

# Regional Perspectives

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## JOURNAL



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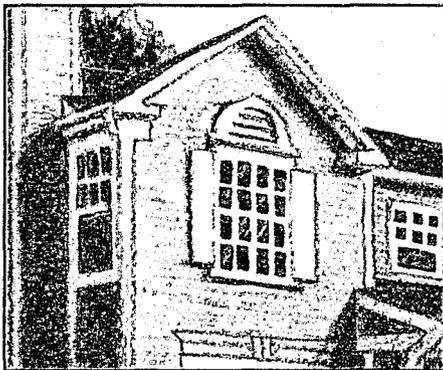
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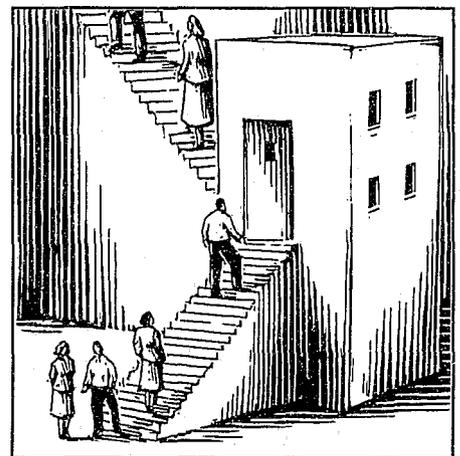
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# Grand Designs, Small Details

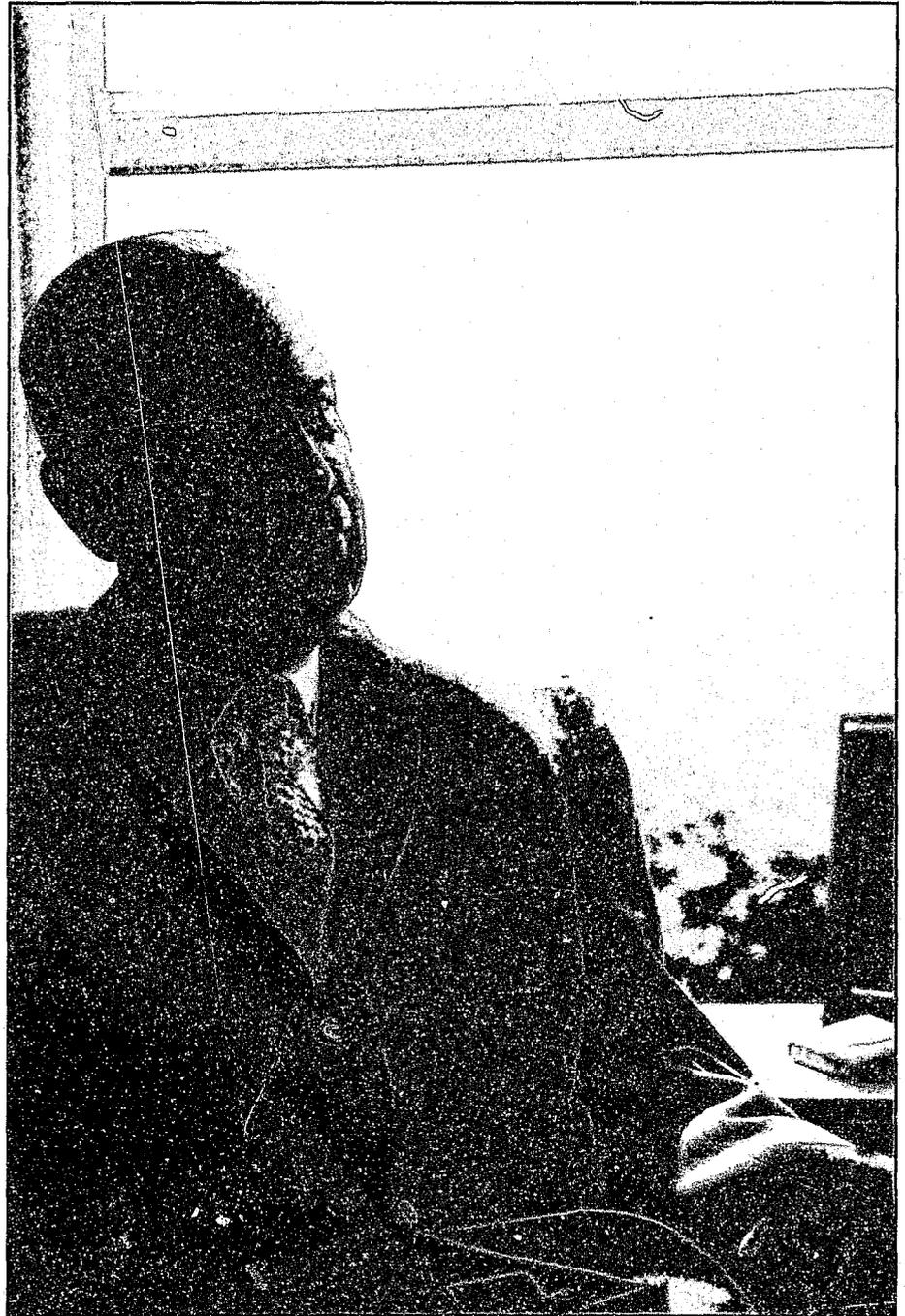
*The management style of James V. Bennett*

