

Beaver Creek Institution

Anonymous Prisoner 9

In the following, I outline a few key problems that emerged within the federal penitentiary system during and after the rule of successive Conservative governments.

ETA ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURES

It is now a requirement that all “Lifers” are required to apply to the Parole Board for a single Escorted Temporary Absence (ETA). No Lifers are excluded from this requirement. In my case, I have been in for over a quarter century with a good institutional record and all programs completed. In addition to this, I had been granted many ETA passes to my brother’s home and to a halfway house. Suddenly, I was required to apply to the Parole Board for a single ETA. This unnecessary delay not only kept me from seeing my family for almost two years and penalized me for no reason, but also harmed my nephews, nieces, grandchildren and other family members. It also tied up the Parole Board to do a hearing for something that was previously under the authority of the Warden. For all the antipathy some politicians direct towards ‘red tape’, why impose such hoops with respect to ETAs?

TIMELINES FOR ETA / UTA / DAY PAROLE OR FULL PAROLE APPLICATIONS

Last year, I applied for a package of UTA passes, along with a Day Parole. I was granted all of the UTA passes I requested and was told to take them over a nine-month period. I successfully completed all UTA passes with excellent reports on each and automatically applied for Day Parole. I received a letter from Parole Board Canada wherein they advised that they would be denying review of my application due to regulations stating I could not apply until a 1-year wait period was completed. I found this rather confusing in that I was told to take my UTA passes over a nine-month time span. The delay is only three months, however, seems quite unnecessary given the fact I complied with their nine-month time frame. It would seem that warehousing is once again being structured into the system, whereby rules and regulations that lack common sense are contributing to the population figures.

PAROLE OFFICERS

It is common knowledge that new parole officers are assigned to prisoner's time and time again, often resulting in failures to follow through on the progress made by those behind bars under the supervision of previous colleagues. The standard answer to most is that, "I am new here and it will take about a year to get to know you and familiarize myself with your case". Not only has this delayed a person who has been working towards their rehabilitation and release, but it somewhat degrades them, taking away any incentive to go forward. In a system that is already bogged down, it also adds to the warehousing factor and the crowded penitentiary environment.

COMBINED WORKFORCES

CSC has combined work forces of medium- and minimum-security penitentiaries. In our case, Fenbrook Medium has been combined with Beaver Creek Minimum, and employees are not sure on which side they will be working when they show up in the morning. It is understandable that employees from the medium side, when stationed to work on the minimum side, are mentally incapable of adjusting their attitudes and insist on implementing rules that are from the medium side.¹ We are no longer in the "camp" setting as a result of this. Additionally, most of the staff on the minimum side has a caseload to look after. Time and time again, we are unable to contact our CXII for days or weeks, as they are posted elsewhere and not available to us.

PENSIONS

The Old Age Security funds were taken away from prisoners under the Harper government. Even though a person may have been a Canadian born citizen who worked their entire life and paid their taxes, they are now denied the pension funds. I have seen many fellows, whose wives were dependent upon the income to maintain a roof over their head and food on their table, no longer being able to contribute to their family's well-being. They are also no longer able to afford their prescription drugs due to the high cost of same. They have, in some cases, lost their homes and ended-up either on

welfare or eating at a soup kitchen post-release. With no funds to establish themselves properly into society, what are their prospects of success and what will be the impact upon their communities?

COMPLAINT PROCESS

There is a process in place wherein if management or staff has wronged a prisoner, the latter is entitled to have their problems reviewed and corrected through a complaint and grievance process. In my case, we had a Warden here who was short-lived and created a lot of problems before being removed. He left a path of destruction before moving on and many of his actions were of a nature that they affected caseloads in a very serious way. I issued a complaint and received a letter stating that my case would be assigned and reviewed in approximately three months. Since that time, I have now received many of such letters, advising that they still had not assigned the case and giving a new date of three months down the line. This standard form letter has become standard issue and after a full three-year period I am still receiving them. The former Warden has moved on without being held accountable in the least. The complaint and grievance system is badly broken, and needs to be investigated with the thought in mind of improving the review times. The system as it now stands makes a complete mockery of the notion of redress.

CONCLUSION

I trust my submission and input will be of some assistance as part of the review of the criminal justice system by the federal government.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ See Shook, Jarrod (2015a) "Collins Bay Institution: A Cluster F*#k", *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 24(1): 49-51.