

# INSIGHT

into corrections

Illinois  
Department  
of Corrections

July ♦ 1991



An artist at the Danville Correctional Center silk screening shop works on a design for a client.

## CORRECTIONAL INDUSTRIES

shines up  
its image

AUG 5 1991

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# Quarterly News Notes

## NEW POPULATION PROJECTIONS RELEASED

Adult prison population projections released May 15 by the Department indicate the number of inmates housed in Illinois prisons will almost double to just under 55,000 by FY2000. The projections show an increase of more than 4,000 through FY1992, growing to 32,778 by June 30, 1992.

The report examines alternatives which could reduce the prison population increase. These include increasing the number of boot camps, shortening terms of parole and providing an alternative sentencing structure.

"The Department of Corrections has said over the past several years that the state cannot build its way out of this predicament. Illinois simply doesn't have the \$1.4 billion to build 26 prisons, or the extra \$442 million needed to operate the new facilities annually," said Corrections Director Howard A. Peters III. □

## EDGAR ANNOUNCES NEW PAROLE INITIATIVE

On May 8, Governor Jim Edgar unveiled a major reform initiative designed to prevent parolees from becoming repeat offenders. PRESTART marks a major change in policy toward released offenders, moving away from an ineffective program intended to monitor the behavior of all parolees, to a program which will focus on crime prevention through the provision of counseling and transitional assistance to parolees during the time they are most likely to return to crime.

The initiative will establish specialized units to focus on the most likely drug abusers among parolees. Regular drug testing will be a key component in the monitoring of the high-risk parolees. Sixty-one parole officers will be assigned to community services centers to do intensive follow-ups with parolees, working to assure that educational, vocational and treatment plans developed for a parolee before release are carried out. The pre-release program throughout the prison system will be beefed up to help the parolees prepare for reintegration into society. The budget for the program is \$3.6 million in the first year including a \$2 million federal grant. □

## FIRST MINORITY ADMINISTRATORS NAMED

Governor Jim Edgar announced the appointment of the first Hispanic warden of an Illinois prison on April 25. Gerardo Acevedo, 37, was named warden of the minimum security East Moline Correctional Center by Corrections Director Howard A. Peters III. Acevedo has been unit superintendent at the Joliet Correctional Center since May, 1990. He began his corrections career as a corrections residence counselor at a Chicago work release center in 1978.

On April 26, Director Peters announced the appointment of the first woman deputy director of an operational division in the history of the agency. Peters named Marjorie L. Brown, 35, to head the Community Services Division which includes work release operations and adult parole. Brown had been warden of the Robinson Correctional Center since before it opened on Jan. 16, 1991.

Director Peters also appointed Richard B. Gramley, 46, as warden of the 2,000 inmate maximum security Pontiac Correctional Center April 10. Gramley has been warden at the Dixon Correctional Center since August, 1986, and served as warden at the East Moline Correctional Center since its opening in January, 1980. □

## INDUSTRIES ETHANOL PLANT WINS NATIONAL AWARD

The Vienna Correctional Center has received a National Environmental Achievement Award for its efforts to produce ethanol in an economically viable manner for small scale agribusiness. With help from Southeastern Illinois College and numerous state and federal agencies, the prison has established a unique ethanol production facility. Director Peters accepted the award in Washington D.C. from Renew America, a foundation representing 28 environmental groups. Peters pledged that the Department will continue to help people find answers to environmental problems through Correctional Industries programs.

The Vienna agricultural research project produces a clean, renewable alcohol fuel that may be blended with gasoline. Byproducts of the ethanol manufacturing process are used as feed in a livestock and aquaculture program on the prison farm. □

# INSIGHT

into corrections

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Howard A. Peters III, Director  
Illinois Department of Corrections

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Chief Deputy Director

Chief Public Information Officer  
Nic Howell

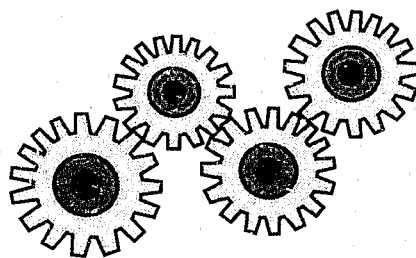
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# CORRECTIONAL INDUSTRIES



## Increasing quality as the business continues to grow

**S**uperintendent of Illinois Correctional Industries Ron Parish is clearly excited about his job and the future of his operation—and for good reason ♦ Illinois Correctional Industries (ICI) has grown from \$4 million in sales during FY80 to a projected \$34 million in FY91, and business continues to boom ♦

by Rita Crifasi



ICI Superintendent Ron Parish

garbage recycling and eyeglass manufacturing, all with the finesse and optimism of a man with a mission. Even as he talks about programs as unconnected as milk processing is to telemarketing, you sense a structure linking them to a shared goal.