*John W. Roberts*

In October 1960, Federal Bureau of Prisons Director James V. Bennett returned to Washington after a 2-month trip around the world that included stops in France, Greece, Italy, Egypt, India, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Japan. After wading through the stacks of reports that had accumulated in his absence, and talking by telephone with his wardens, Bennett drafted a memorandum—whimsically entitled “A View From a Traveler”—which he sent to the Bureau’s top executives. In the memo, Bennett critiqued a number of Bureau programs and procedures that he “had sort of taken for granted” previously, but which he could see in a new light after having been away from the office for so long.

Many of his observations and suggestions were extremely focused—criticizing, for example, the perfunctory interview given a prospective employee, suggesting that too many staff members were overweight, and recommending a limit on the amount of gasoline allowed in institution trucks to make it impossible for inmates to steal them “and highball out for parts unknown.” In fact, in many of his memos of the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, and throughout his career, Bennett tended to pay great attention to small details, as he personally admonished staff not to keep pets on the reservation, expressed concern that inmates were permitted to watch too much television, suggested that institutions cease awarding cigarettes as prizes in inmate athletic competitions, and objected to what he considered the unnecessary duplication of inmate files.

The preoccupation with details may have seemed an anomaly. During his 27-year administration as director of the Bureau, Bennett was best known for his visionary



James V. Bennett, 1960, near the end of his long career as director. Photos courtesy of BOP Archives.

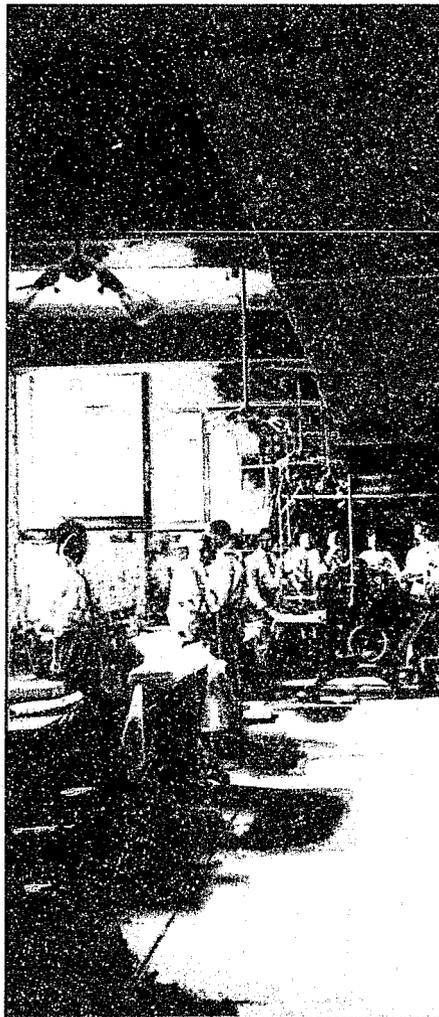
philosophy of corrections and as one of the most determined exponents of rehabilitation programs—what later became known as the “Medical Model.” Bennett’s greatest goals—all of which he achieved—included reducing institutional regimentation, building clean, open, and modern institutions, developing meaningful work opportunities for inmates, improving educational and vocational training programs, providing diagnostic and counseling services, and instituting halfway house programs. During his last decade or so as director, Bennett delegated most day-to-day operations to his assistant directors—Myrl Alexander, Fred Wilkinson, Albert Evans, and Frank Loveland—so that he could devote much of his time to criminal justice issues that went beyond prison administration, such as gun control and sentencing reform. Throughout his career, Bennett clearly was alert to “big picture” issues.

Yet he tried never to lose sight of minute details. In fact, Bennett’s mastery of details helped him realize some of his grand designs. Bennett began his Federal career as a specialist in government administrative methods, and his early first-hand analysis of Federal prison administration furnished him with the guiding principles he used to manage the Bureau. Out of that experience, in turn, he devised a theory of administrative management that could be applied not just to prison operations but to any public service enterprise.

From 1919 until he became assistant director of the new Bureau of Prisons in 1930, Bennett was an investigator and later chief investigator of the Bureau of Efficiency (the predecessor agency to the

present-day Office of Management and Budget). In that position, Bennett studied the management techniques practiced in Federal agencies and recommended improvements. For example, he made an extensive study of the Justice Department’s filing system, and proposed a complete overhaul.

In the mid-1920’s, the chief of the Bureau of Efficiency offered Bennett the choice of undertaking an investigation either of Federal prisons or of the Veterans Administration’s supply procurement systems. Bennett chose



prison, and studying prisons, he wrote later, “was probably the decisive experience of my early career.” His survey of prison conditions helped him frame his philosophy of correctional goals and prison management.

