

Atmosphere of hate and paranoia ^{er} prevade Canadian penal institutions

K I N G S T O N — "Screw(guard)-lovers" can end up with black eyes, broken arms and a knife in the back.

"Con-lovers" will be harangued at the Royal Canadian Legion hall, forced into fights, and have their tires slashed.

This is the reality of the Canadian penal institution according to guard Barry Dennison and ex-convict/author Roger Caron.

Caron and Dennison related their personal experiences in the penitentiary system from different perspectives at a public meeting at St. Lawrence College here Wednesday.

POLICE REPORT

Trains cheaper

One man is in custody and two stolen cars have been recovered after a two-day cross-country driving marathon.

A 1979 Ford LTD station wagon was stolen from a Kingston car dealership Tuesday by a man who said he was going to take the car for a test drive. The car, valued at \$7,000, was left at Braden Ford Sales Limited about 10 a.m. Wednesday by a man who took one of that dealership's cars for a test drive.

City police were called to the dealership shortly after 1 p.m. when the man did not return with the vehicle, a 1981 beige Thunderbird. When they checked on the station wagon left at the dealership, they discovered it had been reported stolen Tuesday.

Manotick OPP recovered the Thunderbird about 3 p.m. Wednesday when they spotted the car being driven in their territory without 1982 license plates. The car was stopped, checked and the driver was arrested.

Caron, who has spent 24 years behind bars and wrote the Governor-General's award-winning book "Go Boy", and Dennison, a guard at Collins Bay for the past five years, spoke to 100 criminology and high school students.

Guards run the risk of being ostracized by his mates if he is friendly to inmates, Dennison said, and Caron said the same goes for prisoners. An atmosphere of hate and paranoia prevade Canadians prisons, they said.

"We just end up shouting at them," Dennison said. "We have little or no contact with the inmates as front-line workers."

Dennison says he wants to change the system, and he has been trying by speaking up on open-line programs and in public forums. Demonstrations are definitely out, he says, because he says he believes in speaking reasonably about the issues.

Using the 1977 House of Commons subcommittee report on prison reform as a base, Dennison has devised his own set of prison reform proposals.

"I hope to build a bridge between the front-line workers and administration staff," he said. "Perhaps we can all become a little more aware of the problems."

Central to Dennison's proposals is the production of video tapes by inmates to be analyzed by staff and students at Queen's University. Dennison believes the information exchange will benefit everyone concerned.

PRAISES COURAGE

Caron, who spent 12 of his 24 years in solitary confinement, said Dennison's initiative was a positive one and he praised his courage.

"It's the rare individual who crops his head up, because boy, is he risking to get shot."

"If you just let it go (and say nothing) you are going to have nothing — you are going to have chaos," he said. "Every little bit helps."

In his presentation, Dennison said

he is also concerned about reforming crime prevention capabilities.

He has proposed three changes to the Save the Youth Now Group (STYNG) for juvenile delinquents at Millhaven Institution, including:

- Finding Big Brothers and Big Sisters for delinquents.

- Establishing low-cost or free programs in parent education to teach parents how to raise their children today.

- And establishing leadership development programs for youths.

Dennison also favors more interaction at the grass roots level among habitual young offenders and hardened criminals. These young offenders should be given more guided tours of the institutions to help deter them from a life of crime, Dennison said.

In defending the prison system, regional director-general of the Kingston area penitentiaries, Art Trono, said jail keepers have a responsibility to the people of Canada to deal with the criminal element in today's societies.

Trono said Canada has by far the best penal institutions of anywhere in the world with a myriad of programs for all inmates in the Kingston area.

Numerous programs and expensive sports equipment does not compensate for the lack of freedom, Caron said. Inmates will always be resentful and unruly if the atmosphere they live in is beset with hostilities.

"You feel anger and hostility because there is just so many disruptions that are going on during the day," Caron said.

Inmates playing cards will be disrupted by others watching television who also face daily disruptions which remind them of their confinement. Programs do not serve to get to the root of the problem, Caron said.

Both Caron and Dennison said the situation would improve immeasurably if administration and staff could be more conciliatory and less hostile with inmates to help improve living conditions in prisons.