



CANADIAN
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Resolutions – 1968 – 1987 – Criminal Justice System, A Summary

There were eight resolutions dealing with one or another aspects of the criminal justice system between 1968 and 1987. Four of them deal with issues related to prisons. They are based on the belief that the purpose of a penal system should be primarily that of rehabilitation rather than revenge. They express concern that reports on conditions in Canadian penitentiaries have not been implemented and the institutions are dehumanizing and a breeding ground for further crime. The various resolutions advocate the following changes:

- increases in the quality and quantity of psychiatric, social service and educational personnel and facilities in correctional institutions;
- more extensive use of probation, parole and day parole, and that the use of imprisonment be restricted to dangerous offenders under therapeutic conditions which will protect society while safeguarding the rights of prisoners;
- support and encouragement of the federal government's sponsoring of research studies on violence, capital punishment and drug abuse, exploration of the possibility of establishment of halfway houses in the correctional system, establishment of Temporary Absence programs which permit prisoners to learn to function in society and to learn skills which will contribute to society by living in the community under supervision, and continuing support for research on violent behaviour such as that carried out by the Canadian Peace Research Institute;
- exploration of involvement of fellowships and churches with individuals in penal institutions within their communities, including visitation, involvement in services and meetings and, growing out of this, assistance in transition to a non-criminal life upon release.

Unitarians founded the Elizabeth Fry Society and have been supporters of it and the John Howard Society, both of which work with people involved with the criminal justice system.

In 1973 and 1987, the CUC adopted resolutions recommending the abolition of capital punishment. The latter resolution empowered Frank Lewis to represent the CUC and to contribute substantially to the coalition which was working on this issue.



A resolution in 1977 encouraged participation by congregations and individuals in Amnesty International to work for the release of people around the world who are detained solely because of religious or political beliefs.

These resolutions could enable us to participate in action if there were a move to re-institute capital punishment. They also indicate a continuing concern about humane conditions in prisons.

This summary is based on resolutions adopted in 1968, 1970, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1977, and 1987.