In his report to the Bureau of Efficiency in March 1928, and in subsequent testimony to a congressional committee, Bennett detailed the deplorable conditions he found at the United States Penitentiaries at Atlanta, Leavenworth, and McNeil Island. Overcrowding was severe—eight men crowded into cells designed for four, and inmates sleeping in dark, poorly ventilated basements or relegated to makeshift living quarters in the prisons’ warehouses. Sanitation was atrocious, there was little meaningful work to occupy the inmates, and there were no rehabilitation programs to speak of.

Bennett was quick to defend the prison administrators of the day, explaining that they did all they possibly could with the limited resources at their disposal. Nonetheless, he considered the prevailing conditions to be virtually inhumane and totally unsuited to the rehabilitation of offenders, which he believed to be the paramount goal of corrections.

*Left: In the 1920’s, Bennett found inadequate factories and a lack of meaningful work in Federal penitentiaries.*

*Right: Recreational programs were subsidized by Federal Prison Industries, which Bennett helped create.*

*Far right: Under Bennett, the first assistant director for Federal Prison Industries, new factories were built (such as this one in Leavenworth) and work opportunities for inmates were expanded.*

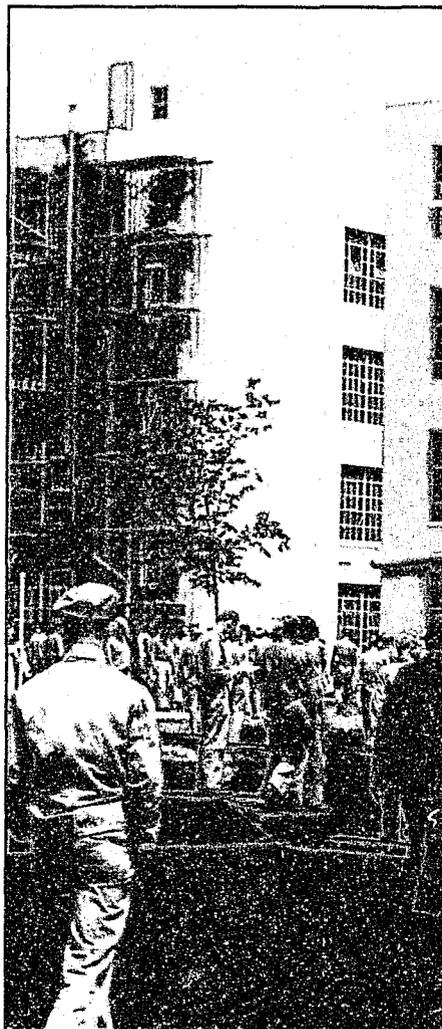
Surveying the wretched conditions in the early Federal prisons helped Bennett define his prison philosophy. He would seek to eliminate overcrowding and idleness, to build clean, new prisons, and to develop worthwhile educational programs, wholesome recreational programs, and productive industrial programs. Further, he would classify inmates by program and security needs to help bring about their individualized treatment. Ultimately, he would gear prison architecture, programs, regulations, and staffing to the rehabilitation of offenders. As he said years later, "the ultimate criterion of corrections is the prevention of recidivism."

To achieve these visionary goals, Bennett also needed a management philosophy. Just as his corrections objectives grew out of his early prison survey, so did his management style. In his report to the Bureau of Efficiency and his congressional testimony, he articulated several management principles upon which he would rely for the remainder of his career. Those principles included central direction and oversight, an emphasis on personnel issues, stewardship of resources, and openness to innovation.



### Central direction and oversight

From the outset, Bennett stressed the need for central direction and oversight. It was necessary to create "a coordinated system of Federal correctional institutions," he said in his report for the Bureau of Efficiency, and shortly thereafter he told the congressional committee that Federal prison administration should enjoy the status of "an independent bureau in the Department of Justice." Resolving the Bureau's status was imperative if prison officials were to



have the authority to make long-term plans and the power to implement them.

Bennett knew that it could take years for a single piece of legislation to get through Congress, followed by a year or more to secure the first appropriation for a new program or institution, and only after all that had taken place could substantive planning begin. In his congressional testimony, the future director argued strenuously that if Congress laid down general principles and then maintained control primarily through the appropriations process, the Bureau would be freed of the cumbersome requirement to obtain specific legislative approval every time it needed to activate a new prison or develop a new industrial product line. Planning would then be far more efficient and plans could be carried out in a more timely fashion.

That theory was put into practice when Congress established the Bureau in 1930 and gave it a broad legislative mandate to build new institutions and to implement appropriate programs for inmates. Sanford Bates, who served as director from 1930 to 1937, and Bennett, who was assistant director under Bates and then succeeded Bates as director, used that mandate to build the prisons that alleviated the terrible overcrowding of the 1920's and to develop the classification, education, and counseling programs geared toward the "individual treatment" of offenders that Bennett believed was essential to his goal of rehabilitation. Those accomplishments might have been impossible had there been no mandate and instead legislative consent had been obligatory on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, Federal Prison Industries—which Bennett masterminded—received legislative authority in 1934 to open new plants, develop new product lines, and

market products to Federal agencies without having to obtain congressional permission for each initiative. That authorization enabled Bennett to expand industrial programs to keep pace with the growing prison population.

