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IOWA PRISONS--

In Poverty and Prosperity

By

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Iowa Prisons---

In Poverty and Prosperity

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Liars may figure and figures may lie, but the fact remains that something serious has been happening to prison figures in Iowa in the past decades. In the 20 years from 1941 to 1960, the criminal courts in Iowa have committed a total of 12,908 men and women to the three correctional institutions in the state, or an annual average of 645 or almost two a day. In 1960, the courts sentenced 497 men to the penitentiary at Ft. Madison, 257 men to the reformatory at Anamosa and 54 women to the reformatory at Rockwell City. This total of 808 is 25 percent higher than the 20-year average, and the highest number in two decades.

In the last full year before World War II, the courts committed 763 persons to the three institutions. (See Chart) By 1944, the year before the war ended, commitments decreased to 438 or a drop of 42.6 percent from 1940. This decrease was due in part to the 10-percent decrease in the total population of the state caused by the removal of men entering military service and the war industries outside the state. In addition, some of the decrease was due to the alteration in the judicial policy of the courts. In the immediate postwar years commitments increased, except for the slight drop during the Korean Incident. At the end of the period in 1960 commitments reached 808, or the highest number. In one year Iowa "produced", among other things, 808 felons and sent them to prison. This figure, of course, does not include the numbers sentenced to the respective county jails in the state. No total figure is available, but in 1960 commitments to 90 county jails amounted to about 17,000 persons.

COURT COMMITMENTS TO THREE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN IOWA,

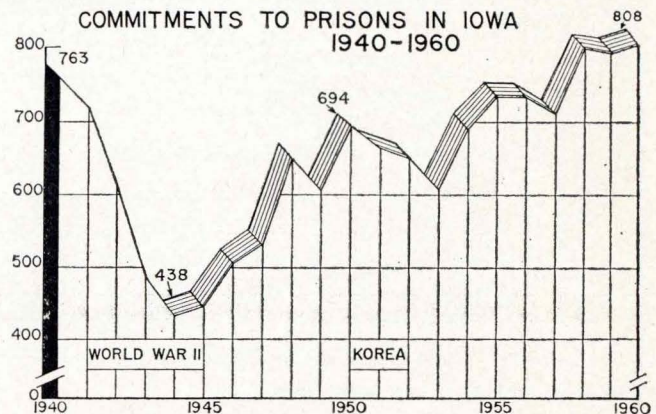
1941-1960(a)
 (as of June 30th each year)

Year	Number
1941	724
1942	618
1943	486

1944	438
1945	448
1946	503
1947	536
1948	649
1949	605
1950	694
1951	667
1952	651
1953	605
1954	689
1955	738
1956	737
1957	714
1958	804
1959	799
1960	808

Total	12,908
Average	645

(a) Exclusive of returned parolees, escapees, transfers, etc. Source: Biennial Board of Control Reports of Iowa for respective years.



THE PRISONERS'S HABITAT

or Rural and Urban Commitments

In order to determine where these felons came from in the state, the 99 counties in Iowa have been classified into five groups according to the size of the largest community in each county. In 1940, there were 23 counties in the state in which the largest community numbered less than 2,500 persons. These counties were placed in Group I and named the Rural-Farm Counties. Group II

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counties comprised 34 counties in which the largest town was between 2,500 and 5,000 persons. These were named the Small-Town Counties. Group III included 22 counties in which the largest town was between 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants. These were the Large-Town Counties. Group IV comprised 9 counties with the largest city ranging between 10,000 and 25,000 persons. These were called the Small-City Counties. Group V constituted 11 counties in which the largest city was over 25,000 population. These were called the Large-City Counties.

With this grouping of the 99 counties, all commitments to the three correctional institutions were tabulated from each county according to the five groups explained above. The commitments covered two decades from 1941 to 1960. The table shows the total commitments in each group, together with the rates per 100,000 based on the average population for the years 1940 and 1960. The total of 14,009 is 1,101 more than the figure given above because the Board of Control reports by counties do not separate returned parole violators and other. The 12,908 includes only court commitments.

