

Saskatchewan Penitentiary

Anonymous Prisoner 16

It is my understanding that the Government of Canada has begun to assess the criminal justice system as a whole. There are many problems with the system as it is now, and while I understand that no human-made system of action is completely without problems, I feel that the number of problems within it and their impacts are considerable, and could be avoided. Problems plague this system all the way from the first moment of arrest up to the end of parole on the street.

I am doing a relatively short period of incarceration, but the stories and instances that I have heard described to me from a multitude of differing sources lead me to believe that almost the entire system is corrupted, from the abuses of power by law enforcement to administrative abuses of power once incarcerated. The problem is that such stories rarely get through the mail as all correspondence is read – as this letter no doubt will be – with the chance of it adversely affecting your period of incarceration being very high. Not many will take the threat lightly, and those whose stories you desire to hear the most are the most vulnerable to abuse. Those prisoners serving life sentences can be given serious setbacks for seemingly arbitrary and petty reasons.

If you are serious about evaluating and subsequently changing the nature of the criminal justice system then I implore you to visit each prison and have closed-door interviews with prisoners as this is the way you will receive the most unbiased and uncensored information. There are stories to be heard and tales to be told, which the medium of pen on paper does not do the reality of our accounts justice. I ask that you come to Saskatchewan Penitentiary and interview prisoners from the maximum-, medium-, and minimum-security units. Only then can you get a full picture of life behind bars.

Thank you for your time, consideration and the acceptance of this task. It is a worthy one.