

**STATEMENT OF DR. MYRL E. ALEXANDER, DIRECTOR OF THE
BUREAU OF PRISONS; ACCOMPANIED BY EUGENE BARKIN,
COUNSEL**

Dr. ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am accompanied this morning by Mr. Eugene Barkin, legal counsel of the Bureau of Prisons.

Senator LONG. Doctor, I am impressed with all of you men bringing your legal counsel along. You don't need a lawyer to protect your rights when you come before this committee—on this type of hearing anyway. But we are happy that both of you are here.

Dr. ALEXANDER. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Barkin is here primarily because he handles so many of the complaints of our 20,000 guests who register complaints.

Senator LONG. He is your ombudsman?

Dr. ALEXANDER. Many of them have requests, including complaints about sentence, sentence computation; and Mr. Barkin handles these. It is for that purpose he accompanies me this morning. I can be my own legal counsel on other questions.

I am indeed happy to be here to present my personal views on S. 1195 with particular reference to the Bureau of Prisons. Moreover, I am appreciative of your interest and acquaintanceship with our problems, Mr. Chairman, in your capacity as chairman of the Subcommittee on National Penitentiaries of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

All too often prisons are thought to be places of rigorous confinement where prisoners have only the most limited means of communication with the outside; that, except for closely censored letters or rigorously supervised visits with his immediate family, a prisoner has no means of communication and is at the mercy of his keepers.

Actually, if that were the true situation, we who administer prisons and correctional institutions would be stupid indeed, because we would have created an intolerable and explosive situation which could not long be contained. Indeed, that kind of administration would no longer be tolerated by the courts or the public.

In actual practice, many channels of communication are available to and can be used without restraint by any or all of the nearly 20,000 inmates in our 28 Federal institutions.

First of all, every person has direct communication access to the Attorney General; to any Congressman or Senator; to the Board of Parole; to any Federal judge; to the Director, Bureau of Prisons; and others in Government.

This direct access is through the prisoner mail box system under which any prisoner may place sealed letters addressed to those mentioned in a special letterbox. The contents of those boxes are sent daily to my office and forwarded unopened to the addressee. Letters addressed to the courts or a Senator or a Congressman, however, are sent directly to the addressee under a form letter by the warden of the institution.

Senator LONG. Some of us have rather extensive correspondence with these inmates.

Dr. ALEXANDER. And rather perpetual correspondence with some of them, Mr. Chairman.

Senator LONG. We get so we can recognize the handwriting.