The 23 Rural-Farm Counties, Group I, committed a total of 1,048 prisoners or an average of 52.4 each year with a rate of 17.1 per 100,000 population. The

COMMITMENTS TO THREE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN IOWA AND RATES PER 100,000 FOR 1941 TO 1960

County Group	Number Committed		Rate Per 100,000
	Total (a)	Annual Average	
I (23)	1,048	52.4	17.1
II (34)	2,391	119.5	20.1
III (22)	2,045	102.3	23.8
IV (9)	1,827	91.4	27.9
V (11)	6,698	334.9	34.2
Total (99)	14,009	700.5	26.5

(a) Miss Karen Carr, a student at Iowa State University, assisted in making these tabulations.

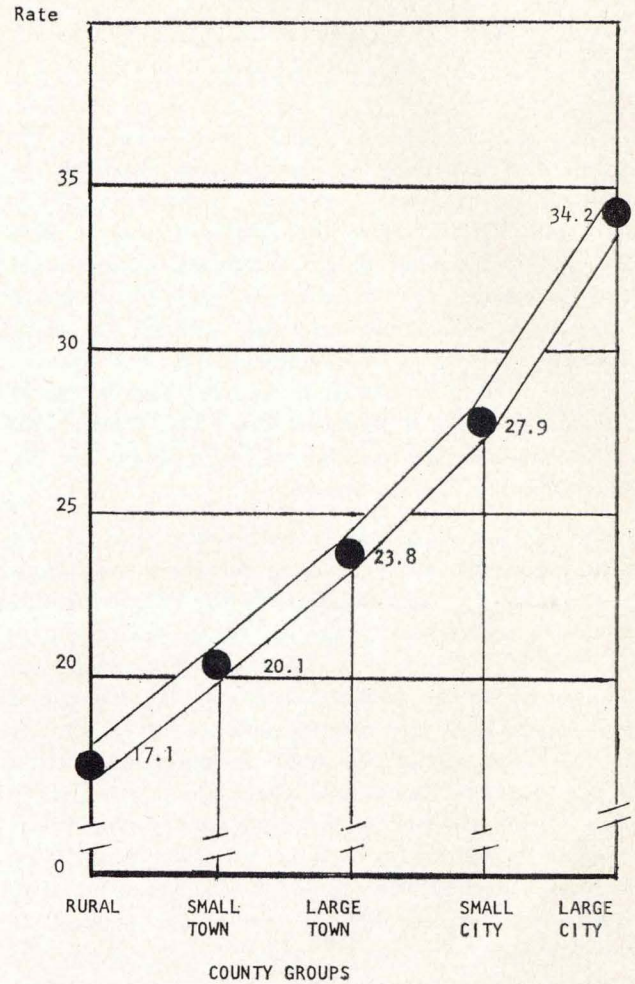
figures for the next three groups appear in the table. The 11 Large-City Counties in Group V committed 6,698 men and women or an average of 335 making a rate of 34.2 per 100,000 persons. From the above table and the accompanying chart, it is clear that the Large-City Counties in Group V committed, on the basis of rates, two times more prisoners than the counties in Group I, the Rural-Farm Counties.

The 11 Large-City Counties "produced" more prisoners (6,698) than all the other 79 counties (6,263) in Groups I, II, and III. This fact substantiates the prin-

ciple that urban areas "produce" more criminals than rural areas.

The same conclusion may be indicated on the basis of the percentages of the population and commitments in each county group for 1960.

PRISON COMMITMENTS BY COUNTY GROUPS IN IOWA, 1941-60 RATES PER 100,000



PERCENTAGE OF IOWA POPULATION IN EACH COUNTY GROUP AND COMMITMENTS TO PRISONS FOR 1960

County Group	Percent of Population	Percent of Commitments
I	10	6
II	21	16
III	16	14
IV	13	13
V	40	51
Total	100	100

