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FIRST U.N. CONGRESS ON THE PREVENTION
OF CRIME AND TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS

CONGRESS HEARS LECTURE BY DR. SANFORD BATES, FORMER PRESIDENT
OF THE INTERNATIONAL PENAL AND PENITENTIARY COMMISSION, ON "MODERN TRENDS IN
THE AMERICAN PRISON SYSTEM"

The First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders met this morning at 9.30 a.m. with Shri Paripurmanand Verma (India) in the Chair.

Dr. Sanford Bates, former President of the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, and Honorary Vice-President of the First United Nations Congress on Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders, spoke on "Modern Trends in the American Prison System".

Dr. Bates recounted the well known contributions of the United States of America in the treatment of crime and delinquency, in the development of the Juvenile Court, Probation and Parole, and the classification system in correctional institutions.

He referred to more recent progress under three headings - Buildings, Personnel and Therapeutic measures.

He listed the many new prison building projects in California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Louisiana and youth centres in Oregon, Philadelphia and New York City. He felt that the personnel employed was improving especially in staff positions, although he expressed "Politics still hang on grimly".

Great progress was also seen in legislation and administrative practice in the indeterminate sentence, and parole and statutory restrictions on abuses in prisons and the classification method of treatment.

He felt that the first period in our effort to rehabilitate prisoners was thus well under way, but that having made concessions towards decency and comfort in our prisons, the second period would be even more difficult, to teach lessons of self-control through just discipline was of prime importance if inmates were to be returned to society improved in body and mind.

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While he deplored the recent epidemic of prison riots in America, he pointed out that these riots were usually inspired by a small group of psychopathic prisoners and in effect will be made impossible by the new type of prison administration. He referred to the disturbances as "growing pains" towards a better rehabilitation prison system, and proposed a plan for their better control and prevention.

Dr. Bates cited statistics to prove that whatever might be the causes of the temporary increase in crime and juvenile delinquency in America, it was not related to treatment in prison. According to F.B.I. reports, States with improved correctional systems and more use of probation and parole, have a markedly less number of crimes known to the police.

Dr. Bates concluded by citing the U.S. Federal Prison system as one of the most progressive and adequately financed systems of correctional treatment in the world.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

This archiving project is a collaborative effort between United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and American Society of Criminology, Division of International Criminology. Any comments or questions should be directed to Cindy J. Smith at CJSmithphd@comcast.net or Emil Wandzilak at emil.wandzilak@unodc.org.