

GOV. TOMMY THOMPSON / GROUNDBREAKING. RACINE CORRECTIONAL
INSTITUTION / APRIL 10, 1989

**(NOTE: THESE ARE DRAFT REMARKS, SUBJECT TO CHANGE!! IF YOU HAVE
A QUESTION, PLEASE CONTACT PRESS SECRETARY JON HENKES AT
608/266-6925.)**

GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE.

IT IS A DISTINCT PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE HERE IN STURTEVANT, IN
RACINE COUNTY ... BREAKING GROUND FOR THE RACINE CORRECTIONAL
INSTITUTION.

YOU WILL RECALL THAT SITING THIS PRISON WAS ONE OF MY HIGHEST
PRIORITIES DURING MY CAMPAIGN IN 1986, AS WELL AS IMMEDIATELY
AFTER I BECAME GOVERNOR A LITTLE OVER TWO YEARS AGO.

THE CITIZENS OF WISCONSIN HAD BEEN WAITING SINCE 1983 FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A THIRD STATE PRISON. THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL
BEDS WAS GREAT, AND I WANTED TO RESOLVE THE SITING PROBLEM AND
PUT THE PRISON ISSUE BEHIND US.

YOU, THE PEOPLE, WANTED ACTION. ADMINISTRATION HAS ACTED --
SWIFTLY, EFFICIENTLY, PROFESSIONALLY.

I'D LIKE TO TAKE THIS OCCASION TO PERSONALLY THANK SENATOR JOE
STROHL AND REPRESENTATIVE JIM LADWIG FOR THEIR EFFORTS AND
ASSISTANCE DURING THE SITING PROCESS.

WITH BI-PARTISAN SUPPORT, WE ACCOMPLISHED OUR MISSION TO SITE
THIS PRISON IN RECORD TIME. I SIGNED THE BILL DESIGNATING THIS
FACILITY AND LOCATION FOR THE NEW PRISON, ON FEBRUARY 17, 1987
--JUST FIVE WEEKS AFTER TAKING OFFICE.

ELEVEN YEARS PRIOR, HOWEVER, IN 1976, THE "FLAD REPORT,"
PREPARED FOR THE STATE BUILDING COMMISSION, RECOMMENDED THAT
WISCONSIN WOULD BE NEEDING THREE MAXIMUM- OR MEDIUM-SECURITY
INSTITUTIONS BY THE YEAR 1985.

THAT RECOMMENDATION, MADE IN 1976, WAS RIGHT ON TARGET!
AND IT'S "ABOUT TIME" THAT THE THIRD INSTITUTION IS UNDER
CONSTRUCTION.

THE 450-BED FACILITY WE ARE BUILDING HERE WILL BE A
WELCOME ADDITION TO OUR PRISON SYSTEM.

TWO YEARS AGO, OUR "ADULT MALE" PRISON POPULATION NUMBERED 5,300
... AND WE WERE APPROXIMATELY 1,000 INMATES OVER CAPACITY.

TODAY, OUR MEN'S POPULATION NUMBERS 6,100 ... AND WITH A CURRENT
CAPACITY OF 4,843, WE ARE NOW 1,400 OVER THAT CAPACITY.

CURIOUSLY, WHEN I SIGNED THE BILL TO CONSTRUCT A NEW PRISON ON
THIS SITE, WE THOUGHT WE HAD SOLVED THE OVER-CROWDING PROBLEM.

BUT THAT'S NOT THE CASE. CLEARLY, WE MUST ALL FACE THE FACT THAT
THE SYSTEM IS TAKING IN MORE AND MORE INMATES EVERY DAY.

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THIS: CORRECTIONS IN WISCONSIN IS
FACING A SERIOUS CHALLENGE.

EVEN WITH ADDITIONAL CONSTRUCTION AT FACILITIES IN WAUPUN,
OSHKOSH, KENOSHA, AND AT SOUTHERN CENTER FOR WOMEN, WE WILL NOT
BE ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH THE NUMBER OF PRISONERS ENTERING THE
SYSTEM.

WE HAVE HAD AN UNFORESEEABLE AND DRAMATIC RISE IN THE PRISON
POPULATION DURING THE LAST 15 MONTHS.

I'LL TELL YOU "WHY" THIS IS HAPPENING IN JUST A FEW MOMENTS. BUT FIRST, LET'S EXAMINE THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM AS IT EXISTS TODAY.

ONE: DURING THE LAST 15 MONTHS, WE HAVE RECORDED A NET GAIN OF 438 MALE INMATES.