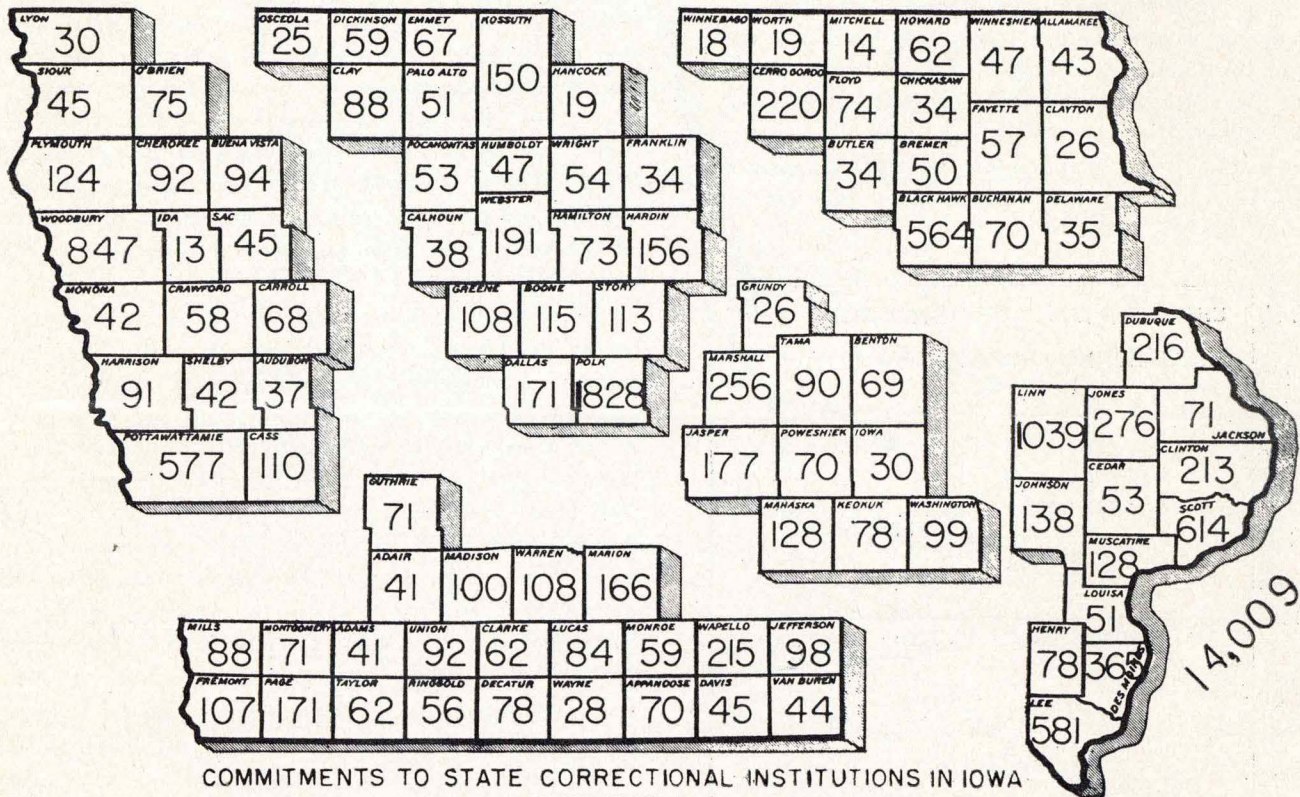
In 1960, 10 percent of the population in Iowa lived in the 23 counties in Group I, Rural-Farm Counties, and 5 percent of the prisoners came from these counties. Commitments were 4 percent less than the expected number in terms of population. In the same year, 40 percent of the population lived in the 11 Large-City Counties, but these 11 counties committed 51 percent of all prisoners or 11 percent more than the due share on a percentage basis. Cities, therefore, breed more felons than rural areas.

In order to show the commitments by counties, the total numbers committed from each county have been placed on the accompanying map. The arrangement of the counties on the map are geographical and not by size of population as in preceding material. As expected, the

heavier populated counties show larger commitments. In the two decades, the six counties that committed more than 500 felons are shown below.

Polk	1,828
Linn	1,039
Woodbury	847
Scott	614
Pottawattamie	577
Black Hawk	564
Total	5,469

(Lee County has not been included because the penitentiary is in this county.) These six counties committed a total of 5,469 felons or about one-third of the total number. The remaining 93 counties committed 68.8 percent of the total or 8,540 felons.



CHANGES IN RURAL AND URBAN COMMITMENTS

Not only do cities produce more felons than rural areas, but the number committed from the urban areas has been increasing whereas the number from the rural sections of the state has been decreasing. In order to show this change, the figures for the 23 Rural-Farm Counties in Group I have been tabulated and compared to the commitments from the Large-City Counties in Group V from 1941 to 1960. The figures have been calculated in terms of Index Numbers or the percentage changes from

the base biennium. This statistical method reveals the change better than using the actual numbers. The years 1941-42 are taken as the base year or an Index Number of 100 as shown on the chart. The chart also shows the change in population in each group using the 1940 and 1960 censuses.

