

### CLABAUGH PLANS PRISON REFORMS

#### TO ENFORCE SENTENCES

Going to Be Change, He Says; Year to Life to Mean What It Says; Tells of Many Pathetic Cases

By Lester B. Colby (Illinois Chamber of Commerce) "When the police catch a professional crook who has robbed a hundred homes he may be indicted on a dozen or fifteen counts. Then the state's attorney, to gain sure conviction, may try him on one charge of larceny, reducing the charge by agreement, if he will plead guilty.

"The prisoner, a professional crook, is told something like this—'Go down on a larceny charge, and you'll get one to seven years, probably, and then when the first year is up, parole—out!' And it has been parole—out.

**Predicts Change** "Things are going to change down there. As it has been, one year to life has meant one year. From now on, one year to life is going to mean lifeless deduction from the maximum, instead of plus on the minimum, as heretofore."

Hinton G. Clabaugh, new chief of the parole board which is the sole source of paroles from the prisons in Illinois told me the above. He meant it. He meant it 100 per cent. He went on:

"I have learned more in sixteen days, investigations of records in Joliet than I learned in sixteen years in the service of the federal government. There are cases in the records that make you burn with indignation; records of political crooks, crooked lawyers and even crooked judges working to turn professional crooks loose upon the public.

**Pathetic Cases** "There are also cases that would make you cry; stories that are heart-breaking, all in the records. Think of murderers, rapists, cut-throats and professional thieves being turned loose regardless while another man serves years because he stole a tin of sardines and a handful of crackers from a shack when he was hungry. Think of bank robbers and safe crackers being turned out in a few months to ply their trade while a poor negro serves several years for stealing chickens!"

In the opening paragraph of this story it is revealed how professional crooks, with punishment due that might keep them in prison ten lifetimes, get out of jail in a few months under the "agreement racket." Mr. Clabaugh knows something more of that. He said:

"A clever lawyer will see to it that nothing goes into the record but the simple matter of a single conviction on a single charge of larceny. When the year is up he comes before the parole board and wrings his hand and begs:

"If the parole board goes back of the records of the case and looks up the police record; if the parole board shows the lawyer that his client is a professional crook who has served a half dozen sentences, and has committed five hundred crimes, the lawyer will cry:

"But you can't judge him on anything but this trial record. You can't go outside of the trial. Here's the record of the trial. You can't take into account anything else."

**Common Sense to Rule** "I'm telling these lawyers that I can take into account anything else—anything. And I am going to tell them that if common sense and justice don't rule in the courtroom—justices for the public as well as the prisoner—that it is going to rule before the parole board.

"I'm going to tell them that when a crook is sentenced to from one to ten years, it means ten years, not one year, and that the only way a prisoner can get out under ten years is to show good reason why. I don't

mean that I'm going to be hard-hearted. I hope to be human. "There's an old man down in the prison that I'm likely to turn out next week. I'm taking stock. It's sort of an inventory. I'm going through the shelves to see what goods I've got on hand. From the records and from the investigation made I'm pretty sure this old man isn't a criminal. I'm pretty sure he was never guilty of much of anything.

"I'm pretty well convinced that certain persons, with whom he was in business, prosecuted him and in doing so misused and abused a public office for private gain. That old man has served a year and a half. Apparently he has no friends to help him. He's going to be the most surprised man in Joliet when I turn him out.

"I don't know him, haven't talked with him, haven't even seen him yet. What I know has shown up in the records and the investigation.

**Poor Unfortunates** "I am first looking into the cases of those poor unfortunates who are without friends, money or influence, to see whether they have been fairly treated and which ones, if any, may safely be released or paroled."

I asked Mr. Clabaugh if efforts had been made, this early, to influence him in any way to bring about the release of prisoners. He replied:

"Yes, plenty of them. Already one judge has come to the front to get favors for certain criminals. Already politicians have sought to bring pressure for the release of friends. Already the governor has forwarded me a batch of letters—sent to him on behalf of certain prisoners. He forwarded them without comment or suggestion.

"Yes, already efforts have been made to annoy me, to scare me, to harass me. Already persons have tried to make my job a burden."

Then Mr. Clabaugh leaned forward with a twinkle in his eye and said:

"Really, I think this is going to be the easiest task I ever tackled. I think meting out justice is going to be simple enough. I've got the thing pretty well organized already and know, in my own mind, just how I'm going to work.

**No Word of Mouth** "For one thing, no word of mouth appeal is going to go. Everything that is said on behalf of a prisoner

must be put down in writing. It's got to be in the record or it isn't there at all. The public is going to have access to all information.

"Everything that is done will be wide open. There'll be no closed doors and no pull. Intrigue doesn't flourish in sunlight. I'm going to see that the sun is let in. When I took this job, Gov. Small promised me that no friend and no politician would be permitted to interfere with me. He promised me that if any state official interfered he would discharge him if it were in his power to do so.

"So far, he has kept his word with me absolutely. I think he will continue to do so."

The soviet government has subsidized an expedition to Africa which will attempt to successfully cross-breed orangoutangs and humans. This may be a move to fill some of the frequent vacancies in the communist high command.

If feminine apparel keeps on shrinking in quality those dress designers are going to have to go in for tattooing.

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