

It's O.K., Supervision Enthusiasts:

You Can Come Home Now! *Harold B. Wooten*

**A Challenge Answered:
Perception of the Prob**

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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**Private Enterprise in Ins
A Call for Caution ..**

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*F. Travis III
Latessa, Jr.
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**Impact of a Job Trainin
CETA-Qualified Prob:**

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B. Anderson

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This Issue in Brief

It's O.K. Supervision Enthusiasts: You Can Come Home Now!—Author Harold B. Wooten asserts that probation systems have lost interest in supervision of offenders; instead, trendy practices which are best described as elaborate monitoring mechanisms have taken the day. But, the author contends, before we rally the supervision loyalists, we should first admit that changing self-defeating behavior of offenders has never been significantly reinforced as a value in probation. The author cites historical reasons for this failure, identifies current barriers to effective supervision of offenders, and offers recommendations to various participants in the process to address effective supervision of offenders.

A Challenge Answered: Changes in the Perception of the Probation Task.—Author Richard Gray responds to the point of view expressed in this issue's article by Harold B. Wooten. Do probation officers actually help probationers or are they primarily paper pushers or law enforcers? According to the author, past experience and current job orientation have caused a change in probation officers' perspective of their job. The author discusses the sociology of knowledge in addressing shifts in task-related perspectives.

Private Enterprise and Institutional Corrections: A Call for Caution.—The current crisis of overcrowding in American prisons and jails, coupled with reduced resources available for corrections, has led to the development of innovative responses to the problems of institutional corrections. One such innovation which has been proposed and is receiving increasing support is the idea of "privatizing" institutional corrections. Authors Lawrence F. Travis III, Edward J. Latessa, Jr., and Gennaro F. Vito examine the movement to contract with private firms for the construction and operation of prisons and jails. Focusing on legal, cost, and accountability issues in such contracting, the authors conclude with a call for caution in the movement to employ private companies for the provision of this governmental service.

Impact of a Job Training Program on CETA-Qualified Offenders.—In this article, author Dennis B. Anderson reports on research—conducted in an industrial

midwestern city during 1984—of a job training program for CETA-qualified probationers. Controlling for self-selection and risk factors, the study compared these pro-

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Conducting Effective Meetings

BY CAROLYN SUE BROWN and GLEN PLUTSCHAK

Administrative Officers, Maryland Division of Parole and Probation

DO YOU agree or disagree with the following statements? Be honest!

- (1) The meetings I attend are necessary.
- (2) The meetings I attend begin on time.
- (3) The leader effectively controls the meeting and all participants contribute.
- (4) Clear, concise minutes are kept of the meeting.
- (5) When I leave the meeting, I have a clear understanding of my responsibilities.

If you find that you rarely agree with the above statements, you are more than likely wasting valuable time. Unfortunately, many of us in the criminal justice system spend enormous amounts of time in meetings. To compound matters even more, upper-level managers and administrators spend an even greater proportion of their time in meetings than lower line staff. Many administrators spend 50 percent of their time in meetings, which, if wasted, cuts into their ability to manage their organization.¹

The importance of meetings, however, is well established, and good meetings can produce a more effective organization. Meetings can help organizations to solve problems, make decisions, plan, evaluate, share information, train, and improve morale. Why then do most of us generally want to avoid meetings or find ourselves wasting time in them? The reasons are many, but there are things that managers and leaders can do to improve their meetings.

Objectives

The leader must first set the objectives for the meeting in advance. If there are no objectives or purposes, then there should be no meeting. *Too many organizations meet to meet.* Don't be one of them!

Participants

The value and success of any meeting is threatened if too many people are present. As Robert Townsend of *Up the Organization* says, "Generally speaking, the fewer (the participants) the better."² Between 4 and 7 people is ideal; 10 is tolerable, and 12 is the outside limit. Keeping in mind the extent to which you have control over the members who can come to your meeting, use the following rules when selecting participants:

- (1) Include anyone whom the meeting may affect positively or negatively. This will help defuse later morale problems when staff members feel that policies were forced upon them with no explanation or opportunity for input.
- (2) Include those who must be included because of their title or for "political reasons." Be sure to give these people the chance to decline coming to the meeting, as many times they would rather not attend anyway.
- (3) Select the best expert when inviting guest speakers or when covering new procedures. If your organization is changing or revising forms, for example, choose someone from the forms committee or someone who worked on the revisions to be present at the meeting.
- (4) Always try to include those "decisionmakers" who have the potential to directly resolve a problem or goal that will be discussed in the meeting.