Between 1940 and 1960, the population in the 11 Large-City Counties increased 29.2 percent, whereas the population in the 23 Rural-Farm Counties decreased by 13.9 percent for the same years. The trend lines for popu-

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counties comprised 34 counties in which the largest town was between 2,500 and 5,000 persons. These were named the Small-Town Counties. Group III included 22 counties in which the largest town was between 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants. These were the Large-Town Counties. Group IV comprised 9 counties with the largest city ranging between 10,000 and 25,000 persons. These were called the Small-City Counties. Group V constituted 11 counties in which the largest city was over 25,000 population. These were called the Large-City Counties.

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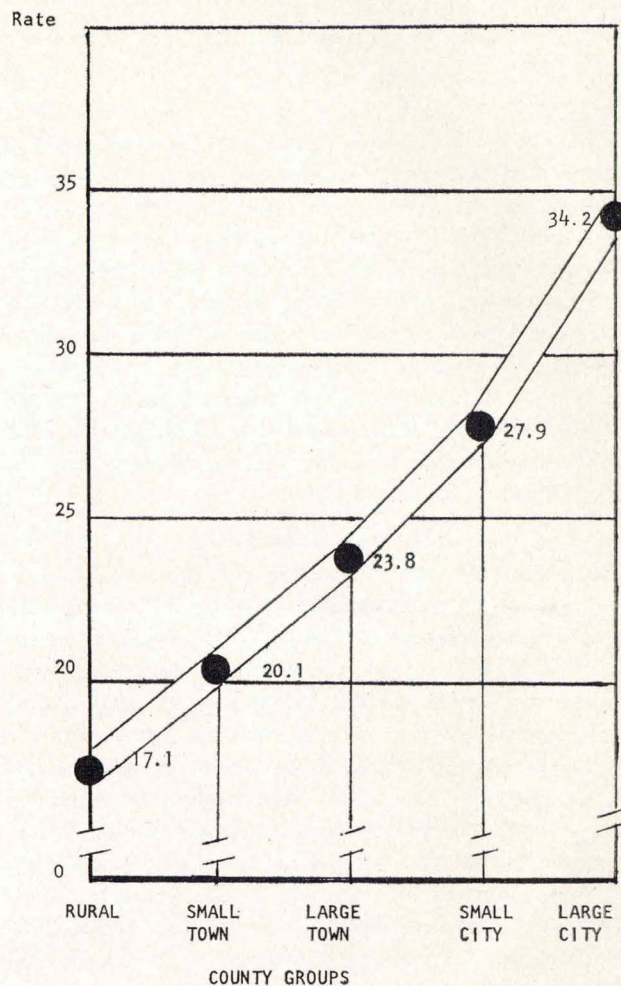
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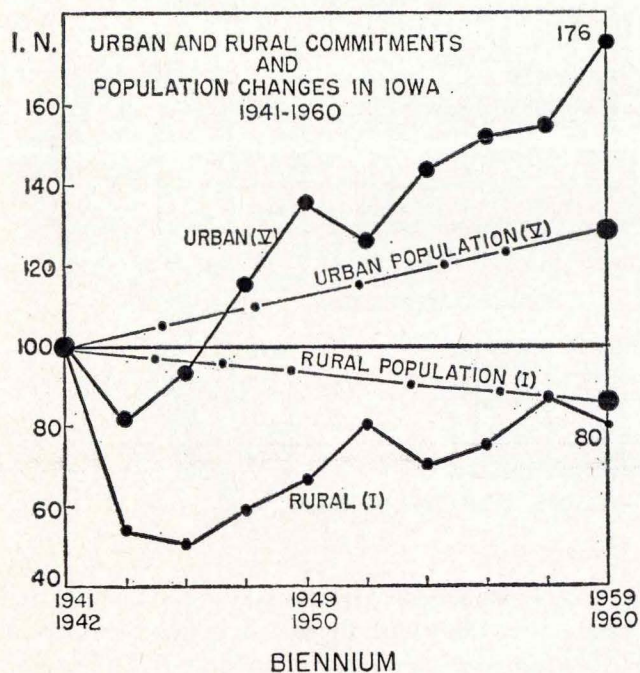
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lation appear on the chart. In the biennium 1943-44, commitments fell to 82 percent of the 1941-42 level in the urban counties of Group V and dropped to 54 percent of the same for the Rural-Farm Counties in Group I. In each biennium after 1945-46, the Index Numbers increased for both groups but much faster for the urban counties. In 1959-60, commitments in the Group V counties had risen to an Index Number of 176 or 76 percent above the 1941-42 biennium. For the same year, commitments in the Rural-Farm Counties registered an Index Number of 80 or 20 percent below the 1941-42 level. In the Large-City Counties, the population increased 29.2 percent but commitments declined by 76 percent. In the Rural-Farm Counties, population decreased 13.9 percent and commitments declined by 20.0 percent. Here it is evident that the population changes occurred in each group of counties, but commitments have been greater than the population changes in the urban counties. Cities not only "produce" more felons than the rural areas, but the numbers in the urban areas have been increasing faster than the population whereas the commitments in the rural counties have decreased more than the decline in population.