Parish readily admits that his mission is to change the image of Illinois Correctional Industries to reflect both the improved quality of goods made and the new direction its programs are taking. Parish focuses his words on a non-stop passion to create more jobs for inmates and save the taxpayers money through one of the nation's top prison industry programs.

"Overall, there are many misconceptions of what we do in Correctional

Correctional Industries jobs are nearly recession proof. The staggering number of inmates entering the system and the unlikely event that any prison will close for lack of clientele indicates continued heavy demand from its biggest customer—the Illinois Department of Corrections.

The word animated comes to mind when describing Parish. With a flourish of hand gestures, he goes from describing one Industries program to another with an enthusiasm undaunted by the complexities of his job. "We make brushes, wax, t-shirts and hamburgers," he says. And then he switches gears to talk about

Workers in the optical lab at the Dixon Correctional Center take a minute out of their busy day to pose for this group photo. Lab supervisor John Gillam, lower right in suit, says the operation is producing about 120,000 pairs of glasses annually.

Equipment for the operation cost about \$300,000 in 1986 when the lab began operation. Total savings to the State in providing eyeglasses to Public Aid recipients and prison inmates has reached \$3.5 million.



Industries, and why we operate such a diverse number of programs. This is something I spend a great deal of time explaining to people across the State. Our mission is growing and changing every day," he said.

According to Parish, the 700% growth in sales over the past decade is the result of a combination of factors—more aggressive marketing techniques, innovative programs and improved products, particularly the furniture ICI manufactures, and above all else, pride in workmanship by both inmate workers and Industries employees who supervise them.

"I worked for the Department of Public Aid for 14 years and would never buy ICI furniture because of its poor quality," said Parish. "If I were in the same position today, I wouldn't hesitate to buy it because now Industries furniture compares favorably with any other furniture in our price range."

## A new direction

The reason for the turnaround in quality stems from an intensified focus on quality control and a "no excuses" approach to faulty merchandise.

"Industries superintendents have been given new direction and have changed their reaction to complaints about the furniture. If a complaint is received, we don't challenge it. The merchandise is either repaired or replaced to the customer's satisfaction—period," said Parish.

▼

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But, furniture is only one small part of the products and services ICI offers. Twenty-six Industries programs currently employ nearly 1,300 inmates. Nineteen adult prisons offer 82 products and services through the Industries program. The expansion in services has been accompanied by a gradual shift in direction reflecting the changing sociological and environmental issues of the times.

The Unified Code of Corrections, Chapter 38, authorizes the Department to employ inmates at useful work. According to the statute:

*"Such employment shall equip such persons with marketable skills, promote habits of work and responsibility and contribute to the expense of the employment program and the committed person's cost of incarceration... It may also employ committed persons (in)...the conservation of natural resources of the State, anti-pollution or environmental control projects..."*

The law authorizes the Department to train and employ inmates in Industries for the production of materials for resale to authorized purchasers including all State and Federal agencies and not-for-profit corporations.

Correctional Industries' FY91 appropriation totals \$34,263,300. Due to budget constraints, the FY92 budget is expected to remain at last year's level. This computes to doing more with less and being innovative with existing resources.

Pay for the inmates who work Industries jobs is generated from the slim profits made by the organization. The Correctional Industries revolving fund gives ICI authorization to spend the money it earns and to cash checks for payment of products sold. If ICI profits are used to pay inmates, purchase new machinery and supplies, then that is less money taken from the State's General Revenue Fund—a source of money already struggling under the burden of an ever increasing prison population.

## Looking at the myths

"For all its success, Correctional Industries remains somewhat of a mystery to the average citizen. The old stereotype of sweatshops with inmates begrudgingly stamping out license plates is history. Today's Industries shops are clean and well-lit, though most remain without air conditioning. The inmates voluntarily sign up for Industries jobs and are proud of their work.