TWO: SINCE AUGUST OF 1988, ADMISSIONS TO PRISON HAVE PROCEEDED AT A RECORD-BREAKING PACE.

THREE: JUST LAST MONTH, WE RECORDED THE ALL-TIME HIGH FOR MALE ADMISSIONS, FOR ANY MONTH, IN THE HISTORY OF THIS STATE.

DURING MARCH, 312 MALE INMATES ENTERED THE PRISON SYSTEM. THIS IS 100 ADMISSIONS MORE THAN THE 1988 MONTHLY AVERAGE OF 212.

WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THE FUTURE, OUR CORRECTIONS OFFICIALS EXPECT THE CURRENT TREND TO CONTINUE.

(slight pause)

DESPITE OUR INCREASING POPULATIONS, HOWEVER, I WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT THE PRISONS IN THIS STATE ARE IN GOOD HANDS.

THEY ARE WELL RUN ... AND THEY PROVIDE EXCELLENT PUBLIC PROTECTION TO OUR CITIZENS.

IT IS BECAUSE THEY ARE WELL-RUN, THAT STAFF HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ADDRESS THE OVER-CROWDING PROBLEM WITHOUT INCIDENT.

THE EMPLOYEES WHO WORK IN THESE PRISONS DAY-IN AND DAY-OUT ARE DESERVING OF OUR THANKS.

THEY DO THEIR JOBS. AND THEY DO THEM WELL. WITHOUT A LOT OF FANFARE.

AND BECAUSE THEY ARE HANDLING OVER-CROWDING IN A QUIET AND PROFESSIONAL MANNER, THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS ALL BUT UNAWARE OF THE PROBLEM.

AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE PUBLIC "HAS" DELIVERED A STRONG MESSAGE THROUGHOUT WISCONSIN ... AND THE ENTIRE NATION.

AND THE MESSAGE IS THIS: "WE WILL NO LONGER TOLERATE BEING VICTIMIZED BY CRIME AND CRIMINALS!"

I WANT TO ENSURE THAT THE PUBLIC'S DESIRES ARE MET. THE CITIZENS OF WISCONSIN "SHOULD BE" PROTECTED ... AND CRIMINALS "SHOULD BE" PUNISHED SWIFTLY.

IF THIS MEANS PROVIDING MORE PRISON SPACE ... THEN THE PUBLIC, AND THE LEGISLATURE, AND YOUR GOVERNOR, WILL HAVE TO WORK TO DO WHAT'S NECESSARY TO PROVIDE THAT SPACE -- AND PROTECTION.

I AM FIRMLY COMMITTED TO SOLVING OVER-CROWDING IN OUR PRISON SYSTEM ... AND WE'LL DO IT WITH THE SAME DETERMINATION AND SUCCESS THAT THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS SOLVED ALL THE OTHER PROBLEMS WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED.

(slight pause)

IN THE BUDGET PACKAGE I PRESENTED TO THE LEGISLATURE FOR FISCAL YEARS 1990 AND 1991, WE PROJECTED A PRISON POPULATION BASED ON THE MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE TO THE STATE.

BUT ... BECAUSE OF A RECORD-LEVEL OF ADMISSIONS, AND THE INCREASED TIME THAT OFFENDERS ARE SPENDING IN PRISON, WE HAVE HAD TO ADJUST OUR PRISON PROJECTIONS.

FOR EXAMPLE, OUR INITIAL BUDGET REQUEST HAD PROJECTED THAT WAUPUN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION WOULD HAVE AN ANNUAL POPULATION OF 970 ... AND THAT FOX LAKE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION WOULD HAVE AN ANNUAL POPULATION OF 740.

OUR REVISED FORECAST INDICATES THAT THIS SUMMER, WE WILL HAVE TO BRING THE POPULATION AT WAUPUN FROM 970 TO 1,133 ... AND AT FOX LAKE FROM 740 TO 799.

ON FRIDAY OF LAST WEEK, THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SUBMITTED THESE "NEW" PROJECTIONS TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE.

IN ADDITION, I HAVE INSTRUCTED THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION TO INCREASE THE CORRECTIONS BUDGET REQUEST SO THAT WE CAN CONTINUE TO OPERATE OUR PRISONS SAFELY AND SECURELY.

CLEARLY, OUR EXISTING PRISON SYSTEM CANNOT ENDURE THESE ADDED POPULATIONS WITHOUT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, OFFICERS, AND SUPPORT STAFF.

(pause)

I WANT TO MAKE IT VERY CLEAR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THAT WISCONSIN IS NOT ALONE IN FACING AN OVER-CROWDING PROBLEM.

