, F.H. McClintock,
Heinemann, 1973
- (C) The Preston Typology Study: An Experiment with Differential
Treatment in an Institution; Journal of Research in Crime
and Delinquency, 1971
- (D) Residential Treatment and its Effects on Delinquency,
D.B. Cornish and R.V.G. Clarke, H.M.S.O. 1975.

As Australian criminologist Gordon Hawkins observed in
The Prison: Policy and Practice, University of Chicago Press, 1976

"The unavoidable conclusion is that the reformist's more-of-the-same
prescription, while it might meet with the approval of social
homeopaths - if such persons exist--must be regarded, in the
light of experience, as a recipe for further disaster".

The fact is that arguments in favour of smaller institutions in
Canada have been based on intuitive assumptions rather than
empirical considerations.

- e) HAS THE CANADIAN CORRECTIONS SERVICE CARRIED OUT ANY STUDIES COMPARING COSTS AND BENEFITS BETWEEN LARGE AND SMALL INSTITUTIONS?

Response - Yes. The Canadian Corrections Service initiated studies into the size of institutions from a cost-benefit perspective.

The first, dealing exclusively with costs concluded that substantial savings could be derived by building prisons with an accommodation capacity almost three times the size recommended by the Mohr Committee (150 inmates). Economies of scale indicate that the annual operating and capital construction costs of a medium security institution with a prison population of 420 inmates is \$12,420 less "per offender", than an institution with 168 inmates. These savings are even more dramatic in maximum security institutions where the savings in a 428 inmate institution amounts to \$19,600 per offender, than in an institution with a prison population of 162 inmates.

Secondly, the Correctional Service of Canada examined the issue of prison size in two separate reports. The first paper entitled: Institutional Capacity: Prison Size and Program Success is a detailed analysis of research literature pertaining to the issue of size of penal institutions.

The report, prepared by Dr. David Farrington, makes recommendations on the basis of empirical data regarding the impact of prison size on inmate behaviour. Dr. Farrington is a lecturer in criminology at the University of Cambridge, England. He has an international reputation as a research scholar. Dr. Farrington has co-authored two books with Dr. Donald West, a clinical psychiatrist at the University of Cambridge, entitled; The Delinquent Way of Life and Who Becomes Delinquent. In addition, he has authored over 20 articles in criminological journals and books which deal with various aspects of crime and delinquency. He is currently on sabbatical leave with the research division in the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

The second paper entitled: "The Size of Penal Institutions In Canada: The Facts Behind the Figures" was prepared by Canadian criminologist, Darryl T. Davies. Mr. Davies has worked as a research consultant with the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan and is the author of a report entitled: Provincial Offences, Tentative Recommendations For Reform which makes specific recommendations for reforming sentencing laws in that province. He has lectured to inmates at Saskatchewan Penitentiary and holds a post-graduate degree in criminology from the Cambridge Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge.

He has written articles on a variety of criminological topics including: Community Service Orders, fines and diversion. He is currently Director of the Public Participation Division, Communications Branch, Correctional Service of Canada, at National Headquarters in Ottawa.

A) INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY: PRISON SIZE
AND PROGRAM SUCCESS

CONCLUSIONS

Because of the constraints under which researchers have to work, no research can be 100 per cent perfect and totally clear cut in its results. However, researches differ very considerably in their adequacy and sophistication. The better researches attempt to isolate the effects of the factors of interest either by statistical means (e.g. the use of partial correlations) or by research design (e.g. a random allocation experiment).

Of the researches reviewed here, those by Megargee and Jesness, the experiments on rehabilitative treatment, and the British study of reconviction rates are the most adequate. I would draw two major conclusions from these studies:

- (1) Prison size is not related either to behaviour inside the prison or to behaviour after leaving the prison, but the staff : inmate ratio¹ and the degree of overcrowding probably are related to these factors.
- (2) The kinds of rehabilitative treatments defined on page 29 have no effect on reconviction rates.

The problems of generalizing from other countries to Canada, from other types of institutions to maximum security adult prisons, and from other sizes to the 150-450 range, have been discussed in the introduction. Assuming that these kinds of generalizations can be made, the existing empirical evidence gives no reason to suppose that decreasing the size of a prison from 450 to 150 will have any effect either on behaviour inside the prison or on behaviour after leaving it. However, two studies (one by Megargee and the British study) suggest that, if an increase in size is accompanied by increased overcrowding,

¹ For the purposes of this paper the staff : inmate ratio is the number of institutional staff whose primary job involves regular and direct contact with the inmate (e.g. Living Unit staffs) divided by the total inmate population of a Living Unit or of an institution as applicable.

there will be deleterious effects on security and rehabilitation. One study (by Jesness) suggests that, if this increase in size is accompanied by poorer staffing ratios, this will have deleterious effects on rehabilitation. It is only necessary to read the substance of the paper to realize that the conclusion about overcrowding is based on stronger evidence than the one about staffing ratios.

