

get involved so that the inmates spend all of their time voicing their complaints and there is a great deal of duplication. I certainly think we have demonstrated through the years that we are anxious to provide proper outlets and competent evaluation of the complaints.

Mr. KASS. This will be actually a statement more than a question. Professor Gellhorn, also in reference to State and local governments primarily, makes the statement, and I quote "nowhere is the need for external examination of grievances greater than American prisons, jails, and other places of detention." Would you care to comment on this more toward the question of State and local?

Dr. ALEXANDER. That is a very sweeping question since it is covered in terms of all jails or prisons in the United States. There are some 3,200 county jails, some 285 major prisons, and untold numbers of detention homes, police lockups, and city workhouses throughout the country. I can only suggest that by our practice, I hope it is clear that I endorse full communication and opportunity for any person held in confinement to enable him to make known whatever his problems may be.

Mr. KASS. And in S. 1195, section 8b says "any letter addressed to the ombudsmen and written by any person in custody on a charge of or after conviction of any offense in the United States shall be immediately forwarded to the ombudsmen from the institution where the writer of the letter is detained." This would not conflict with your present intention?

Dr. ALEXANDER. This is precisely the method we use with Members of Congress and with the courts at present.

Mr. KASS. But would there be a harm in giving it to an additional person who would be able to investigate it?

Dr. ALEXANDER. No; my response suggests that if there is an ombudsman, I would subscribe to that procedure of communicating with him because wherever there is a responsible person in government we follow that practice now.

Mr. KASS. Although you seem to suggest in your statement there is some merit to it, I think that maybe you don't want too many people sticking their fingers into the prison pot so that the prisoners will have constant correspondence, and maybe are deluded in thinking they are going to get assistance when they are not.

Dr. ALEXANDER. I think it is important that those with whom they communicate be responsible officials of government. If the Office of Ombudsman is created, the ombudsman no doubt would be a responsible official of government and would be included in this pattern of communications which we presently follow.

Now, we do not, for example, permit an inmate of a Federal institution to write to the chief food inspector of some far-off State, and many times, they will want to do this. We believe that since they are Federal prisoners, they should communicate with responsible officials of the Federal Government, the Federal courts, or those persons who are responsible. You see, 20,000 inmates sitting around talking in the yard at night can concoct all kinds of ideas, and they might decide that the president of the National Football League really ought to know about the fact that we don't play contact football. If one such case came up, we probably would say, "Well, write the letter." How-