VIRTUALLY EVERY STATE ACROSS THIS COUNTRY HAS SEEN DRAMATIC INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IMPRISONED.

SOME STATES, SUCH AS CALIFORNIA AND MICHIGAN, ARE BUILDING PRISONS AS FAST AS THEY CAN TO MEET THE DEMAND.

OTHERS, SUCH AS MINNESOTA AND WASHINGTON, HAVE MANAGED TO CONTROL THEIR POPULATIONS BY SEVERELY CURTAILING THE DISCRETION THAT JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS HAVE IN SENDING AN INDIVIDUAL TO PRISON.

THE FEDERAL SYSTEM HAS SIMILAR PROBLEMS. WITH A CAPACITY FOR 30,675 AND A POPULATION OF 47,418, THE FEDERAL SYSTEM IS TODAY 55 PERCENT OVER CAPACITY.

TRUE ... SENTENCING GUIDELINES AND ELIMINATION OF PAROLE IN THE FEDERAL SYSTEM HAVE HAD A DRAMATIC EFFECT, BUT SO HAVE DRUGS.

IN 1972, NINETEEN PERCENT -- OR 4,000 -- OF THE FEDERAL PRISONERS WERE SENTENCED FOR DRUG-RELATED OFFENSES. TODAY, THAT NUMBER HAS SWELLED TO 43 PERCENT, OR 20,000!

(pause)

IN WISCONSIN, WE HAVE HISTORICALLY BEEN A LEADER IN CORRECTIONS.

WISCONSIN IS RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY AS HAVING A BALANCED SYSTEM OF PRISONS, PROBATION, AND PAROLE.

I DO NOT WANT TO SEE THAT BALANCE UPSET.

AND THAT IS WHY, IN ADDITION TO STRENGTHENING THE "PRISONS," I HAVE ALSO ASKED THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS THAT WILL STRENGTHEN "COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS" AND ADD MORE "HIGH-RISK" INTENSIVE SUPERVISION AGENTS.

PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFERS GOOD, TOUGH, COMMUNITY PROTECTION. WE WANT TO ENSURE THAT OUR COMMUNITIES CONTINUE TO RECEIVE SOLID PROTECTION, AND THAT THERE ARE SUFFICIENT AGENTS AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HANDLE THE NEARLY 27,000 INDIVIDUALS CURRENTLY ON PROBATION AND PAROLE IN WISCONSIN.

(slight pause)

IN WISCONSIN, WE ARE ALSO MAINTAINING OUR REPUTATION AS ONE OF THE NATION'S SAFEST STATES TO WORK, TO LIVE, AND TO RAISE A FAMILY.

WE HAVE ONE OF THE LOWEST CRIME RATES IN THE NATION... RANKING
40th AMONG THE 50 STATES.

(THE STATES RECORDING LOWER RATES, SUCH AS NORTH AND SOUTH
DAKOTA, VERMONT AND NEW HAMPSHIRE, HAVE MUCH SMALLER
POPULATIONS.)

MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT -- WISCONSIN HAS MAINTAINED CONTROL OF
ITS PRISON SYSTEM. UNLIKE 38 OTHER STATES, WE HAVE NOT BEEN
FORCED TO TURN OVER THE OPERATION OF ANY OF OUR INSTITUTIONS TO
THE FEDERAL COURTS.

BUT IN ORDER TO AVOID INTERFERENCE FROM THE COURTS, THE
LEGISLATURE AND I WILL HAVE TO CONSIDER ALL OF OUR OPTIONS,
INCLUDING ADDING MORE PRISON BEDS TO OUR EXISTING INSTITUTIONS.

I HAVE ASKED PATRICIA GOODRICH, SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, TO STUDY WHAT COURSE OF ACTION
WISCONSIN SHOULD TAKE TO END THE OVER-CROWDING PROBLEM.

I WILL BE REVIEWING ALL OF THE DATA AND RECOMMENDATIONS WITH
LEGISLATIVE LEADERS, SO THAT WE CAN SOLVE THIS PROBLEM ... ONCE
AND FOR ALL!

(pause)

EARLIER, I SAID I WOULD PROVIDE YOU WITH REASONS "WHY" THE PRISON POPULATION HAS GROWN SO DRAMATICALLY DURING THE LAST 15 MONTHS ... PLACING US IN OUR CURRENT SITUATION.

PLEASE RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS NO SINGLE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION. IT IS A COMPLEX ISSUE WITH MANY FACTORS.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, I CAN TELL YOU THAT DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS, TWO DISTINCT TRENDS HAVE EMERGED.