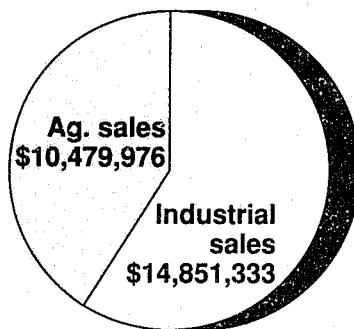
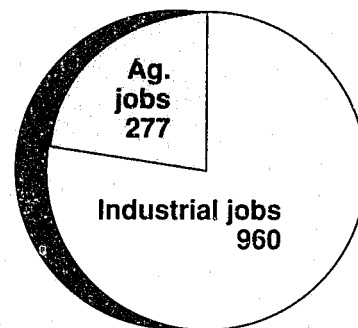
"The Industries programs are set up to work with inmates who may not have had a job before, who don't understand the work ethic and what it means. Inmates need to know that if they work hard, their efforts will be rewarded," Parish said. "Building self-esteem is not something you can assign a dollar amount to."

Production facilities behind prison walls, or "factories behind fences," became a reality with the creation of Correctional Industries in 1904. At that time, few programs were offered and they focused mainly on the agricultural side of the operation. Although agriculture is still a major part of the business, other programs have been initiated in response to both the needs of the prison system and the needs of society at large.

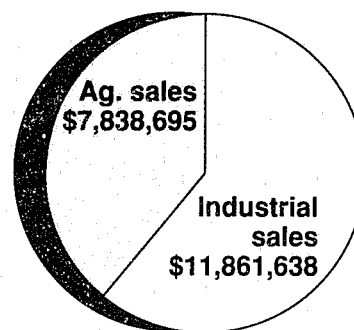
As a part of State government, ICI is committed to using its workers and resources to help solve environmental problems. This is reflected by the asbestos abatement program started more than three years ago, as well as a pilot project for solid waste recycling and another for processing millions of worn-out tires from cars and trucks.

Concerns by the nutrition and medical staff within the Department over the composition of inmate diets has been taken into account by Industries officials. ICI's attention to health concerns is demonstrated by the use of fewer preservatives in the bread made at the Canton bakery and less

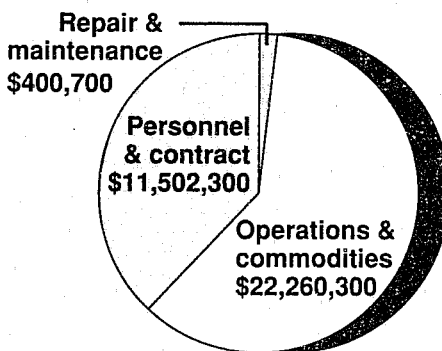
## Distribution of inmate work assignments between agricultural and industrial operations in Fiscal Year 1991



## Year-to-date revenue comparison between agricultural and industrial operations (through Third Quarter)



## Comparison between agricultural and industrial operations from this time last year (Third Quarter FY1990)



## Breakdown of expenses by personnel costs, operating costs and repair and maintenance costs for FY1991

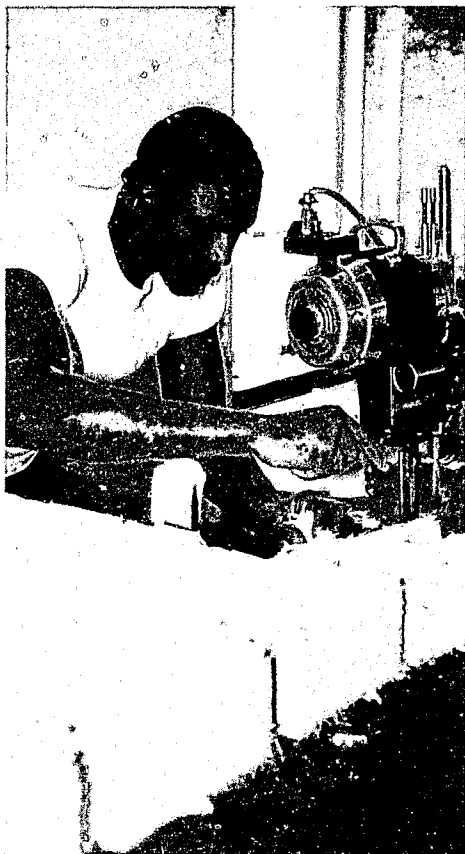
fat in the meat products it sells than is generally offered commercially.

