

worked its way out of an almost impossible tangle of restraints and set in motion long delayed projects such as the Interstate Highway system through Baltimore. I endorse and urgently recommend that you adopt the Redding Committee's proposal that the Commission be given a free hand in planning and developing the State's primary highways without having to obtain prior approval of local legislators and county commissioners. Professional rather than political judgment is the key to expediting highway construction throughout Maryland.

Prison reform ranks high on our list of unfinished business. A \$2.7 million increase in the Department of Correction's budget is recommended principally to implement last year's Michaelson Commission report. In addition an impressive \$4.7 million has been included for the Department in the 1969 Capital Budget. Genuine rehabilitation requires more than simple imprisonment if we are to reduce the revolving-door syndrome plaguing Maryland's prisons. We must first provide the proper facilities and personnel. Rehabilitation must also be practiced at the local level. In order to encourage and enable local governments to improve their correctional efforts, I am proposing legislation authorizing State matching funds for the construction and *staffing of regional detention centers*. The economy of regional rather than independent facilities is obvious. More important, this bill should relieve pressure from primary State detention facilities while extending professional rehabilitation services at minimal cost to Maryland's subdivisions. Prison reform can significantly reduce Maryland's crime rate. Presently seven out of every ten prisoners are ultimately returned to custody. It is perfectly clear that as we rehabilitate criminals we reduce crime.

A proper system of "early release" probation and parole must accompany prison reform if we are to realize a substantial decrease in repeated crimes. "Early release" — a modern penal concept — must be practiced cautiously with careful screening and professional supervision serving as a public safeguard.

### CONCLUSION

In review and retrospect, we can say the state of the State is good — but not good enough. I have attempted to outline some of the challenging problems that confront us and to offer solutions. Other proposals will be before you from the Legislative Council, and still others will originate within your membership during the next 69 days. Additional legislation will be presented for your consideration by the executive branch in the course of the session.