

'I'm not like the others.'

by Boyne Hall

It's back to basics at Monteith Correctional Centre.

Starting a week from now, sheep will be added to the centre's inventory and the inmates will begin a program "which will try to motivate the people of our institutions."

The Honourable Frank Drea, recently appointed Minister of Correctional Services was in Monteith Correctional Centre (MCC) Saturday on a general inspection tour.

"I was sworn in on September 21," said the down-to-earth Minister. "At that time I said I would visit every centre under my jurisdiction. Everyone laughed. But when I reach New Liskeard (this weekend) I will have done it.

"My visit is simply that—an inspection tour and nothing any more significant.

"I realize that not too many ministers have visited here," he said. "But I am not like the others. I plan to come and go often and no one needs to know. I am going to look at things like the plumbing. That's my job."

The fortyish Minister, Frank Drea (pronounced Dray) is certainly not like any other Honourable Minister that I have yet encountered. His steel grey hair falls boyishly over his forehead and his blue eyes look directly at you. He speaks in a very informal manner but forthright. He knows what reporting is all about. He was a reporter for 20 years with the Toronto Telegram and is the only reporter he knows of to ever become a cabinet member, he said.

With three teen-age children of his own (his 13 year-old son was accompanying him) he is sensitive to the problems of the inmates under his care.

"They are all under 25," he said. "and they get younger every year.

But the minister wants one thing straight.

"When an inmate leaves one of my institutions," he said "he is going to be able to say--'look I did jobs which no one else in this country would do. I did them and did a good job. Now, (society) get off my back!'"

The Honourable Minister

which provided something for the inmates to do. It was a "tremendous mistake," he said, when the farm emphasis at the Monteith Correctional Centre was taken away.

"We're too tuned in to Toronto," he said. "What is good for Toronto is not necessarily good for us.

"We have to provide the total environment for these men so that the inmate himself will make the decision to reform.

"I can't reform anyone," he said. "All I can do (in institutions) is to try to motivate the inmates to want to be an asset rather than a liability. And all I ask him to do is to try. If he doesn't make it the first time, he can try again.

"We're going to try sheep," he said. "I know they're going to laugh at me. But sheep is a labour-intensive industry and the faster we get back to basics the better it will be.

"Once these (inmates) find out there's something in society that is beneath them, it may help them. It may take time, but we hope it will work."

When asked if his Ministry interacted with others to try to help in prevention methods the Hon. Drea said, "All the other ministries have failed where these men are concerned—and then we get them.

"We are actually the Ministry of 'Failure'. Because when the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Services and so on fail, we get them.

"But we aren't going to accept this anymore. We are going to correct this—at least while I am the minister."

"It is costly to apprehend these offenders and take them to court—and the community has to pay it. Now we (in institutions) are going to pay back the community."

"The trouble with this country is there aren't too many people who want to really work. Our convicts are going to show them. We're going to do the dirty jobs no one else will do." He pointed out that Labour Unions have given him their support of the idea.

The Hon. Drea, who represents the Riding of Scarborough has himself lived in the north in Sudbury. He said that if only Northern Ontario was in Toronto, "we could do so many more things—because in the north it's basics you find. And the sooner the rest of us get back there the better."

The Honourable Frank Drea