Thus, the establishment of the Bureau and the incorporation of Federal Prison Industries changed top Federal prison officials' relationship with Congress by giving them greater authority and more independence. It also changed their relationship with field staff by conferring upon them the responsibility to set direction for the entire prison system. Before the Bureau's establishment, the various Federal wardens operated their institutions almost independently of each other and with minimal direction from their nominal superiors in Washington. Even after the Bureau came into existence, Directors Bates and Bennett had to struggle to establish discipline over the agency's components. But the law creating the Bureau set down the lines of authority—with the director clearly at the top—and during his administration

Bennett adopted many tactics to exert control and give direction.

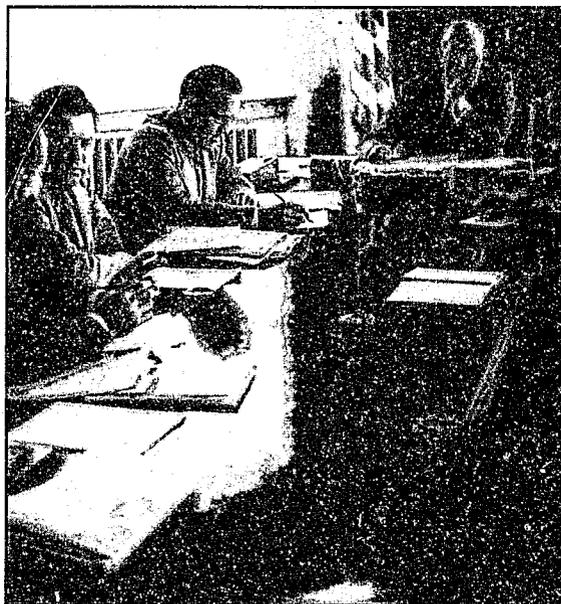
For example, under Bennett, the Bureau became more policy-driven than ever before. In 1942 it codified its agency-wide policy system in a volume exceeding 800 pages. Officially titled the *Manual of Policies and Procedures*—but better known as the “door stop”—it contained thousands of directives in all disciplines and was updated and revised continually.

Bennett adopted other means to coordinate policies, make his orders known, and educate staff. In 1937 he inaugurated periodic wardens' conferences, giving wardens throughout the Bureau an opportunity to exchange ideas, learn new methods, and be advised face-to-face by Bennett. Once or twice a month, Bennett sent what he called “round-robin” letters or “encyclicals” to all his wardens, in which he issued orders, clarified instructions, shared information, and explained policies. In addition, during Bennett's tenure the Bureau developed a series of

in-house publications, such as the *Progress Report*, the *Bulletin Board*, and the *Field Operations Newsletter*, to keep staff at all levels abreast of new developments, aware of new techniques, and in line with system-wide policy.

Finally, better methods of oversight were introduced during the Bennett administration. In the late 1940's, Assistant Directors Myrl Alexander and Frank Loveland developed the “team visit” concept—the precursor of modern program reviews. Alexander and Loveland each headed up teams of 5 to 10 members, including specialists in accounting, food services, custody, education, farming, industries, medical services, personnel, and so forth. Future Assistant Directors H.G. Moeller and John J. Galvin served as the inmate classification specialists on Loveland's and Alexander's teams, respectively.

Teams traveled (usually by car) for 2 or 3 weeks at a time, and visited three or four institutions. They would spend 3 to 5 days at each site, each specialist auditing



*This page: Team visits helped ensure proper administration of Federal prisons. At far left: Assistant Director Myrl Alexander speaks at a team closeout during a visit to USP McNeil Island, c. 1948. At left: At the same meeting, Warden P.J. Squire listens at the head of the table.*

*Right: Bennett (fifth from left, first row) at the second annual wardens' conference, held at Springfield, Missouri, in 1938. Bennett instituted wardens' conferences to communicate policy more effectively and encourage innovation.*

operations in his or her area. The team would present findings and recommendations to the warden and key staff at a closeout on the final day of the visit, and then would file a report with Director Bennett. Bennett would review the reports and refer them—after adding his own comments—to the warden. Team visits were an important tool for maintaining correctional standards and administrative control.

Bennett remained committed to the idea of oversight. In 1956, in a speech at George Washington University to the Institute of Correctional Administrators, he outlined the essential factors to be considered when “appraising a prison” and emphasized that if inspections were to be reliable, then inspectors had to see everything first-hand—they should attend discipline hearings, sit in on classification meetings, examine records, interview inmates, inspect the hospital, and review everything else they could.