Additionally, programs such as telemarketing, microfilming and data entry have evolved with the advancement of technology and social needs to keep inmate skills up-to-par with the kinds of jobs available in free society today.

There is a market for the skills of inmates who have held Industries jobs such as dry cleaning, vehicle repair, garment making, laundry services, silk screening, meat processing and the manu-

facturing of eyeglasses. Likewise, the on-the-job training for inmates in the asbestos abatement program is invaluable in qualifying for asbestos worker positions on the outside that pay as much as \$20 an hour.

"Which type of ex-offender would you rather have living in your community?" asked Parish. "Do you prefer a person with no marketable skills who sits at home idle with no job and nothing to do except think about how they are going to come up with some money. Or, would you rather have one who is steadily employed



An inmate cuts patterns from fabric at the garment shop at Menard. Shirts, socks, underwear and other clothing are manufactured for use in the prison system and other State agencies.

at a skill they learned in prison—supporting themselves and their family?

"Another common belief is that inmates should be forced into hard labor and get no money for their efforts. People rationalize that inmates can only produce junk and that they don't deserve any compensation because they committed a crime," Parish said.

So, why pay inmates to work? The State provides them with shelter and three meals a day. They get free medical attention and educational opportunities. Why should inmates get paid for working in prison when people out on the streets can't earn enough money to put their kids through college?

The reasons for inmate programs and compensation reflect the need to keep inmates busy and out of trouble, to allow them to save money for their release, and to develop the self-esteem and skills needed for a successful return to society.

Most inmates have a job to do in prison. They either go to school, work for the prison or have Industries jobs. If they work for the prison, they perform jobs such as porters, janitors, dietary work and yard work, paid for by taxpayers at a rate of about \$15 a month. "On the other hand," Parish points out, "Industries has an ethanol plant and a book bindery. We make cardboard boxes, mattresses, refinish furniture, and have a telemarketing program. We raise cattle and farm. A lot of the jobs are of a more technical nature that give inmates the skills necessary to find a decent job on the outside.

"First of all, people tend to do what we expect them to do—good or bad. If inmates are given responsibility and encouragement toward fulfilling a task, they will more than likely be successful at it, feel better about themselves for having attained a goal and carry that feeling with them into the outside workforce.

"It's one thing to be incarcerated," said Parish, "but, we have to keep in mind that these are people who are paying their debt to society. What good does it do to browbeat somebody and strip them of any hope for their future? Industries programs strive to do just the opposite."

Pay for Industries jobs ranges from 50¢ an hour for workers at an ethanol plant on the grounds of Vienna Correctional Center to \$3 an hour for asbestos removal workers. ICI is set up to replicate the free market with a competitive wage structure based on the skill required to do a job and individual performance.

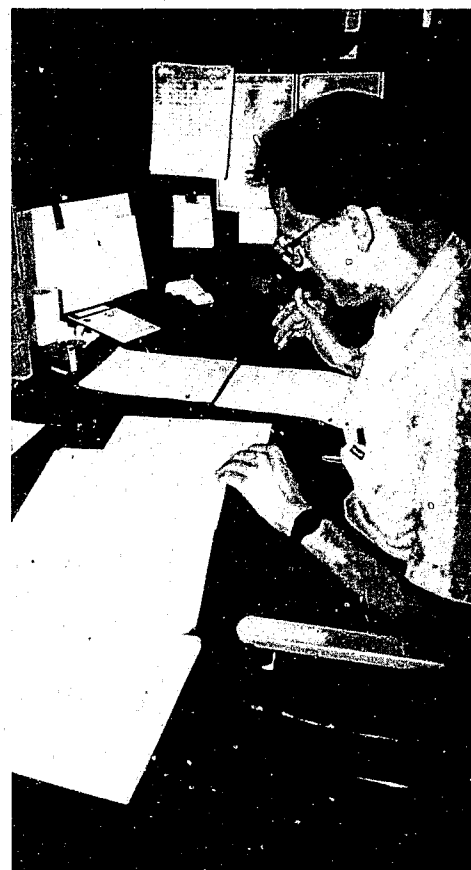
"Garment factory workers do piece work. If they do a good job and produce, they get paid for it. They start seeing what it really means to be paid for your skills, and I think that's imperative in instilling that all-important work ethic. If an inmate is released and finds gainful employment with a skill he learned in prison, then maybe he won't be back. That's the ultimate reason for Industries programs, not the money to be made on inmate labor," said Parish.