There are many considerations which must be taken into account in designing prisons. Costs, geographical considerations and the provision of essential medical and educational facilities are all important. Whether the provision of rehabilitative treatment in the shape of group counselling or a therapeutic community should be taken into account is less clear, in view of the frequent failures of well-designed experiments to demonstrate the efficacy of these methods. Since no method of rehabilitating offenders has been proved to be successful as yet, it is questionable whether it is realistic to set rehabilitation as a major goal of imprisonment.

My own view is that it would be more realistic to place the emphasis on humane containment rather than on rehabilitation. Prisons should be designed so that they are as pleasant for the prisoner to live in as possible, with the aim of ensuring that the prisoner suffers only by losing his liberty and not in any other way. The aim of preventing the offender committing crimes in the community for the duration of his sentence is one which can be achieved. This is not incompatible with saying that we should continue to carry out well-designed empirical research to try to discover acceptable and successful methods of rehabilitating offenders. For example, two of the researches quoted here (by Shaw, and Berntsen and Christiansen) suggest that practical help given to a prisoner towards the end of his sentence help with employment, accommodation, financial and family problems can reduce reconviction rates. Results such as these, and other successful rehabilitation experiments, should be taken into account in the design of prisons.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

It would be possible to investigate the influence of size on behaviour in prison and behaviour after leaving prison in Canada by randomly allocating offenders either to a 150-man institution or to a 450-man institution, trying to keep other features of the institutions as comparable as

possible. However, I would not recommend such an experiment, since in my view the benefits in terms of increased knowledge would be very small in relation to the costs in terms of resources needed, not to mention ethical difficulties which would have to be overcome. In view of the research reviewed here, it is very likely that such an experiment would find no difference in outcome.

Random allocation experiments are especially useful when it is desired to test specific hypotheses. At the present stage of our knowledge of the Canadian Correctional Service, hypothesis-generating research is more appropriate than hypothesis-testing research. In my estimation, the most useful research at the present time would involve collecting basic information about every Canadian correctional institution. Such basic information would include:

- (a) background characteristics of the prisoners, especially age, sex, race, previous criminal record;
- (b) the behaviour of the prisoners in the institution, especially violence, escapes and other violations of rules;
- (c) the behaviour of the prisoners after leaving the institution, especially reconviction;
- (d) characteristics of the institution, especially security classification, size, staff : inmate ratio, overcrowding;
- (e) characteristics of the staff, especially age, sex, training, prison experience, attitudes.

No doubt many other factors could be specified, but I think it is important as a first step to obtain information about those which appear to be most important, in the light of operational concerns and of existing criminological theory and empirical evidence, and those which can be measured easily and objectively. In adding to this list, it would be valuable to interview some inmates and staff and ask them which aspects of the prison, of staff and of prisoners are important in relation to behaviour inside and after prison. After measuring these factors in each prison, the analysis should attempt to determine:

- (i) which aspects of the prison, staff and prisoners are related to behaviour inside and after prison;

- (ii) which of these relationships are important after controlling statistically (e.g. by using a partial correlation method) for all other aspects.

Following this essential background research, the next step would depend on the results which emerged and on current operational concerns. In the light of the research reviewed in this paper, I would be surprised if size was found to be an important variable. However, as an example, let us suppose that the staff : inmate ratio in prison proved to be related to an index of prison violence independently of all other factors. This would not prove that poor staffing was a causal factor in prison violence, because it is always possible that some unmeasured factor was responsible for the observed association. The best way to investigate whether or not poor staffing was a causal factor would be to carry out an experiment in which prisoners were randomly allocated to a better or poorer staffed institution (or living unit), and then to investigate the incidence of violence in the two institutions (or living units). Such an experiment would have to be carefully designed, and careful attention would have to be given to ethical issues. For example, it would not be desirable to subject prisoners to badly staffed conditions purely for experimental purposes. It would be more defensible to subject the experimental group to an unusually high staff : inmate ratio, and to allocate the control group to the usual ratio.

The research sequence which I would recommend, then, is to begin by collecting basic information and conducting a large correlational analysis, and then to test hypotheses emerging from this analysis on matters of current operational concern (e.g. prison violence) in random allocation experiments. Such experiments are difficult to carry through satisfactorily, and need a great deal of commitment by prison administrators. Experimentation is the only method which produces clear cut information about causal relationships, but it may be that, for some topics of interest, quasi-experimental methods are more feasible. Whatever method is used, it must be remembered that good research is essentially a long-term activity and requires a long-term commitment of resources.

