

# Minorities trapped by system

Continued from page 1

laws requiring longer sentences and mandatory prison terms for second or third felony offenses.

Offenders who might have been placed in treatment a decade ago are today going to jail, noted Joe Buttigieg, associate director for human resources at the New York State Catholic Conference.

"There are a whole lot of people who are incarcerated who would not have been if judges had some leeway," Buttigieg said. "Clearly (drug) treatment was called for in many of these cases, but the judges were not free."

Mauer told the *Courier* drug offenders represented 25 percent of U.S. jail and prison populations in 1981. Today, he said, drug offenders constitute 53 percent of those populations.

If inmates jailed for such drug-related crimes as theft, assault or murder are included, Relin pointed out, drugs can account for as much as 80 percent of the prison population.

Meanwhile, Mauer noted, the mounting incarceration rate is harmful to society as a whole. Several studies have shown that incarcerating prisoners is more expensive than such alternative methods of supervision as parole or house arrest.

On the local level, incarceration costs 10 times as much as alternative sentencing, estimated Robert Dunning, coordinator of Monroe County Alternatives to Incarceration Division and former director of the county's probation office.

Increasing imprisonment also drains potential funding from other New York state programs, according to a 1991 study co-written by the New York State Coalition for Criminal Justice and the Correctional Association of New York.

The report, "An Imprisoned Generation: Young Men in Criminal Justice Custody in New York," states that the cost of operating prisons has "diverted monies away from programs that would have greater success in reducing crime and in improving the quality of life among New

York's poor citizens."

The report cited housing, drug treatment, education, job training and health care among the slighted programs that could reduce future drug addiction and crime.

According to the report, the state used \$1.6 billion from the Urban Development Corporation to finance construction of new prisons. That money had been earmarked for low-income housing.

Yet another result of tougher law-enforcement and sentencing policies is a sharp rise in the proportion of minorities in the prison population.

A 1989 study by state Coalition for Criminal Justice revealed that minorities constitute 82 percent of the inmates in New York state prisons.

Yet a study by the Division of Substance Abuse Services shows that most drug users in the state are white. The study reported that whites constituted 61 percent of drug users in 1986 and 1987. Blacks made up 23 percent of the drug-using population, and Hispanics accounted for 14 percent.

On the other hand, whites represented only 18 percent of those arrested for selling drugs and 36 percent of those arrested for drug possession.

Once arrested, whites are more likely than blacks to be placed in drug-treatment programs, Murphy said.

On the surface, these statistics might suggest racial bias in the system, Murphy acknowledged. But this is not the case, he said.

"I don't think generally, it is overt racism," Murphy said. "I think a lot of it is economic." Because they often have no health insurance and cannot afford private treatment, minority drug users generally have less access to treatment programs than do whites, he noted.

Minorities are also more likely to lack jobs, education and family or other support systems, Murphy added. Such factors can lead people to turn to drugs and crime, he said.

Relin acknowledged that police depart-

ments do direct more of their anti-drug activity to inner-city, minority areas than to suburban, white areas. Since drugs are sold and used more openly in the inner city than in the suburbs, city users and traffickers are easier targets for police, he explained.

Relin also noted that city neighborhoods are the ones most afflicted by drug-related violence. Heightened police activity in these neighborhoods is motivated by concerns for community safety, he explained.

Some critics of the criminal-justice system believe that these and other law-enforcement policies must be changed. But simply changing policies cannot cure all the system's ills, noted John Klofas, a professor of criminal justice at Rochester Institute of Technology.

Klofas, who has done extensive study on Monroe County's criminal-justice system, observed that economics and high rates of drug use are part of the system's problems. But he stressed that further study is needed to find solutions for those problems.

Nevertheless, those who advocate reforming criminal justice say some initial steps can be taken to improve the situation.

Murphy, Mauer and Buttigieg agreed that one of those steps would be repealing mandatory sentencing laws. Doing so would give judges more discretion in deciding what to do with convicted criminals.

They also advocated more use of alternative sentences. Such sentences could combine parole, house arrest, drug- or alcohol-treatment programs and support groups.

Monroe County, in fact, offers a variety of alternative programs, Dunning noted. Among these programs are pre-trial mediation, release for drug treatment and probation.

Another option for alternative sentencing was created by the recent opening of The Bridge.

A resource center, The Bridge offers space for support groups, meetings with counselors, and social programs to encourage individuals to escape the cycle of crime and drugs, Dunning said.



But the alternative sentence office deals with an average of 550 people a month. That number continues to grow, as does the number of people going to jail and prison. Thus, Dunning acknowledged, alternative programs help to reduce jail populations, but they are not solving the overall problem of crime.

Klofas observed that solutions to the problems of increasing crime and imprisonment will be found only when individuals on all side of the question put aside their rhetoric, sit down and talk.

Dunning similarly remarked that long-term solutions will come about only when society as a whole deals with the problems that lead to crime. He said people must be given hope for the future through improvements in education, housing and job opportunities.

Accomplishing this goal will require the entire community to become involved, Dunning said.

"The criminal justice system is part of the community," Dunning concluded. "We need the whole community to get involved. It's going to cost the taxpayers money, but it's a matter of pay me now, or pay me later."

Attorney & Counselor At Law  
**RON BUTTARAZZI**  
**GENERAL PRACTICE OF LAW**  
 Full and comprehensive legal services for all your personal, family and business needs.  
 "Counsel and support when you need it most."  
**CALL: 232-4640**  
*Wisdom, Justice, Judgement, Equity*  
 Prov. 1:3



**OUTDOOR SHRINES**  
 FOR YOUR YARD OR GARDEN  
 Many statues in stock including The Blessed Mother, Christ, Sacred Heart, St. Jude, St. Francis, St. Joseph, St. Anthony and Infant of Prague.  
 (Statues of other saints may be special ordered)  
 A COMPLETE GARDEN SHOP FEATURING A WIDE SELECTION OF GARDEN SUPPLIES, AND LAWN ORNAMENTS.  
**HILLTOP MARKET**  
 1506 EMPIRE BLVD.  
 WEBSTER, NY 14580  
**671-1967**

**Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)**  
**Vol. 104 No. 29 August 1, 1991**  
 Published weekly except the first Thursday in January.  
 Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$19.50; Canada and foreign \$19.50 plus postage.  
 Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340.  
 Second-class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.  
 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

**Excellent Part-Time Employment Opportunities**



**Positions Available in September. Train Now!**

Free Training • Summers & Holidays Off  
 Excellent Hourly Pay • Excellent Work Conditions  
**Call Mary Butera, Personnel Supervisor**  
**647-9360 or Stop In & Apply.**



**NATIONAL SCHOOL BUS SERVICE, INC.**  
 575 Colfax Street • Rochester, NY  
**716-647-9360**

**Stokoe Farms**  
 Pick Your Own  
 Picked Quarts Always Available

**TOMATOES AND PEPPERS**  
 Call For Availability

**Blueberries and Peaches**  
 Now Available For U-Pick

**PLENTY OF SWEET CORN AVAILABLE AT THE RASPBERRY AND BLUEBERRY STAND ON RT. 383 889-2050**

**Call Before You Come**  
**U-PICK HOURS: Tues., Thurs., & Sun 8-1; Sat. 8-6 Or till picked out**