He had been shocked by the unsanitary conditions he had noted at Atlanta and

Leavenworth during the 1920’s, and in his speech at George Washington University 30 years later he showed that cleanliness was still one of his chief concerns. Prison inspectors should make sure that “good housekeeping prevails,” he said; there could be “no excuse for sloppiness.” Staff should be neat and orderly in appearance, and inmates “reasonably well-clothed.” Because “nothing [was] more important to the morale and well-being” of an institution than the quality of food service, Bennett also admonished prison inspectors to note kitchen conditions and ascertain that the food was both appetizing and clean, whether menus were changed regularly, and whether vegetarian meals were available for those desiring them. Lastly, inspectors had to appraise the overall institutional climate—specifically, the morale and attitudes of officers and inmates alike.

The absence of a strong, centralized administration was one of the causes of the unfortunate state of affairs Bennett discovered in Federal prisons in the

1920’s. Bennett and others believed that having a strong prison bureau in Washington could go far towards rectifying many shortcomings. Not only would a bureau be in a stronger position to compete for appropriations, but it would have the authority from Congress to make important decisions, and a chain of command would be in place to enforce those decisions. As director, Bennett used his authority to plan necessary expansion of the system and to commit the Bureau to programs of individualized treatment of offenders. He then used wardens’ conferences, round-robin letters, the *Manual of Policies and Procedures*, and several publications to convey his policies and goals to the field, and relied upon team visits and other forms of monitoring to ensure that his programs were being put into effect properly.

**Personnel issues**

One of the most troubling drawbacks that Bennett identified in his 1928 study of Federal prisons was that top officials had



too many responsibilities and too few staff. Penitentiary wardens confronted "tremendous" administrative problems, Bennett wrote. They had responsibility for purchasing enough supplies for the subsistence of more than 3,000 people, ran a farm and a large industrial operation, maintained custody over the inmates, and sat on the institution's parole board—all with "a pitifully small amount of assistance." Bennett continued: "The same problems which face the warden are presented in a magnified and concentrated form" to the Justice Department's superintendent of prisons, who nominally was in charge of Federal prison administration before the creation of the Bureau. In his testimony to Congress a few months later, Bennett stated that he did "not know of any harder job in the Government service or anywhere else than running the Federal prisons," and that it was "physically impossible" for the superintendent of prisons to give detailed attention to all his tasks.

Bennett's solution was two-fold. First, the responsibilities of the superintendent (later, the director of the Bureau) and the wardens had to be limited; in particular, they had to be relieved of their demanding parole responsibilities so they would have more time for prison administration. That was accomplished in 1930, by legislation that created a single, independent United States Parole Board to replace the individual parole boards at each Federal prison. Second, Bennett called for more staff to be hired. He cited the lament of the solitary physician at Leavenworth: "To ask one man to function as penitentiary physician is a manifest unfairness. I know of no village in America of 3,200 souls that has but a single doctor." For purposes of compari-

son, Bennett pointed out in his congressional testimony the inequity of having a single division of 200 employees within the Washington office of the Veterans' Administration to administer a hospital system with 20,000 patients, whereas the superintendent of prisons had a staff of only 18 in Washington to administer a prison system with more than 18,000 inmates.

Bennett's intent to place realistic limits on the responsibility of top officials carried over into a general commitment to rational organization that conformed "to good business principles." Defining job responsibility throughout a prison by having an appropriate organization plan, he wrote in *Federal Probation* in 1944, was essential if each employee's abilities were to be mobilized and if overlapping assignments and conflicting authority were to be avoided.

The way staff were configured influenced the effectiveness of programs.



Recognizing that more sophisticated inmate programs required more sophisticated staffing patterns, the Bureau started moving in the 1950's toward the "treatment team" concept. Representatives from all disciplines—correctional officers, caseworkers, and senior staff—worked together more closely in their supervision of inmates. By the early 1960's, a "Cottage Life Intervention" system developed by Myrl Alexander put interdisciplinary teams in charge of supervising specific groups of inmates at one of the Bureau's youth facilities. Those new structures led to the development of the unit management system, which became standard by the 1970's. For Bennett, treatment teams and Cottage Life Intervention promoted interaction, information sharing, and coordination of activities among staff; they also put staff in a better position to carry out the advanced programs that were part of Bennett's individualized treatment emphasis.

Ultimately, good prison management in Bennett's view depended on a good staff. "Every institution," he said, paraphrasing Ralph Waldo Emerson, "is but the lengthened shadow of some man or men." The success of Bennett's foremost policy goal—individualized treatment—rested upon the knowledge and professionalism of individual staff members. Also, he worked with the first director to bring about, and during his own administration continued to extol, the nonpolitical, merit-based selection and promotion of officers. As he would have remembered well from his initial study of Federal prisons, early wardens were political appointees, a fact that engendered a host of problems. Only "under a genuine merit system," Bennett said,

could staff enjoy the independence and the job security they needed to make objective decisions, propose innovations, and carry out their assignments.