FELONS ARE YOUNGER TODAY

In the past 20 years, there has been a change in the age of felons committed to the prisons in Iowa, especially the men. In 1939-40, of the total 741 men committed to the reformatory at Anamosa, 187 or 25.2 percent were 15 to 20 years of age. Of the total sentenced (735) in 1959-60, 229 or 31.2 percent were 15 to 20 years of age.

For the same years, the percentage of men in the same age groups increased from 10.9 percent to 16.4 percent at the penitentiary at Fort Madison. The percentage of men 15 to 20 years of age expanded 6 percent at Anamosa and 5.5 percent at Fort Madison.

Here it is clear that more younger offenders are entering the prisons in Iowa now than two decades earlier. This follows the general change for the nation as a whole. Serious offenders are becoming younger. *Crimes committed by older men two decades ago are now being committed by younger men.*

PRISONERS IN THE IOWA PENITENTIARY, 1926-60

In order to show how the number of men in prison varies with changing conditions, the annual number of men in the state penitentiary at Ft. Madison has been tabulated and the figures presented on the accompanying chart. The time-span, 35 years from 1926 to 1960, includes the years of the Great Depression, the years of World War II, 1941-45, the postwar years, the Korean Incident and the later years. The figures are the number present as of June 30th for each year, the end of the fiscal year.

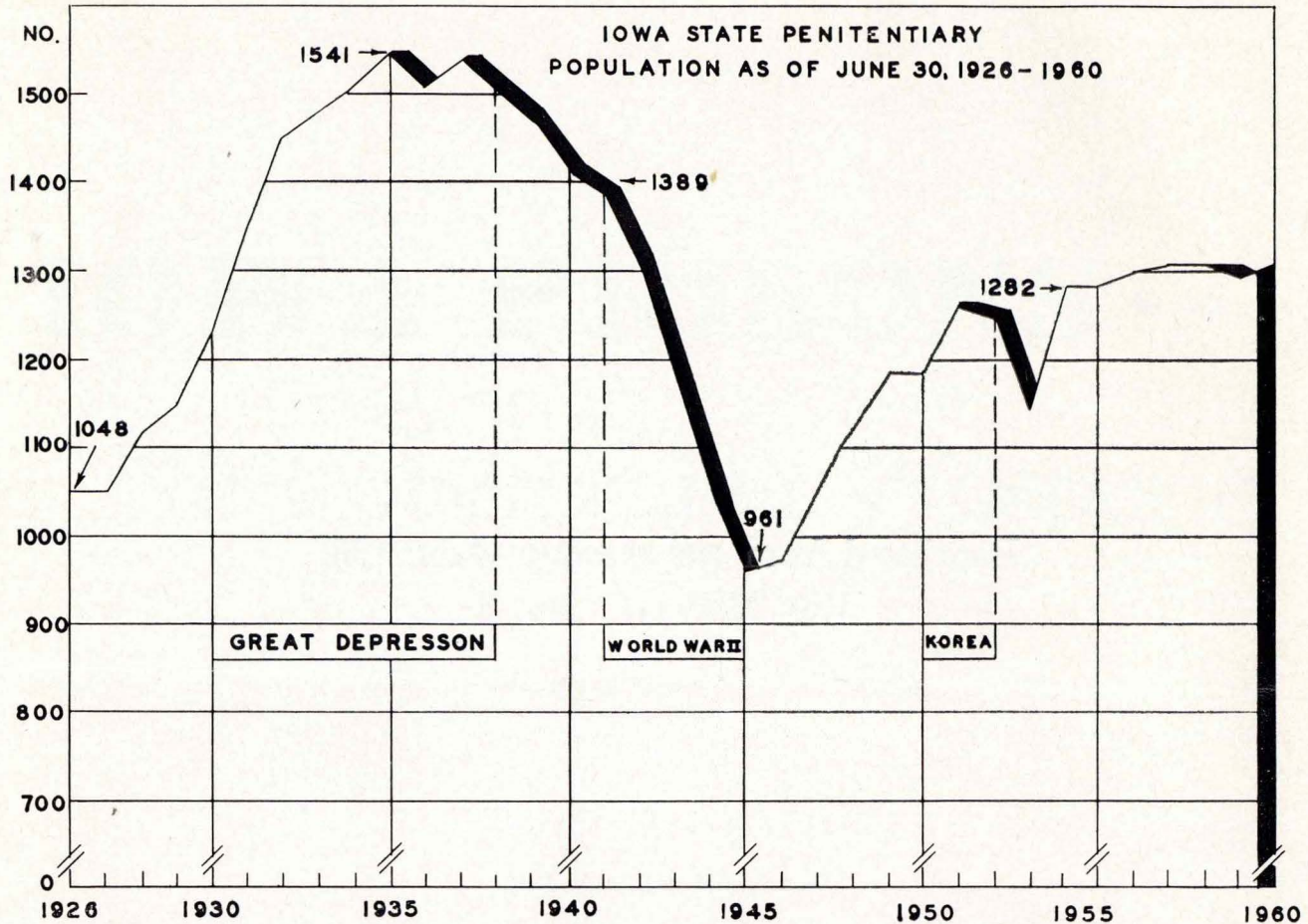
In 1926, there were 1,048 men in the penitentiary, but as the Great Depression began to affect Iowa the number increased sharply reaching 1,541 in 1935, two years after the depth of the depression in 1933. The number remained close to 1,500 until World War II which began in 1939, with the United States entering in 1941 after Pearl Harbor. In 1941, the number fell to 1,389 and decreased rapidly to 961 in 1945, the year the war ended. This sharp decrease during the war years was due to fewer commitments and the wider use of parole in the state. A certain number of the paroled men entered the military and some made creditable records.

