

by our legal staff, and where there is some aspect of the complaint that is open to question, it is completely investigated by our legal office. The inmate is then supplied with a statement as to why or why not the request cannot be granted. I happen to have given one example of a case on construction of sentence which could be done.

In cases where we have an unusual complaint, it is our practice to send someone from the central office. In two recent instances in the past year, I have had a disinterested person actually retained to go to an institution to check out complaints on which I did not want to be in the position of conducting a self-investigation.

There are many other kinds of complaints; for example, those involving injury compensation for a minor injury of some kind. We follow the standards and the principles of the National Safety Council. Our hospitals which are administered by the U.S. Public Health Service are regularly inspected. Incidentally, included in the prisoner's mail box addressees are letters to the Surgeon General, U.S. Public Health Service, on any complaints such as medical practices or lack of sanitation.

What I am saying is that as conscientiously as possible, we answer, follow every complaint, give a written response to every prisoner's mail box letter that comes to us; that is, those directed to me as a Director of the Bureau of Prisons or one of our staff.

Now, as the chairman knows, this sometimes initiates correspondence back and forth. We don't have a person who acts in a capacity similar to the contact representative of the Veterans' Administration. However, each inmate in our institution is assigned to a trained counselor or caseworker, and each complaint that he has is handled by this caseworker. We have now the established practice in our institutions that the inmate doesn't even have to put in an interview request and wait 2 or 3 days to be called up. Either at the noon or evening meals these staff people are available to any man from the institution going or coming from the dining hall. In some of our youth institutions we now put such a person right into the cellhouse or the dormitory. We have tried to provide, within our system, both an immediate opportunity to register his complaints within the institution and access to the highest levels of Government.

Mr. KASS. The structures that you referred to within the institution are, of course, commendable and do work in many instances. I am thinking of the instance you raised of prisoners complaining about the quality of food.

If, for example, the quality of the food is good, and one of the food inspectors goes to the prison, inspects the food and then comes back and says the food is good; maybe this is the steam-valve approach we talked about; but isn't there a utility for the external type of review so that the prisoner will know that not only did the Bureau of Prisons say the food is good, but also this ombudsman, or call him "grievance man," has told him the same thing.

Dr. ALEXANDER. Any system or device which would help us manage these highly volatile prisons and institutions and provide an outlet for, many times, these rather emotionally disturbed persons, can be no serious problem to us. Indeed, all of these procedures I described are designed for that purpose. My principal concern is that we not provide so many avenues and channels of communication that too many people