Finally, Bennett recognized that the hardest job of prison administration was to recruit and develop staff. His commitment to training and a merit system reflected that conviction, as did his commitment to one other important goal: better pay for correctional officers. "In most American [penal] institutions," he wrote in 1954, "the pay of prison officers is nothing short of scandalous." If "their worth as measured in pay received [is] satisfactory," he wrote 10 years earlier, then more qualified individuals would be attracted to a career in corrections. Yet pay for correctional officers frequently lagged behind that of other law enforcement officers who possessed equal skills and faced similar hazards.

In 1955, Bennett complained bitterly to Attorney General Herbert Brownell that

higher salaries for commensurate work lured "not a few" correctional officers to accept positions as deputy United States Marshals. Thus, said Bennett, the Marshals were receiving staff who had been trained at the Bureau's expense. At higher levels, too, pay was inadequate. In the 1950's some Federal wardens held Civil Service ranks as low as GS-11, despite the fact, said Bennett, that "there are few positions in the Government requiring the breadth of experience, the diversified abilities, the long hours, or the hazards that are inherent in the position of a Warden." Well into retirement, Bennett continued to argue that prisons were understaffed and prison staff underpaid.

It was not enough for top staff to champion the concerns of line staff. As Bennett told a Brookings Institution conference in 1958, line staff had to "know you're fighting their battles" for higher pay and civil service protection [emphasis added].

Ironically, Bennett did not always succeed in making staff aware that he was fighting their salary battles. Because Bureau budgets were so tight, Bennett was forced to hold grade levels down even as he was trying to persuade the Attorney General to raise them. Bennett's executive assistant, Lawrence A. Carpenter, recalled that the low salaries sometimes fostered staff resentment towards Bennett.

### Stewardship of resources

Except for demanding higher pay for Bureau staff, Bennett tended to be very conservative on spending matters. According to Bennett's long-time assistant director and eventual successor, Myrl Alexander, Bennett monitored the Bureau's budget very closely. He "maintained a consistent flow of interest in expenditure of appropriated funds, from their initial development and justification on through the actual expenditures," and "invariably" reviewed the reports of financial auditors. His fiscal caution was encouraged by the severely limited budgets the Bureau received during his administration, but Bennett was able to use economic restraint as a tactic to achieve program goals.

Bennett's frugality may have derived in part from his flinty Yankee upbringing. Myrl Alexander once suggested that his predecessor's "sense of responsible stewardship of public funds" actually "grew out of the New England Yankee tradition." The son of an industrious but not terribly prosperous clergyman, Bennett remembered the many economies his family practiced during his boyhood—stewing salt pork, saving pennies in a souvenir teapot from



Staff recognition and training were important priorities for Bennett. At left, he presents an award to a staff member, c. 1949; above, Bennett speaks at a training conference for jail inspectors. Myrl Alexander is next to him.

Niagara Falls, and stoking the furnace with one shovelful of cinders for every shovelful of coal. Later, Bennett worked his way through Brown University in Rhode Island as a butcher's boy on weekends in a Providence market at 15 cents an hour, saving "everything I was given or could earn."

Undoubtedly of greater significance was the fact that frugality was forced on the Bureau by a chary Congress. The House of Representatives' Appropriations Committee customarily pared Bureau budgets to the bone. Although Bennett had many friends on Capitol Hill—Representative Emmanuel Celler and Senators Edward Long, Roman Hruska, and Thomas Dodd among them—an influential Appropriations Committee member, Brooklyn Congressman John J. Rooney, was one of Bennett's adversaries. In a 1974 interview, Bennett recalled that Rooney had been "a young prosecutor when he was elected to Congress. He considered his job as the head of the Appropriations Subcommittee to prosecute everybody who came before him, including me, and cut us back everywhere along the line."

At committee hearings, Rooney grilled Bennett on budget requests both large and small, once insisting upon a protracted justification of the Bureau's modest intention to hire 1 new chaplain, 1 classification officer, 2 junior stewards, 3 mechanical engineers, 1 garage mechanic, and 13 correctional officers during the course of fiscal year 1959. Rooney "always delivered himself of a tough message," said Bennett, and preached "economy sermons"—on the record—to the Bureau.

Yet perhaps the most important aspect of Bennett's policy of cost containment was that he used it to achieve program goals, thereby turning an apparent disadvantage into a plus. He helped bring about a modern prison system by arguing that modern prisons could be less expensive than old-fashioned prisons.

Bennett's objective was to replace the handful of massive, populous, Bastille-like prisons that predominated prior to the 1930's with a system of smaller, open, less restrictive prisons. Moving to such institutions was critical to his philosophy of individualized treatment. Smaller prisons meant the possibility of specialized prisons that could provide targeted rehabilitation programs; open prisons meant fewer bars, fewer walls, and, in Bennett's estimation, greater dignity for the inmate and greater likelihood of successful readjustment after release.

Starting when he wrote his report for the Bureau of Efficiency and lasting throughout his career, Bennett's hole card in

seeking to bring about such a prison system was that it would be vastly more economical than maintaining a system of traditional penitentiaries. For instance, by having a network of prisons across the country rather than just a few, the Government could house inmates near their homes and would not have to spend nearly as much on inmate transportation.