The reason Industries workers are compensated differently reflecting the amount of skill needed to perform specific jobs has another purpose. Some of the much sought after, higher paying jobs such as asbestos removal and jobs in the optical lab at Dixon Correctional Center are seen as valuable administrative tools. They are something to work for as well as something to be taken away. This helps corrections officials reinforce positive behavior.

This very important aspect of Industries jobs can best be explained by prison wardens who have a large number of inmates working for the program. They know well the relationship between busy hands and increased prison security.

## Busy hands...

Menard CC Warden George Welborn has about 156 Industries workers employed in the broom and wax, farm/food processing, knit, tobacco and furniture refinishing shops at the prison. "From an administrative standpoint, Industries inmates have historically stayed away from problems. Menard Industries workers are housed in the East Cellhouse. These men get up in the morning, go to work and come back to the cellblock tired after a full day's work. They go to sleep and get up early to begin the same routine the next



Another Menard inmate tracks orders and billing at the business office. A variety of products from clothing to soaps and waxes are warehoused and shipped from the facility.



day. We have far fewer management problems with these inmates because they have very little free time to get into trouble. They are more stable men with a sense of pride and self-worth."

According to Pontiac CC Warden Richard Gramley, who has approximately 100 Industries workers employed in data entry and making signs, inmates actively involved in Industries programs see it as an incentive to behave.

"They know that if they misbehave, they could lose their job, and there are plenty of others waiting in line to accept the job and the better pay that goes with it," said Gramley.

## Earning your keep

Do taxpayers save money by having inmates produce all these products? Yes, specifically through the meat and milk products, the garment factories and the eyeglasses manufactured at Dixon CC. The meat and milk are sold back to Corrections at a rate generally less than market price.

"Sure, grocery stores have specials that bring their prices down, but you can't buy the food at those prices every day. Industries rates are stable and save the State money over the long haul," Parish said. The garment factories make inmate clothing and uniforms for correctional staff at or below market rate. "Basically, ICI is a Corrections program operating under business principles. Our prices don't go up and down week by week, but are set for an entire quarter, just like commercial businesses," said Parish.

The Dixon optical lab is a prime example of making good use of the taxpayers' money. Workers make eyeglasses for the entire inmate population as well as for 120,000 Public Aid recipients at reduced costs. The Department estimates a savings to the taxpayers of approximately \$750,000 per year through the program. Since the eyeglass program began in FY1987, numbers show a total savings to taxpayers of at least \$3.5 million.

Other Industries programs such as the bakery at Illinois River Correctional Center and the ethanol plant at Vienna Correctional Center have been money-losers. But, the "loser" stigma depends on who's making that determination, according to Parish. If the inmates are occupied, save money for their release and pose less of a security problem because of these programs, then who is the loser?

Workers at the Shawnee Correctional Center produce thousands of metal bed frames each year for use in college dormitories. The shop often runs double shifts to keep up with demand for a variety of metal furniture.



## INDUSTRIES AGENDA 2000

### ✓ Braille transcribing

Industries is working up a plan to establish a braille transcribing service at the Jacksonville Correctional Center. Michigan prison officials currently run a similar operation.

There is a braille transcribing service at a School for the Blind in Jacksonville which will lose a Federal grant this year and go out of business. Industries officials intend to keep the service going by investing \$35,000 to \$40,000 in the equipment already used by the operation. They would like to hire the blind supervisor who currently runs the service for the school.

Officials believe 20-30 inmate assignments would be created at the beginning of the project. The possibility of more jobs is good if additional markets for the reading materials can be found.

This proposal is in line with Governor Edgar's literacy efforts, and it could mean greater access to information for blind students in Illinois.

The equipment allows inmates to type in text from any source and then output it in book form. A thermal printer can duplicate the braille pages for any number of copies that are needed. Students at the school in Jacksonville have offered to help proof-read the books produced. □

"The large number of inmate workers at the bakery is one reason for the higher prices being charged. It costs the Department approximately \$13,000 more per year to buy its bread from the bakery, but Industries just got a federal grant for free flour, so things should be looking up for that program. Seeking out new production methods and research grants will often turn losers into moneymakers in a hurry," said Parish.