Preparation

Preparation is in many ways the key to an effective meeting. When planning a meeting, consider four elements:

- (1) *Time factors* — Very little is achieved in a business meeting after 2 hours.³ One and a half hours is usually enough.
- (2) *Agenda* — The agenda is the most important piece of paper that will be used in the meeting. Properly managed, it has the potential to speed up and clarify a meeting. The main problem with agendas is that they are unnecessarily vague and brief. An agenda item such as "Office Communica-

¹ Michael Doyle and David Strauss, *How to Make Meetings Work*. Washington, D.C.: Wydin Books, 1976, p. 4.

² Robert Townsend, *Up the Organization*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970, p. 107.

³ B.Y. Auger, *How to Run More Effective Business Meetings*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964, p. 32.

tions" could mean anything from computers, to new telephone installations, to the routing of inner-office memos. Be as specific as possible. It is better to give too much rather than too little information on the agenda.⁴ Also, circulate the agenda and necessary background information 2 or 3 days before the meeting. Don't circulate it too far in advance or the less organized members will forget to bring it or will lose it. When writing the agenda, keep in mind that the beginning of the meeting is more lively and creative than the end. If an agenda item needs a great deal of mental energy, place it earlier on the agenda. Agenda items should also be placed in proper sequence, combining those items that are related.

- (3) *Location* — The setting of a meeting can have a positive or negative effect on the participants. The room should be comfortable and free from interruptions. Larger, spread out organizations could use a central meeting site or perhaps rotate the meeting sites so that a few participants will not always travel great distances. Be sure that all equipment needed for the meeting is available.
- (4) *Costs* — Meetings cost money—there is no way around this fact. Seven to 15 percent of any organization's budget is spent directly or indirectly on meetings.⁵ Hidden costs of meetings include "down time" for staff, salaries for those present, mileage costs, as well as the costs of damaged morale if the meeting goes badly. While the losses are not itemized on the agency's budget statement, they are there nevertheless.

There are times when memos/letters, telephone calls, personal visits, or delegation of duties can effectively take the place of a meeting. Finally, if a need to have a meeting disappears, cancel the meeting!

Atmosphere

All meetings have an atmosphere—unfortunately the atmosphere of many is bad. One way to improve the atmosphere is to *begin all meetings on time*. Late comers will soon learn to be on time and punctual staff members will not be penalized by having to wait for the meeting to start.

⁴ *Meeting Bloody Meetings* (Xicom, Inc., 1974), an excellent training film in which an inefficient chairman dreams he is taken to court for conducting ineffective meetings. From the evidence presented, the viewer learns to prepare for meetings, inform others of meetings, plan the sequence of meetings, control the discussion during meetings, and record decisions made at meetings.

⁵ Doyle and Strauss, p. 4.

⁶ Auger, p. 60.

Another method in improving the atmosphere at a meeting is to give out good news in the beginning of the meeting. Also keep in mind that the group leader has a major impact on and a responsibility for setting the atmosphere.⁶ We'll talk more about this principle later when "leadership" is discussed.

The atmosphere in a meeting can also be improved by sticking to the agenda items as closely as possible. This will avoid leaving the more important agenda items until the end of the meeting when there is no time left to discuss them. *Finally, end the meeting on time.*

Followup

Minutes should be recorded while the meeting is in progress and later distributed to all who attended the meeting. Good minutes include the following:

- (1) Time, date, and location of the meeting.
- (2) The names of all present and absent.
- (3) All agenda items discussed and all decisions reached. If you agree on some action, record and underline the name of the person responsible for the assignment.
- (4) The time at which the meeting ended.
- (5) The date, time, and place of the next meeting.

Leadership

So far, this article has concentrated on what the leader of a meeting needs to do before and after a meeting. Another major responsibility is to actually run the meeting. As stated earlier, it is important to follow the agenda. The agenda will keep the meeting running smoothly and help control each topic area. The leader remembers not to dwell on trivial items. He or she gets the less important things out of the way quickly and spends time on the pressing problems or goals.