B) THE SIZE OF PENAL INSTITUTIONS IN CANADA:
THE FACTS BEHIND THE FIGURES -

CONCLUSIONS

As this paper reveals, there is no empirical evidence to substantiate the belief that small institutions are more effective than large prisons in rehabilitating inmates, decreasing recidivism or preventing prison violence. If anything, criminologists have shown that size is neither the most significant nor principal factor with respect to the operating effectiveness of different prison regimes. This raises another hypothesis which is equally plausible, namely, that penal institutions of a similar size (i.e. with the same number of inmates) may reach a certain level of operational efficiency at different times and for entirely different reasons. Demographic fluctuations in the inmate population, staff transfers, etc., all affect a prison's ability to control its inmate population.

I would, however, like to make a few additional comments regarding my thesis on prison size. First, I am not saying that large prisons are more effective than small ones in curbing prison violence and preventing recidivism. Rather, my position is that large institutions are no less effective than small ones and, therefore, more practical to build because they are much cheaper to operate.

Secondly, although treatment programs have no demonstrable effect on recidivism rates, I am not proposing that programs should be scrapped in institutions irrespective of their size. Programs have a valuable function in the prison system which extends well beyond the objectives of treatment, like providing meaningful work for staff and keeping inmates occupied.

Thirdly, the rationale for building small prisons on the grounds that prisoners and staff will get to know each other better is hardly a basis upon which to decide the future capacity of penal institutions. Both the Canadian Committee on Corrections (1969) and the Canadian Association for the Prevention of Crime (1978) have cited this as a major reason for building small rather than large prisons.⁴¹

In a letter to the Solicitor General of Canada, the Honourable Jean-Jacques Blais, on November 17, 1978 the Canadian Association for the Prevention of Crime stated:

"The most effective resource available to prison staffs in dealing with prison inmates is personal relationships. A prison should be small enough so staff can know each inmate personally. In a large prison, relationships become impersonal and all programs suffer. In

particular, security suffers. In small institutions housing inmates with a uniform security rating the staff know the good and bad qualities of each inmate and can sense tension building up in the inmate group in time for remedial action. Disturbances can be avoided and greater protection provided to both staff and inmates. Sensitivity to inmate tensions is more limited in larger institutions."⁴² (emphasis my own).

However, unless close interaction between staff and inmates can "only" occur in small institutions and unless such interaction results in a reduction in crime, fewer prison violations and greater protection for staff (and there is no research evidence to support such broad generalizations), the justification for building small prisons must come from substantive and empirically-based considerations. As S.R. Brody commented, "It has often been shown that recidivism is not reduced merely by sentencing offenders to an institution where attempts will be made to understand them and to encourage them to understand themselves."⁴³

In any event, there is nothing to lead us to believe that these "presumed benefits" of small prisons cannot be obtained with comparable efficacy in large prisons.

Fourth, a decision to build large (450) rather than small prisons (150 inmates) does not necessitate

the abandonment of some of the features of small prisons. There is no reason why large institutions cannot be architecturally designed so as to improve the quality of life behind our prison walls. Living-units can still be restricted in size and the nature of cellular confinement made sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in ideas and attitudes towards the treatment of offenders. Moreover, prisons with large inmate populations can also provide a broad range of programs that could not be offered in small institutions because of their size.

The construction of large (400-450 inmates) rather than small prisons (150-200 inmates) does not mean that we have to revert to the barbaric and out-dated prison practices of previous generations. The progressive aims of penal reformers can be achieved with equal success in large as well as small prisons. Although economic considerations may place restrictions on the types of institutions that can be built in the future, we can still embark on a program of prison construction aimed at population capacities with 450 inmates and administer them just as humanely and effectively as institutions one-third that size. Overcrowded prisons and common economic sense dictates such a course of

action but so does existing research evidence, for
in the final analysis, it helps to bridge the gap
between our knowledge and ignorance of human behaviour.

- f) IF WE INCREASE THE ACCOMMODATION CAPACITIES OF OUR PRESENT INSTITUTIONS TO 450 WILL SERIOUS OVERCROWDING RESULT?

Response - No. The Correctional Service of Canada is committed to reducing the prison population. Studies are currently in progress to determine the most effective methods of reducing prison over-crowding while at the same time offering the public maximum protection from dangerous offenders. Institutional facilities will be expanded to accommodate expected increases in the prison population but new institutions will not be built if the number of offenders being sentenced to imprisonment declines.

- g) WILL THE QUALITY OR QUANTITY OF OFFENDER PROGRAMS DIMINISH IN SIGNIFICANCE OR MARKEDLY DETERIORATE IF WE INCREASE THE PRISON POPULATION TO 450?

Response - No. The Corrections Service has no intention of abandoning its commitment to administer the penal system in an enlightened and humane manner. The quantity and quality of offender programs will neither deteriorate or decrease within the prison system. In fact, larger institutions will allow a greater diversity in the types of programs that can be offered to the inmate population. There is no reason to believe that institutions with prison populations ranging in size from 400-450 inmates cannot be administered effectively and efficiently for both staff and inmates.