"We underwrote the ethanol production program for ten years, losing money each year. The program was in the red due to untested technology and lack of proper equipment. But, after realizing the profit to be made by using the byproducts of ethanol production to feed more of our cattle, the ethanol plant will make a profit for the first time this year.

"In the few programs where we have lost money, we don't just walk away from them. The inmates would lose their jobs. With more than 28,700 inmates and only about 1,300 Industries jobs, the benefits to the inmates of keeping the programs running far outweigh the lost revenue. Many businesses operate at a loss for a period of time until they become established. We are no different in that respect. We look for the innovations that will turn a loser into a profit center every day. We have to keep searching for new markets and new approaches to our established operations," said Parish.

One innovative program, the silk screening operation at the Danville Correctional Center, has given inmates the opportunity to develop artistic talents that may never have been realized without the creative outlet available through this job assignment. The specialty advertising program has now expanded into the collegiate market, producing silk-screened articles of



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**"Basically, we propose to take garbage in and sort out recyclable items and other usable materials using inmate labor. Current proposals call for Industries to construct a 12,000 square foot building to house the operation with the understanding that part of the dumping or tipping charge will go toward paying for the building."**

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clothing for Eastern Illinois University and the University of Illinois. The silk screening operation also is under contract to produce garments for the Special Olympics, the Prairie State Games and Air Rendezvous in Springfield.

There are problems at Correctional Industries. The operation only employs a small percentage of the total population. There are thousands of inmates currently on a waiting list for prison Industries jobs. As a result, Parish and his crew are constantly on the lookout for viable programs to keep the inmates busy. However, the commitment to keep profit margins low means less money to expand existing operations or develop new programs.

## **A look ahead**

As the inmate population escalates, so does the need for more programs and inmate jobs. The new bakery at the Illinois River Correctional Center in Canton, opened in December, 1990, now supplies bread and rolls to 18 prisons and will soon supply bread for the entire Department of Corrections. Approximately 8,000 loaves of bread are prepared each weekday. The bakery has opened up 70 jobs for inmates

who work 7 1/2 hour shifts for 30¢ an hour. The workers receive an increase of 15¢ an hour after 60 days of service. That may seem like very low pay to workers in free society. But, it is about four times the money to be made in a regular prison assignment as a kitchen helper or porter.

The proposed poultry operation at the new Robinson Correctional Center and a pilot recycling program in the central part of the state are two innovative ideas that show promise as future programs.

"There's no other poultry operation in Illinois and the chicken operation at Robinson would mean jobs for Robinson residents as well as jobs for the inmates in raising the chicks," said Parish. "Our aim is to coordinate a program in the community that is acceptable to them and to us." Parish pointed out that inmates have been consuming 40% more chicken in the last five years as a health measure and that chicken is less expensive than beef, making the program a logical venture.

Morgan, Logan and Montgomery counties have all expressed an interest in entering a cooperative agreement for solid waste recycling. Since the Governor's proclamation on recycling mandates State agency involvement, Parish thinks the program is a good risk. The Department is required to reduce by 25% the amount of solid waste going to landfills by 1995, and a 50% reduction is expected by the year 2000. This requirement reflects the same deadline placed on local governments by environmental laws which regulate the amount of different kinds of trash which may be disposed of in local landfills across the State.

"Basically, we propose to take garbage in and sort out recyclable items and other usable materials using inmate labor. Current proposals call for Industries to construct a 12,000 square foot building to house the operation with the understanding that part of the dumping or tipping charge will go toward paying for the building. The proposal estimates the sorting building should be paid for in approximately four years. Once we get a program going at one institution, then we'll have a boiler plate design for other cities around the state," said Parish.

"Industries recently negotiated a contract with Central Management Services to allow Industries workers to pick tires up at CMS garages and take them to Logan Correctional Center to sort. The piles of old tires laying about present a potential

## **✓ Solid waste recycling**

One of the biggest challenges facing city and county governments across the State is complying with laws that mandate the reduction of solid waste sent to landfills for disposal. A project suggested by Industries to several central Illinois counties could provide the answer.