When time is wasted during the meeting, it is costly because not only is the leader's time wasted but the time of everyone else as well. Time is often wasted because of the interaction among group members and the leader. There are certain individual personalities that emerge in meetings which waste time and limit productivity. The leader needs to control the group's interaction while focusing on the purpose of the meeting. The following personalities may be disruptive, and the leader is responsible for recognizing and controlling them:

- (1) *Rambler* — This person talks about everything except the subject and uses far-fetched analogies. When the person stops for breath, thank him or her, refocus attention by restating the relevant points, and move on. As a last resort, look at your

watch and in a friendly manner indicate that the group needs to get back on the subject.

- (2) *Personality Clash* — When two or more members clash, they can divide your group into factions. It's important to emphasize points of agreement and minimize points of disagreement. Draw attention to objectives or bring a more neutral member into the discussion. If this fails, frankly ask that personalities be omitted.
- (3) *Obstinate* — This person just won't budge, hasn't seen your point, and is stopping the progress of the meeting. Throw the member's view to the group and it straighten him or her out. Say that time is short and you'll be glad to discuss his or her view later and ask that the group's viewpoint be accepted for the moment.
- (4) *Won't Talk* — This member may be bored, indifferent, timid and insecure, or feel superior. Your action will depend on what is motivating the person. You can usually arouse his or her interest by asking for an opinion in a supportive manner.
- (5) *Overly Talkative* — He or she may also be exceptionally well-informed and anxious to show it or just naturally wordy. Don't be embarrassing or sarcastic. Ask some difficult questions or interrupt with, "That's an interesting point. Let's see what the group thinks of it." In general, let the group take care of overly talkative members as much as possible.
- (6) *Side Conversation* — The conversation may be personal, may be related to the topic, or totally unrelated to the topic. Side conversations are distracting to you and the rest of the group. Don't embarrass those members talking. You may, though, call one by name and ask an easy question or for an opinion on the last remark made.
- (7) *Inarticulate* — This member has ideas but lacks the ability to put thoughts into proper words and

needs help to clarify his or her ideas. Don't say, "What you mean is this." Rather, say, "Let me repeat that," and then put the thought into better language. Twist this group member's ideas as little as possible but have them make sense.

- (8) *Definitely Wrong* — Sometimes a member comes up with a comment that is obviously incorrect. Say, "I can see how you feel" or "That's one way of looking at it" or "I see your point and. . . ." This must be handled delicately.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to provide ideas on setting objectives and preparing for a meeting. One's style of leadership and communication will also affect the group's interaction and productivity. The Xerox Corporation has summarized the rules of conducting effective meetings through the following *Ten Commandments for Meetings*:

- (1) Thou shalt not meet if the matter can be resolved by other means.
- (2) Thou shalt make the purpose of each meeting known to the participants.
- (3) Thou shalt invite to the meeting only those participants whose presence is needed.
- (4) Thou shalt start at the time announced.
- (5) Thou shalt stop when it is meet and right so to do.
- (6) Thou shalt not run beyond the scheduled time for ending the meeting.
- (7) Thou shouldst organize the agenda items in proper sequence—combining those that are related.
- (8) Thou shalt keep minutes of all meetings.
- (9) Thou shouldst prepare in advance for the meeting as not to waste everyone's time.
- (10) Fear not to cancel if need disappears.⁷

⁷ Reprinted with permission of Xerox Corporation.

News of the Future

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN CORRECTIONS

BY JOHN P. CONRAD

Davis, California

THE LIFER'S LIFE

A WEEK before sitting down to compose this contribution to the enlightenment or befuddlement of penology, I toured Alabama's Holman Prison, the maximum custody "facility" of that State's vastly improved penal apparatus. For the last couple of years I have been a member of a committee appointed by the Federal District Court to observe and assist in the implementation of a decree requiring Alabama to make major and much needed changes in its prison system. It is a pleasure to report that the changes that have been made during the last 10 years have elevated the system from a condition of squalid barbarism to a state of affairs that would not shame a state far more affluent. No government will preen itself on the excellence of its prisons and jails, but what Alabama has accomplished in less than a decade should embarrass states with far more resources and fewer problems.

