State about halfway to goal of reducing prison population

ANNAPOLIS — State corrections officials who say the first step toward easing prison overcrowding in Maryland is to remove state prisoners from local jails are about halfway to their goal.

George Smith, a special assistant to Corrections Secretary Gordon C. Kamka, said that the Hughes Administration's early release program for prisoners has permitted the transfer to state-run facilities of 158 of the 450 prisoners incarcerated in local jails.

But Kamka, head of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, told a legislative committee that he expected to fall short of his self-imposed goal of freeing 500 prison inmates.

Figures provided by Ms. Smith indicated that 56 prisoners have been released already and another 188 are going through the final stages prior to release. She said all 444 should be free within the next few weeks.

As the inmates are released from minimum security facilities around the state, state prisoners are moved into the state facilities from local jails, she said.

The state Parole Commission is still reviewing the cases of at least 60 of the 444 prisoners identified as candidates for parole. But Ms. Smith, echoing remarks made in recent days by Kamka and Gov. Harry Hughes, stressed the parole requirements have not been relaxed to meet the early release goal.

"If we don't make 500, we're not just going to go and release 100 people to make the 500," she said. "If the Parole Commission doesn't think 500 are ready for parole, then they not going out."

All of those who will receive early releases would have been paroled within the next 10 months anyway, most of them within the next two to three months, she said.

Those already released under the program had been imprisoned for crimes ranging in severity from murder to shoplifting. None had been sentenced to life imprisonment and all had been recommended for release by either their prison counselor or the head of the facility where they were incarcerated.

Among them were 10 who had been convicted of second degree murder, 11 who had been convicted of rape or assault with the intent to murder, and eight who had been convicted of manslaughter.

The largest group—63 inmates—had been locked up for armed robbery, but Ms. Smith said that was normal because persons guilty of such crimes typically make up the largest group of criminals incarcerated in state facilities.

"We're releasing the same kind of people that we release under the normal parole process," she said.

The early-out program has been heavily critiqued by public officials who fear dangerous criminals are being set free merely to satisfy a federal court order that requires Maryland to end double-celling of prisoners by July 1980.

Delegate George B. Adams, D.-Harford, a member of a joint committee on corrections that heard a Kamka briefing on his department's 1981 budget, was one of many who voiced opposition to the early release program.

Adams, a former local police chief, accused Kamka and Hughes of panicking "and letting too many people out too fast"—a program he said had caused morale within police departments around the state to deteriorate.

Kamka, obviously irritated, restrained himself from arguing with Adams, but called a newspaper story about the early release program that Adams had quoted misleading, inflammatory and sensationalized.

Undaunted, Adams charged, "We're playing Russian Roulette with the public of Maryland with, maybe they will (commit a crime), maybe they won't."

Kamka countered by referring to the court order to end prison overcrowding, saying, "Maryland has to recognize the fact that the federal court has spoken."

AFRO photo by Roman Hankewycz

ENDORSEMENT — Delegate Walter Dean, (L), 41st District, announced his endorsement of Norman V. A. Reeves (R) for a 5th District City Council seat. Dean also made the endorsement on behalf of the Urban Democratic Organization. Reeves also received the support and endorsement of Delegate Wendell Phillips, also of the 41st District.

Md. Lumber Exchange elect officers

At the annual meeting of the Lumber Exchange of Maryland Inc. the following were elected to serve in 1979 - 1980:

President, Barry Gold; first vice president, Ray Desor; second vice president, Sam Cooperman; secretary, F. Scott Jay and treasurer, Elliott Zulver.

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REPUBLIC AIRLINES

Single parent family seminar held at Hopkins

The Baltimore City Department of Social Services held a one - day seminar to discuss concerns and special needs of single parent families on Tuesday, July 31.

Special guests included Hilda Ford, personnel director, Civil Service Commission, who gave the keynote address in the Glass Pavilion.

Ernestine F. Jones, acting director of DSS, described this seminar as "an exciting, innovative approach to raising community awareness of the special needs of single parents."

"It is our hope that this seminar," Mrs. Jones added, "will stimulate agencies to begin to look at their services and examine their relevance in meeting the needs of families who have only one parent present. We are also hoping that our staff will be stimulated to develop some creative projects that can be used in our Family Service Program."

Workshops included Social Policies and Practices Relating to Single Parent Families, focus: Social policy needed to meet the demands of the single parent family;

The Impact of Single Parenthood on the AFDC Mother, focus: a look at the institution of welfare on family structure;

Displaced Homemakers, focus: Unique problems of single parents who would like to be employed;

Single Male Heads of Household, focus: single parent families headed by men — their special needs;

Other Single Parent Family Structures, focus: Impact of single parenthood on the extended family, the blended family, the homosexual family;

Adolescent Single Parent Family, focus: Growing population of adolescent parents and services needed;

Attitudes and Stereotypes Regarding the Single Parent focus: attitudes regarding single parent families as they presently exist — potentials for change;

Single Family Adoption, focus: challenge presented to single individuals who are adoptive parents;

Supportive Services to Single Parents, focus: supportive services currently provided to single parents versus services needed; Preventing Developmental Disabilities in Infants of Adolescent Single Parents, focus: social, physical and psychological factors that may lead to developmental problems.

ATTENTIVE—Audience members listen to workshop speakers at a seminar for single parents held at the Glass Pavilion at Johns Hopkins University.

(AFRO Photos by Roman Hankewycz)

KEYNOTE SPEAKER—Hilda Ford, personnel director for the Civil Service Commission, addressed a seminar for single parents sponsored by the Department of Social Services.

Community leaders get ax

The Coalition of Peninsula Organizations, (CCPO) a South Baltimore neighborhood group, has fired its director and other paid staff members as a way to end personality conflicts in the organization.

Newly elected president, Margaret A. Reiley said Eight part-time and full-time staff employees, including director Susan Leske, were asked by the coalition's senate to resign.

She said the group will begin searching for a new director, who will then hire a new staff.

Arts council offering fellowships

The Maryland Arts Council is giving poets, playwrights, filmmakers and composers living in Maryland a chance to improve their crafts by offering $60,000 in fellowships to artists this year.

The council said Maryland residents over age 18 can apply for the 12 $5,000 fellowships by submitting a representative sampling of recent work.

The fellowship program began in 1977 when four creative arts fellowships were awarded. A total of 13 fellowships have been given to Maryland residents since the program began.

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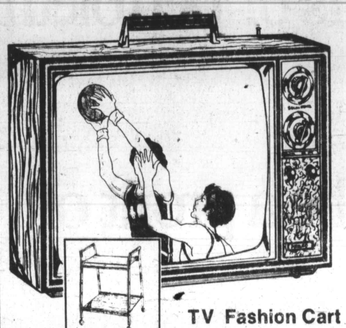

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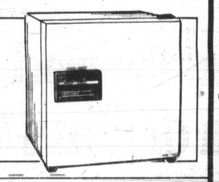

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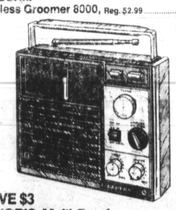

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