Under agreements currently being negotiated, garbage would be hauled to a sorting station where tipping fees usually paid to the landfill would be collected by Industries. These fees would help pay for part of the cost of the program. Inmates would sort out recyclable glass, plastic, paper, aluminum and other items. The money collected from the sale of the recyclable materials would pay inmate wages and some other expenses.

There is another angle to the program. Corrections officials are looking into the possibility that yard waste, non-recyclable paper and other organic matter could be shredded, combined and made into small bricks by an extrusion machine. These bricks could be sold to power plants and burned in their boilers to generate electricity. This would further reduce the amount of material going into landfill space.

This concept reflects the intent of Governor Edgar's Executive Order to State agencies on recycling.

Grant fund sources for several aspects of this program are being identified by Corrections officials. These include research into what the ideal mix should be for the cardboard, yard waste, etc., that would make up the waste fuel bricks. Finding out what to charge customers for the bricks based on the amount of heat they would generate in the boilers is another question that grant funds might answer. This could help determine a price to charge for the fuel sold to power companies. □

## Training, Industries, Education are TIE'd together

The Training, Industry and Education (TIE) program supports Industries programs by enhancing workers' employment potential on release. The program assists inmates in selecting programs with career-related assignments and education. The TIE program has been enhanced by the Illinois Job Service. They provide placement staff to assist inmates at most adult prisons and selected community correctional centers.

Industries programs linked to the TIE program include the microfilming operation at Centralia, the Dixon optical lab, the ethanol plant at Vienna, milk processing operations at Vandalia and Galesburg and the Dwight garment industry.

"The benefits of the TIE program are multi-faceted," said ICI Superintendent Ron Parish. "The inmate benefits by learning a viable job skill and by being instructed in job seeking skills. Academic and vocational programs are enhanced by hands-on training."

Ginny Denton, DOC's TIE Project

Coordinator, points out that combining education, training and Industries jobs produces a more well-rounded, knowledgeable worker.

"As in the free world, certain types of training and education are needed to land specific jobs. The TIE Program promotes a real world work environment while offering the skills needed to secure the same type of job after release. Services include the development of a resume, enrollment in a career awareness program and placement assistance through the Illinois Department of Employment Security," said Denton.

The training aspect of the program includes vocational education, apprenticeship programs and on-the-job training through DOC School District 428. All programs are based on current labor market information.

The education link includes literacy, life skills, adult basic education, technical and post-secondary programs, as well as pre-employment education for inmates. □



An inmate sorts packs of cigarettes in the Correctional Industries tobacco shop. The packs sell in the prison store for 35 cents each—a price that hasn't change for nearly a decade.

health hazard because they are a breeding ground for mosquitoes which are known to carry diseases. The tires also fill up landfill space that could be used for items that are not recyclable. Industries has agreed to take the truck tires to Centralia CC to be recapped and the car tires will be recycled. We've also negotiated a contract with Archer Daniels Midland in Decatur to allow us to deliver scrap tires to them at no charge," said Parish. "We've got inmates picking up tires, recapping them and hauling the scrap tires to Decatur for disposal. Now that's the type of cooperation and dedication from the community that allows us to provide inmate jobs.

"We're also negotiating with the Department of Energy and Natural Resources and Illinois EPA to make Industries the appointed agent to pick up all the tire piles in a 13-14 county area. This, again, will be done with inmate labor and will create approximately another 30 much-needed jobs for inmates. It also shows the public that State agencies do communicate with each other and want to work together."

With no end in sight to the steady influx of inmates to the system, the need for

Correctional Industries jobs becomes even more urgent, according to Parish. "Every time I speak with a warden, they plead for more inmate jobs because they know that Correctional Industries jobs are a vital link in helping maintain safe and secure correctional facilities.

"The Department stands ready and willing to listen to any proposals from communities and State agencies to expand existing programs and create new ones to accommodate the needs of the 55,000

inmates expected to be housed in state prisons by the year 2000," said Parish.

"In the last ten years, this program has been spun around on its nose. We've gone from bankruptcy to prosperity. In the next ten years, we will continue to provide State government and other groups with quality products. We will add to that a greater measure of community service. And, we will be giving inmates something to be proud of. A little pride goes a long way in making a better person." □

Hamburger patties are packed at the Galesburg meat processing plant in this photo. Much of the meat for the burgers is produced in prison farm operations. Meat cutters gain vocational training while assigned to the packing plant.