But this is not a column about Alabama. In this essay I want to consider the management of lifers. In doing so, I'll extend the tour far from the heart of Dixie. At Holman, I asked to be shown the administrative segregation unit, never the showplace of any prison. I've seen much worse, but life in "admin seg" at Holman is basic. Three meals a day, a half-hour in the exercise yard, and the rest of the time is cell-time, to be spent as the prisoner pleases. Passing the cells, I tried to engage those men who were awake in casual, aimless conversation. I didn't learn much except that they were mostly resigned to a condition that they felt helpless to improve.

What impressed me most was passing the time of day with a handsome black man, friendly and alert, who told me that he was 25 years old, had never done time before, and had been sentenced to Life Without Possibility of Parole. He had only one complaint. He didn't see why it was necessary for him to be locked up in solitary confinement for 90 days, as Alabama prison rules require for men in his unfortunate situation when they first arrive.

There are a lot of such men in the Alabama prisons. In December 1984 there were 285 of them, 277 serving sentences for "crimes against property," otherwise not differentiated in the data. By last August the total had grown to 323, with 313 committed for property offenses. The percentages are small but rising— 2.7 percent in December, 3.0 percent in August. Assuming that all 323 men live in Alabama prisons for 25 years (surely a gross underestimate; most of them are young, and not many will ever be released), the cost to the Alabama taxpayers, at the present rate of \$9,673 per prisoner-year, will be \$78,109,475. That does not count the steady increase of this indigestible intake, averaging nearly 6 per month this year, nor does it allow for the steady increase in the costs of imprisonment.

There must be a better way to deal with these serious offenders. Alabama is not unique by any means. The hardening line of criminal justice has produced a large and increasing national population of men and a few women who have little or no hope of ever leaving prison alive. The cost of keeping them locked up is small compared to the total cost of our prison establishment, but it grows. As the years go by it

will grow faster. Whatever the aims may be in imposing this sentence on offenders, I think they can be achieved at less cost to the state and less cost in ruined lives. I have thought so for a good many years, and now I have some data to support my belief.

THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE NOOSE

I found these data in some unprecedented research just published by two English researchers who have studied the careers of lifers released on parole since the abolition of the death penalty in 1965 and the substitution of the life sentence for what was formerly capital murder. In their report, *Licensed to Live*, J. B. Coker and J. P. Martin have laid to rest most of the qualms about the recidivism of murderers that the retentionists in the capital punishment debate have propounded as arguments in favor of the continued employment of the hangman.¹

The Murder Act of 1965 abolished capital punishment in Great Britain. In its place, the law required mandatory life sentences for all persons convicted of murder. If the judges thought the crime was serious enough, persons convicted of certain other crimes against the person might also be committed for life. But a life sentence was indeterminate and subject to review and release "on licence" by a Parole Board created in 1967.² Some consideration was given to limiting the Parole Board to releasing only those murderers who had served some minimum period of time to be recommended by the sentencing judge. This idea was rejected. It was agreed that the proper time could not be predicted years in advance. Thus the Parole Board could release a lifer on licence whenever it pleased, but the average time served before release has been about 9 years— not taking into account a substantial number of lifers who may never be turned out.

The crucial element in this new system has been the probation service. From the first it was agreed that if lifers were to be released they had to be under supervision for a considerable period of time— 3 years or more— after they emerged from prison. Supervision was delegated to the probation service, which has been significantly different in function, organization, and objectives from the probation departments prevailing in this country. Probation rules specify that officers are to "advise, assist, and befriend" offenders. Some may be punitive in approach to their clients, but generally the surveillance and arrest of parolees and probationers has been left to the police.

The management of lifers gave probation officers unfamiliar responsibilities. Some of them were uneasy about accepting this new role; inevitably a new atrocity committed by a released killer would be blamed on some inadequacy of supervision— the officer's lack of foresight, his failure to call on a parolee at a crucial moment in time, or his inability to see the significance of clues to a change in the parolee's behavior. These apprehensions were by no means imaginary. The "cheap" London press looks for sensations wherever it can find them, and the prison and probation services are fair game. Headlines like these would give any criminal justice professional some pause:

HUSH-UP ON MAN WHO WAS FREED TO KILL AGAIN

Daily Telegraph, 15 February 1977

WHY WAS KILLER DAD SET FREE?