ONE: WE'VE GOTTEN TOUGHER ON LAW-BREAKERS, AND WE'RE SENDING MORE OF THEM TO PRISON.

TWO: CRIMINALS IN THE PRISON SYSTEM ARE STAYING "IN THE SYSTEM" LONGER THAN BEFORE.

LET'S EXAMINE SOME SPECIFICS.

-- TODAY, I AM VERY PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE STATISTICS HAVE JUST BEEN RELEASED, AND "SERIOUS" CRIME IN WISCONSIN DECREASED BY 3.6 PERCENT DURING 1988 -- THE FIRST DECREASE SINCE 1985.

SPECIFICALLY, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A 3.6 PERCENT DECREASE IN THE FOUR VIOLENT CRIMES OF MURDER, FORCIBLE RAPE, ROBBERY, AND AGGRAVATED ASSAULT...

... TOGETHER WITH THE FOUR PROPERTY CRIMES OF BURGLARY, THEFT, MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT, AND ARSON.

IN ADDITION, THE "OVERALL" CRIME RATE IN THE STATE ALSO DECREASED DURING 1988.

HOWEVER.... HOWEVER, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARRESTED FOR DRUG OFFENSES INCREASED STATEWIDE BY 17 PERCENT IN 1988.

IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY ALONE, DRUG ARRESTS WERE UP 53 PERCENT, WITH COCAINE ARRESTS JUMPING BY 145 PERCENT.

IN MADISON, COCAINE ARRESTS INCREASED BY 100 PERCENT.

AND STATEWIDE, DURING THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1988, COCAINE ARRESTS INCREASED BY 78 PERCENT.

(slight pause)

TODAY, OUR STREETS ARE SAFER ... WE'RE CRACKING DOWN ON PUSHERS ... AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IS DOING A GOOD JOB.

BUT WE MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT DRUGS ARE AN EVER-INCREASING PART OF THE WEB OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR.

64 PERCENT OF ALL INMATES ENTERING PRISON HAVE A SERIOUS DRUG PROBLEM.

THIS CANNOT CONTINUE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

WISCONSIN MUST BE PREPARED, AND WELL-EQUIPPED, TO WAGE A WINNING WAR ON DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE.

AND I AM WORKING VERY HARD, ALONG WITH THE OFFICES OF ATTORNEY GENERAL DON HANAWAY, AND SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT BERT GROVER, TO GET OUR STATEWIDE ALLIANCE FOR A DRUG-FREE WISCONSIN UP AND RUNNING.

THIS IS AN HISTORIC EFFORT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, TO INVOLVE ALL SEGMENTS OF OUR COMMUNITTES IN THE WAR ON ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE.

EDUCATION, REHABILITATION AND TOUGH ENFORCEMENT ARE IMPORTANT WEAPONS IN THE WAR ON DRUGS. BUT WE HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO WIELD THEM MORE EFFECTIVELY ON A STATEWIDE, COOPERATIVE BASIS.

AND I AM COMMITTED TO SEEING THAT THIS HAPPENS.

I NEED YOUR HELP. TOGETHER, WE MUST ALL PLAY A PART IN TACKLING THE DRUG PROBLEM.

I WANT THE PUSHERS OUT OF WISCONSIN. AND THOSE THAT ARE HERE, I WANT BEHIND BARS. AND IF THAT MEANS ADDING MORE BEDS IN EXISTING PRISONS, THEN SO BE IT.

(pause)

ONE OF MY SPECIFIC INITIATIVES TO GET TOUGH ON PUSHERS AND STEM THE FLOW OF DRUGS, IS A PROPOSAL TO CREATE DRUG-FREE SCHOOL ZONES.

IF WE ARE GOING TO KEEP DRUGS OUT OF THE HANDS OF OUR CHILDREN ... THEN WE MUST GET TOUGH ON PUSHERS WHO HANG AROUND OUR SCHOOLS PEDDLING THEIR POISON.

I HAVE PROPOSED A PLAN THAT MAKES POSSESSION AND DISTRIBUTION OF DRUGS ON, OR NEAR SCHOOL PREMISES OR A SCHOOL BUS, A MUCH MORE RISKY BUSINESS.

THE PLAN CALLS FOR A MANDATORY THREE-YEAR MINIMUM PRISON SENTENCE FOR PERSONS CONVICTED OF DISTRIBUTING A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE ON OR NEAR SCHOOL GROUNDS OR A SCHOOL BUS.