In the postwar years, the number in the penitentiary increased again to a point higher than the prewar years. There was a slight drop during and after the Korean Incident. After this, the number remained at about the 1,300 level until 1960. This leveling process was not due to decreased commitments, but because each year from 50 to 100 men were transferred to the reformatory at Anamosa in order to avoid overcrowding at the penitentiary which has a capacity of only 1,313 men. From 1957 to 1960, a total of 312 prisoners was transferred from Ft. Madison to Anamosa.

The number of men in prison is due to the annual number committed, to the length of the sentences and the use or non-use of parole. If commitments increase and few men are paroled, the prison population increases. When the opposite takes place, prison numbers decrease.

Apart from these factors, the general over-all social conditions in the nation are related to the number of men in prison. Poverty and prosperity both tend to increase prison population, whereas wars cause the numbers to decrease. *Poverty depraves wheres prosperity tends to cor-*

rupt men, and both cause the prison population to rise. War, on the other hand, removes that age group of 18 to 45 years when most men commit crimes, and, *therefore,* decreases the prison population. In addition, war tends to cause men to shift interests and to unify a nation.



THE HIGH PRICE OF PRISONERS TODAY

Not only has the number of men in prison changed in the past three decades, but the cost of housing, feeding, clothing and securing men in prison has risen. In 1940, the State of Iowa paid \$237.60 to keep one man in the penitentiary for one year. In 1960, the cost increased to \$1,374.35 or almost five times more. This increase is due in part to the devaluation of the American dollar, but not all. Much more is being done for the prisoner today than two decades ago.

In 1940, the state paid \$336,441.60 to keep 1,416 men in the state penitentiary. In 1960, the state paid \$1,797,649.80 to keep 1,308 men in the same prison. In 20 years, the expenditures have increased from one-third

of a million to a million and three-fourths dollars. This serious increase in prison costs may cause those in authority to give serious thought to other means of caring for felons than securing them in prisons. In general, for the nation as a whole, it costs ten times more to keep a man behind bars than to supervise him on parole. Prisons do not constitute the biggest business in Iowa, but they comprise large amounts of public money. In 1960, the total capital investment in the three state correctional institutions for adults amounted to \$9,830,313.42. In 1960, the annual average cost of keeping one adult in prison in Iowa amounted to \$1,963.00: \$1,374.35 at the penitentiary, \$1,715.00 at the men's reformatory and \$2,801.65 at the women's reformatory.

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