Bennett was unwavering on custody issues for those inmates who required tight security. No prison in the system received greater attention from Bennett than the U.S. Penitentiary at Alcatraz, California, which was the Bureau's most secure facility. But Bennett's ideal prison was the Federal Correctional Institution in Seagoville, Texas—the "prison without walls," he called it, with a strong programming emphasis and lack of regimentation—which he claimed was "living proof that there may be no need to build costly cell blocks except for a few chronic escape artists, a few desperadoes, and a few who have lost all hope." To win support, he pointed out that that type of institution could be built for one-half or even one-third the per inmate cost of constructing a traditional penitentiary. The sorts of prisons Bennett wanted reflected his correctional philosophy, but also his fiscal prudence.

By both design and necessity, then, parsimony was a hallmark of Bennett's administrative style. "From the first day of the fiscal year," he wrote to his wardens in July 1947, "we must bend our utmost to save every penny." In 1952 he observed, "There is no institution or department in the entire system that doesn't have problems springing from a lack of funds. Our appropriations are very carefully guarded and there is no 'fat' anywhere." Wardens and business managers responded so well, however,



that more than once Bennett reminded them that in their eagerness to save money they should not “take any foolhardy risks” or go beyond “a peril point.” He asked to be told of critical areas that were underfunded so that he could secure funding “essential to the safety and well-being” of Bureau facilities. “We will find some way to maintain our defenses,” he wrote, no matter how severe the budget cuts.

Bureau personnel came up with imaginative ways of getting by on restricted budgets. Bennett himself instructed institutions with farms to grow as much produce as they could—to lease additional farmland, if possible—and to share surplus goods with other institutions. He also encouraged institutions to avoid “duplication of services.” As an example, Bennett suggested that institutions that maintained machine shops for the prison itself, for the Prison Industries factory, at the powerhouse, and for vocational training, could consolidate them under one roof. Business managers, meanwhile, husbanded resources and scrounged for free or inexpensive materials.

The controller at Alcatraz, for instance, said he “spent a great amount of time and effort searching other agencies for their surplus property and obtained substantial

quantities of valuable and useful items,” mainly from military posts. When the Maritime Service deactivated 21 vessels, he obtained their stock of provisions for use at Alcatraz and at other Bureau institutions. Another time he discovered a barrel containing surplus components for direct current motors, and he persuaded officials at the agency that owned the equipment to give it to Alcatraz. “I recall being very proud of the fact that the BOP operated as economically as reasonably possible,” wrote the Alcatraz controller, “while other agencies seemed less concerned over the source of their funds.”

**Openness to innovation**

In his very first involvement with prisons—the Bureau of Efficiency study—Bennett championed innovation. While hardly the only person calling for Federal prison reform, Bennett made his start in corrections with a broadly based appeal for restructuring Federal prison administration and for adopting progressive new programs for inmates.

Throughout his administration, Bennett continued to champion innovation as a management tool. He lashed out against “lid-sitters” who were content with the status quo and who failed to identify or remedy problems aggressively. Complacency in a prison setting, he pointed out, meant that “explosive or dangerous institutional” problems could be overlooked until it was too late.

Instead of complacency, Bennett advocated “a ferment, lively experimentation, [and a] lack of ‘doing-things-this-way-because-it’s-always-been-done-so’” attitude. He urged administrators to “keep abreast of developments in the management field,” to experiment and conduct research, and to undergo critical self-appraisal. He advocated “brainstorming sessions—retreats—conferences—executive development—[and] talent scouting” to generate “creative ideas.”

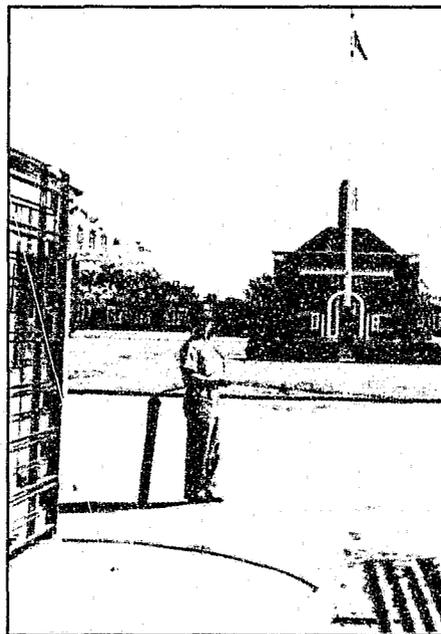
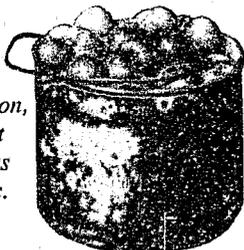
Accordingly, Bennett himself generated or supported a host of new ideas and projects. Not all were implemented. For example, in 1939 he called for the Department of Justice to establish a Crime Control Unit that would carry out research and provide assistance to States geared toward applying the insights of social work, psychiatry, and education to crime prevention initiatives at the local level. Bennett’s proposal was not adopted, but it was emblematic of how he tried to devise new solutions not just to the problems of corrections but to broader issues in criminal justice.