NO PROBATION. NO PAROLE. NOT UNTIL THE GUILTY PARTY HAS SERVED A MINIMUM OF THREE YEARS BEHIND BARS.

IN ADDITION, STUDENTS AND OTHERS CONVICTED OF POSSESSING A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE IN ONE OF THESE "DRUG-FREE ZONES" WILL BE ORDERED BY THE COURT TO RELINQUISH THEIR DRIVER'S LICENSE FOR SIX MONTHS, AND PERFORM 100 HOURS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE.

(pause)

ANOTHER REASON WHY WE'RE FACED WITH AN OVER-CROWDING PROBLEM IN OUR PRISONS IS BECAUSE CRIMINALS IN PRISON ARE STAYING LONGER.

THE MAJORITY OF INMATES LOCKED UP IN PRISON ARE SERVING UNTIL THEIR MANDATORY RELEASE DATE: ALSO, THE PERCENTAGE OF INMATES ENTERING THE PRISON SYSTEM FOR MULTIPLE OFFENSES HAS INCREASED FROM 49 PERCENT IN 1980, TO 69 PERCENT IN 1988.

WE ALSO KNOW THAT THE LENGTH OF SENTENCES BEING DELIVERED BY JUDGES OVER THE LAST NINE YEARS HAS INCREASED BY AN AVERAGE OF

18 MONTHS FOR ASSAULT-TYPE OFFENSES ... AND 28 MONTHS FOR SEX-RELATED OFFENSES.

(pause)

THESE ARE THE FACTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. AND THAT IS WHY WE ARE GATHERED HERE THIS MORNING.

THE PUBLIC DEMANDS GOOD, SOLID PROTECTION. AND PRISONS PROVIDE SURE, AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SAFETY.

THIS NEW INSTITUTION WILL BE ONE OF THE VERY BEST IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY.

BUT MORE THAN THAT, IT WILL BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR TO THE CITIZENS OF STURTEVANT AND RACINE COUNTY.

I KNOW. I HAVE FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE AS A LEGISLATOR WORKING TO SITE PRISONS IN COMMUNITIES ... BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, AS A HOME-OWNER, RESIDING CLOSE BY THE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY IN PORTAGE.

TODAY IN WISCONSIN, THE COLUMBIA CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION IS A VERY GOOD NEIGHBOR TO THE CITY OF PORTAGE AND THE SURROUNDING AREA.

SO, TOO, IS THE OSHKOSH CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONAL TO THE CITY OF OSHKOSH AND THE SURROUNDING AREA.

IN FACT, IN ALL AREAS OF THE STATE WHERE PRISONS ARE LOCATED, LOCAL COMMUNITIES HAVE QUICKLY REALIZED THAT CORRECTIONS "IS" A GOOD NEIGHBOR.

THIS INSTITUTION WILL BE NO DIFFERENT.

ON A FINAL NOTE, I WANT TO REPEAT MY DESIRE FOR THE DIVISION OF CORRECTIONS TO BE SEPARATED FROM THE SPRAWLING DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES.

WE NEED A SEPARATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS IN WISCONSIN. TO DATE, THIS ISSUE HAS RECEIVED BROAD, BI-PARTISAN SUPPORT ... EDITORIAL ENDORSEMENTS ACROSS THE STATE ... AND THE ENDORSEMENT OF COUNCIL 24 OF THE STATEWIDE AFSCME UNION.

IT IS ALSO STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY SECRETARY GOODRICH, AND CORRECTIONS ADMINISTRATOR STEPHEN BABLITCH.

CLEARLY, A SEPARATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS IS AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME.

FORTY-FIVE OTHER STATES HAVE SEEN THE WISDOM OF HAVING A SEPARATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, AND WISCONSIN NEEDS TO BE ADDED TO THAT LIST.

AS CORRECTIONS' POLICY BECOMES MORE COMPLEX, AND THE FISCAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS MORE DEMANDING, WE NEED TO HAVE A DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS THAT IS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THE GOVERNOR AND TO THE LEGISLATURE.

I APPRECIATE ALL THE SUPPORT THIS INITIATIVE HAS RECEIVED. BUT I WILL NOT BE SATISFIED UNTIL I CAN SIGN THE BILL INTO LAW.

(slight pause)

AND NOW, WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, IT IS TIME FOR US TO MOVE ON WITH THE GROUND-BREAKING ... SO THAT OUR CONTRACTORS CAN GET TO WORK, AND SO WE CAN OPEN UP THE RACINE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION ON SCHEDULE.

THANK YOU.