

JAN 15 1985

Early Releases Not Laughing Matter

A READER at Yukon writes: "It used to be that law-abiding citizens went about freely at night while drunks and criminals were locked up, but now the tables have turned and it is normal people who hide out in their locked homes."

That doesn't mean they are safe. Unless homes are constructed like fortresses with metal doors and bulletproof windows, burglars and rapists will find ways to break in. It's no more difficult to break into typical residences than it is to get out of prison — and that's pretty easy.

Criminals usually seem to have pretty firm ideas of what they are looking for and where to look. In a study of 7,000 burglaries by the Bureau of Justice Statistics it was found that in 42 percent of the cases, perpetrators were relatives or acquaintances of the victims.

If the Bureau of Justice Statistics made a study of the character of criminals turned loose prematurely, they probably would find that twice

that percentage of early releases are people who ought to be kept behind bars for full sentences.

Instead of building barracks and putting lawbreakers to work hard enough to keep them from training each other in outlawry, the Legislature and courts have "solved" the crowded prison problem by turning felons loose to stay within quotas.

During the first six months of 1984, police records show that 3,241 burglaries were committed in Oklahoma City. By December, the police department had arrested 160 burglary suspects.

Catching one burglar out of 20 break-ins is not a very hot batting average. Not all of those arrested are convicted and those who are rarely serve their full sentences.

Because those accused may be freed on bail or pending appeals, officers say that by the time a convicted burglar is sent to the penitentiary he may have been caught in two or three other incidents. Perhaps they wanted money to pay their

lawyers or to have going-away parties.

In mid-December, Gov. George Nigh commuted sentences of 143 prison inmates so they could be home for Christmas. It was pointed out that this was less than in other recent years, but it was not mentioned that between May and October 1984 a total of 487 inmates had been released to keep the prisons from being crowded and infringing on prisoners' "rights."

A poll by Thomas Kielhorn and Associates reported in October showed 74 percent of Oklahomans interviewed said they have "strong support" for the death penalty, with only 7 percent expressing strong opposition. You'd never know it from the way the penalty is imposed and wanton mass murders continue.

By making a joke of crime and punishment, lawmakers, enforcement officials and courts (the United States Supreme Court included) have made a joke of their oaths of office. If the outlaws and felons are laughing, they have reason to.



January 15, 1985

*Regarding how
court make
jobs of crime
and punishment*

Ferdie Deering
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Dear Mr. Deering,

Thank you, so much, for your article in today's OKLAHOMAN.

Sincerely,

Ken Jagd
Pastor

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