

Repeat Crime Dropping

By KEN ROBISON
Statesman Staff Writer

The rate of repeat crimes by men released from the Idaho State Penitentiary has been greatly reduced in recent years, a 12-year veteran of the penitentiary staff said Monday.

Li Gene Quinn, coordinator for the work-release program, made the comment in response to criticism by Boise Police Chief John Church and Ada County Prosecutor James Risch.

Church said that men who are not rehabilitated are being released, and Risch said convicted murderers are not serving enough time before release.

"I can remember when the recidivism rate was 65 to 80 per cent," said Quinn, "when we kicked a man out of the gate with \$15 in his pocket and no job.

Presently he said the recidivism rate is much lower.

The penitentiary's records division reported that it was 23.06 per cent for the two-year period July 1, 1979 to June 30, 1977.

Quinn said the three-year record of the work-release program is only an 11.7 per cent recidivism record for 280 men who have participated.

Under that program, men take jobs in the community before their release, returning to the penitentiary at night. Some also take on the job training and some attend college or vocational school on the same basis.

The recidivism rate is higher for inmates who don't participate in work releases, on-the-job training or study release. Quinn said about one-third of those released participate in these programs.

"We have placed every one of our work-release participants in jobs," he said. "We've had tremendous cooperation from industry. One has six employed on work release and is asking for six more."

Quinn said inmates have

also been placed out of county jails in other communities. He said there are cooperative agreements with 15 counties.

Of 50 men who have participated in the meat-cutting training program, he said, only six have come back for new offenses or parole violations, a recidivism rate of 7.5 per cent. Ninety eight per cent have followed the meat cutting trade in Idaho and other states.

During the three years the earnings of work-release participants total \$108,119. Of that \$15,722 went for board and room, \$18,000 in taxes and \$1,534 was sent to dependents. The men had an average of \$270 at the time of their release.

Of 77 released after participating in work release in the past year, said Quinn, only seven came back. The 70 who were out represented an annual saving to the taxpayer of more than \$350,000, he said, since it costs \$5,000 to keep a man in prison for a year.

There is also a cost to maintain the families of some of them on welfare, he said.

Concerning the selection of men for release, Quinn said it may not be perfect but "our successes far outnumber our failures." He said he believes the staff does a good job.

"To my knowledge, we've never had a man commit a crime while on work release," he said. "We screen them. Is he ready to try to work his way back into society? What's his attitude? What are his work reports?"

Quinn said work release could be expanded, particularly in other areas of the state. He noted the establishment of a regional jail at Wallace.

"My big problem is a shortage of staff," he said. "I can't get out to cover the state like I should."

Concerning Risch's remarks, Quinn said that murderers released from the

\$3,000 more per year for the same type of work.

"I've been here 12 years. I've seen a lot of good men come and go because they couldn't make it financially. A fellow who sticks it out has to be dedicated. We had a fellow quit yesterday, one of the best officers we had."

Quinn said he believes the penitentiary has a good staff, with many men who could go to any state and work in similar positions for more pay.



GENE QUINN
... fewer repeaters



2 WAY
HANG OR STAND