Bennett did succeed, however, in implementing many innovations. He was a key player in perhaps the most critical innovation in Federal prison history—the creation of the Bureau of Prisons. His “individualized treatment” concept

*Left: The day room at FCI La Tuna, Texas, c. 1952, an example of the better living conditions that Bennett implemented.*

*Far right: Bennett was proud of the “prison without walls,” FCI Seagoville, Texas.*

*Right: Throughout Bennett’s administration, farming was important for alleviating idleness and reducing expenses.*



involved adoption of numerous programs in classification, education, and counseling. Bennett was assistant director for industries in 1934 when Federal Prison Industries was founded—a milestone in the Bureau's development. Even late in his career, Bennett was strongly in favor of new initiatives. A pilot project begun under Bennett in 1961 to test the halfway house concept led to the creation of community corrections. Shortly before he retired in 1964, the state-of-the-art supermaximum-security penitentiary he helped design at Marion, Illinois, was activated. And at the time of his retirement, planning for the Bureau's leading-edge institution at Butner, North Carolina, was well under way.\*

□ □ □

In 1962, in a speech at the Brookings Institution, Bennett observed that careers in public administration carried with them many satisfactions. One did not enter the field for the money, of course. Further, public administrators were "surrounded by regulations" and were

never "immune from public scrutiny." But public administration also offered an "opportunity to do something constructive and meaningful," brought the "adventure" and "excitement" of developing and experimenting with new programs, and permitted one to "make decisions" and "get things done." Public administrators, Bennett continued, could win promotion through merit, meet interesting people, and be a "part of history."

Bennett started his career not as a prison administrator but as an expert on public administration. Just as he tended to see the problems of corrections within the broader context of criminal justice issues, so he viewed prison administration within the larger framework of public administration. Drawing on his decades of experience in managing a major Federal agency, Bennett in 1961 outlined for the American Society of Public Administrators the problems and goals of managing any sort of public institution where inmates, patients, wards, or other

residents were confined. At base, the principal challenge amounted to satisfying a variety of constituencies, each of which had different needs and expectations.

The public, said Bennett, wanted institutions to provide protection and the convenience of being "able to forget the problem because it has been turned over to an expert." The "boss"—whether a mayor, governor, or board of directors—wanted tangible evidence of success and an absence of problems and criticisms. The regulatory office wanted efficiency, economy, and adherence to rules. The profession-at-large wanted adherence to professional standards and "an approved approach with approved personnel." The inmate or patient wanted "individuality or self respect," assistance, and "to get out." And the administrator in charge of the institution wanted the best staff, the best facilities, and the best operating budget he or she could acquire, to carry out the assigned mission successfully, and "to leave a mark on the field through research, new ideas, or contributions."

Bennett tried to accomplish these goals by stressing central direction and oversight, personnel issues, stewardship of resources, and innovation. And he clearly achieved his stated goal of leaving "a mark on the field."

\*Marion was designed to be the replacement for Alcatraz, the Bureau's first supermaximum-security institution. Marion's original mission, however, was that of a youth facility, so that the Bureau could operate the institution and work out any design flaws before incarcerating more dangerous adult offenders there. Marion then operated for several years as a maximum-security penitentiary, before being redesignated a supermaximum-custody institution in the late 1970's.

Butner was not opened until 1976—12 years after Bennett's retirement. Bennett had long advocated such an institution, however, and planning for Butner began while he was still director. Lack of funding delayed the construction of the institution (see Robert L. Brutsche and John W. Roberts, "A Working Partnership for Health Care," *Federal Prisons Journal* 1 (Fall 1989): 32-8.



Left: Bennett accepting a Presidential Award for Distinguished Civilian Service from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1959.

Right: Bennett speaks at the dedication of FCI Butner, North Carolina, 1976.

Some scholars of public administration have argued that agency heads enjoy comparatively little influence over the actual programs, philosophies, or operations of their organizations. As Professor John J. DiIulio points out, however, that was not the case with Bennett. According to DiIulio, Bennett had an enormous impact upon the Bureau—developing and instituting new programs, showing sensitivity to staff needs, forging alliances with politicians and opinion makers, besting bureaucratic rivals, and burnishing the Bureau's public image. The success of the Bureau, in DiIulio's estimation, was due in no small measure to the personal strengths of James Bennett.

In many respects, Bennett focused on details and functions: penny-pinching budgets, legislative processes, minute points of supervision, internal newsletters and other forms of communicating with staff, and institutional sanitation. But by attending so closely to such details, Bennett was able to cultivate a prison system that achieved his much larger goal of individualized treatment. And as much as Bennett and the Bureau evolved during Bennett's tenure as assistant

director and director, Bennett's insights, concerns, and philosophical orientations almost always could be traced back to his initial study on Federal prisons produced in the 1920's. In turn, many of the management principles he enunciated continue to be valuable nearly 30 years after his administration came to an end. ■

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