The Sun, 17 May 1979

¹ J. B. Coker and J. P. Martin, *Licensed to Live*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

² The composition of the Parole Board is significantly different from American specifications. The British law requires that one member must be a High Court, (appellate) judge, another must be a psychiatrist, and a third must be a "criminologist-sociologist, a person appearing to the Secretary of State to have made a study of the causes of delinquency or the treatment of offenders." Usually the Board has contained more than one of the required specialists, as well as a considerable number of other informed persons, such as police officers and social workers, as well as lay persons without special qualifications. The large Board works in panels. For consideration of life prisoners, the panel will always include a judge and a psychiatrist.

THESE DANGEROUS MEN SET FREE TO KILL AGAIN

Daily Mail, 12 June 1981³

Some probation officers, accustomed as they were to rather tractable shoplifters and auto thieves, worried about supervising men and women who had committed the most heinous of crimes. About three-quarters of those interviewed told the researchers that they had initially negative reactions when assigned to the supervision of a lifer:

"... great apprehension, anxiety and worry... and what the press would do if anything went wrong."

"... one is concerned about one's personal safety."

"... shock and horror at the allocation."⁴

Others were pleased at the challenge presented by this new assignment—one officer replying that he thought it was an accolade and another saying that he thought it was a sign of his superiors' confidence in him.⁵

All life parolees are subject to recall for the remainder of their lives, whether still under supervision or not. Probation officers are responsible for submitting recommendations for recall for any behavior seriously inconsistent with the conditions on which parole was granted.

This was the simple and familiar structure of supervision. The only really significant difference from American parole practice is that the Home Office Probation Service had become responsible for the entire gamut of supervision of offenders in the community; any probation officer might now find that his or her caseload consisted of fairly harmless misdemeanants, experienced recidivists, and sometimes a sensational murderer of some years back. Federal probation officers manage somewhat similar caseloads; most states make an administrative differentiation between probation and parole.

THE RESEARCH

The dramatic change from capital punishment to life sentences was an opportunity not to be missed, and Coker and Martin leapt at it.⁶ They combed the Home Office data banks for findings about life parolees, they interviewed probation officers, and they interviewed a large number of the parolees themselves. There are a lot of differences between English criminals and American criminals—much less violence, very few guns available to the ordinary thug, and a race problem that is less obtrusive than in this country. But a life sentence is a life sentence in both countries, and murder is the same offense. It's worthwhile to look at the Coker-Martin findings for what they can tell us about a problem that confronts us more insistently than it does the British criminal justice system. Perhaps the American criminological research establishment can be inspired to undertake similar studies that might, in turn, provide that young man in Alabama administrative segregation with reason to hope for daylight.

Coker and Martin decided to investigate two cohorts. Cohort A consisted of 64 men⁷ released during the years 1960-64. These would be lifers who had escaped the gallows, either through an act of clemency or because of the sentence of the court. Cohort B comprised all lifers released during 1970-74, a total of 175.

There were two important differences between the cohorts. Seventy-five percent of the men in Cohort A had been sentenced to death and had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment. Only 9 percent of Cohort B had originally been sentenced to death. All the men in Cohort B had been released to supervision under "stringent conditions," but 45 percent of Cohort A had been released without supervision and the remainder was subject to much looser supervision than was imposed

on everybody in Cohort B. It is important to keep in mind that although supervision might end after only 3 years (but could be extended if the Parole Board thinks it necessary), all lifers are always subject to recall for breach of the conditions of parole.

