

Dr. ALEXANDER. In a 10-month period from October 1, 1966, through July 30, 1967, there were 6,131 such letters. Almost 900 were congressional letters. Virtually all of them resulted in congressional inquiries to my office to which we responded with the facts requested. Many are addressed to Federal judges. The great majority, however, are addressed to the Bureau staff and to which we respond to the writer.

The letters involve a wide range of subjects: food, disciplinary actions, legal questions, requests for work release, and transfers to other institutions. The program is critically important to us, understood and supported by the wardens and, as I have said, used substantially by the inmates.

We consider the merits of each request. Many raise questions or make claims which cannot be allowed. But we take affirmative action where justified.

Senator LONG. Doctor, may I interrupt you there?

Dr. ALEXANDER. Yes.

Senator LONG. Do you feel that works as a "steam valve," too, or a let-off valve for the prisoner which proves very helpful to him to know that he has the right to write you or his judge or his Congressman while he is in prison?

Dr. ALEXANDER. Yes, sir; we consider this prisoner's mailbox the most valuable safety valve of the entire system. That is why I indicated earlier in my statement that a prison administrator would be stupid indeed if he kept all of the tensions and emotions bottled up with a lid on them.

Senator LONG. You told me that before, but I wanted to get it in the record as to how important it was.

Dr. ALEXANDER. A few examples of responses: An inmate claimed he should have credit for time held in a Canadian jail while awaiting extradition to the United States. The records reflected that he was held for another offense in Canada, in which case jail time would not have been creditable to his sentence later imposed here. But after considerable correspondence, by Mr. Barkin here, with the Queens Counsel in Canada, it was definitely determined that he was in custody there solely awaiting extradition. We then properly granted his request.

A prisoner claimed that he was not granted the work-release privilege although he had completed training and believed himself to be eligible. We investigated. The warden and his staff pointed out that he was 1,000 miles from his eventual parole plan. We transferred him to an institution near his home, he was placed on work release, and continued on the job after release from his sentence.

An inmate complained bitterly to his Congressman that he was not getting any dental attention. Investigation disclosed that he had arbitrarily refused dental care. Further study revealed deep emotional problems. He was transferred to our medical center at Springfield, Mo., where both his mental and dental problems were treated successfully.

We noticed a series of letters from one institution complaining about food. I sent our food administrator to the institution where he discovered the complaints were justified and appropriate changes were made.