The collection of data took place in 1979, allowing for a minimum followup period of 5 and a maximum of 19 years. As conscientious researchers, Coker and Martin warn that their samples are not really representative of the lifer population in British prisons. In the first place, the two cohorts include only those men whom the Parole Board thought it safe to release; the study did not undertake to examine the men not released, and it was assumed that they were a risky lot. In the second place, men arriving in the system after 1974 may include more dedicated criminals; the authors mention a separate study, showing that 80 percent of the offenders received in 1979 had previous convictions, including 40 percent convicted of violent or sexual crimes. Only 62 percent of the Coker-Martin cohorts had previous convictions of any kind, including 30 percent convicted of violent offenses.⁸

THE FINDINGS

The most important question was, of course, *How many of these people committed new offenses?* The answer for the consolidated cohorts is that 65 of the total of 239 parolees committed an offense of some kind, of which 15 were for serious violence and 10 for serious non-violence. The 15 violent offenses included two murders, one of them committed in a mental hospital to which one of the parolees had been committed. All of them were returned to prison, two without further criminal proceedings and the rest with new sentences ranging from 3 months to life for the two who committed new homicides. The serious nonviolent offenders were all sentenced to new terms ranging from 14 days to 18 months. About half of the new offenses were committed within 2 years after release.

Out of their review of the statistics collected, their case by case study of the files, and their interviews with parolees and probation officers, Coker and Martin arrived at some further conclusions:

- (1) There is little evidence that the strict supervision imposed on lifers makes a significant difference in the outcome of their return to the community. Those men who committed new offenses were neither deterred by the condition of supervision nor did they present warning clues of impending violations that were apparent to their supervisors.
- (2) Relationships between probation officers and parolees were generally friendly. I was struck by references to adjournment of official contacts between officer and offender for drinks in a neighborhood pub. Nevertheless, the interviewer elicited considerable sentiment to the effect that parolees didn't entirely trust their supervisors. "It was too risky to reveal... any inability to cope or anxieties about doing so."⁹
- (3) The prevalent belief that long periods of incarceration are destructive of the prisoner's ability to manage freedom is not supported by this study. The researcher commented after his long period of interviewing that "lifers were indistinguishable from other members of the public... The majority were different only in respect of the offence, which did not necessarily signify personality disorder."
- (4) While the social work belief in the efficacy of supervision in resettling offenders and preventing recidivism is not upheld by this study, there was no doubt in the minds of the authors that supervision was absolutely necessary politically. As one offender commented, "the public (does) not want to think of a released murderer walking about on the loose."

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The Coker-Martin findings seem reassuring. A recidivism incidence amounting to 25 serious offenses committed by 239 very serious offenders during an unusually long followup period would seem to be reassuring enough for the most apprehensive Briton. However, it was not good enough for the Conservative backbenchers in the present House of Commons. They urged an amendment to the legislation requiring the Parole Board not to release any lifer in less than 20 years. There was finally a compromise: The Home Secretary agreed to the 20-year minimum for all murderers of police or prison officers, terrorist

³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁶ Dramatic indeed. In 1957 the entire population of lifers in the prisons of England and Wales was 122. At the end of 1984 there were 1,978 lifers, an increase of 1,521 percent.

⁷ No women. There were too few women lifers, and their careers seemed to be generally too different from those of the men and therefore would require a separate analysis which was too complicated to undertake.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 232-236.

murderers, sexual or sadistic murderers of children, and murderers by firearms in the course of a robbery. Coker and Martin express their disapproval of this modification. I don't agree. Although a Parole Board should have reasonable latitude in coming to its decisions, the categories of murderers to be excepted from eligibility for early parole are those which reasonably call for strict deterrence and vigorous condemnation of the crimes committed. Certainly the Home Secretary made a politically necessary amendment to his rules.

FINALLY

Why don't we have studies of this kind in the United States? Our data banks are now overflowing with the needed statistics. Criminologists competent to undertake such research are to be found in practically every major university. Instead of further burrowing into the "root

causes of crime," and other diversions requiring only some proficiency in statistical esoterica, we should be getting more studies which give us a basis for understanding what's going on. Anyone who has ever done field research of the kind reported here knows how time-consuming, frustrating, and often boring and unproductive it can be. But it has to be done, and it's no credit to American social science that we have to look to Britain for studies as essential as this to the safety of the public, the economics of criminal justice administration, and fairness to the offender and his victim alike. We need to know much more than we do now about those 323 Alabamians now doing Life Without Possibility of Parole. Research of the Coker-Martin variety would enlighten us about the decisionmaking that sent them to the Holman Prison, as well as about practical alternatives to that sentencing policy.