

# BLITCH TALKS NO CONVICT LEASE SYSTEM

One of the questions of much interest to the people of Florida at the present time, is the present Convict Lease System. Perhaps there is no man in the state more thoroughly conversant with and able to discuss this question, than Dr. S. H. Blitch, the present Supervisor of State convicts. The following address of Dr. Blitch, delivered before the Prison Congress recently assembled at Albany, N. Y., thoroughly depicts and presents to the public the ideas of this man on this much discussed and very important subject to the people of Florida.

The address is well prepared and in part is as follows: "I shall define for the purpose of argument, that the "Open" penitentiary system is that mode of social restraint wherein the prisoner sentenced to hard labor is required to perform skilled and unskilled service in fields, woods, surface mining, and such industries and occupations that do not require his daily confinement or circumscribed confinement. The utilization of indoor confinement and the utilization of the conditions of his imprisonment out of doors. The "Close" penitentiary system may be defined wherein the felon is under perpetual cellular restraint, in that during his entire term of imprisonment he is confined within the four walls of his prison, compelled to render continuous daily service at some fixed occupation or trade; his recreation even being confined to prison walls and his complete isolation assured.

I am free to confess that superficial and theoretical comparison of the open system with the close system shows the former to be a decided disadvantage, however, from a humanitarian standpoint, and the actual correction of the vicious, the rehabilitation, both mentally and physically, can more rapidly be arrived at by the open method than the close method, and thus the intent and object of penal institutions be better fulfilled; and why—because the open system immediately leaves the prisoner with Nature, and Nature, omnipotent, omniscient, sublime, can do more with the mental and physical mind in one day than the combined ingenuity of man can accomplish in a lifetime. The close system surrounds the prisoner with ever present evidence of his degradation, giving mind and matter no chance, no opportunity to expand and chasten. The deadly daily routine, the perpetual sameness, the universal silence, the brain allowed to constantly brood over the unfortunate situation and the body existing without life-giving nature, I say, the close system returns to society an individual more dangerous to posterity than the one it confined originally to reform. The open system impresses upon the prisoners the gladness of living, the joy of commingling with his fellow man, the inexpressible longing for freedom, the one chance and determination to lead a correct future life. Marching at the rising of the sun under armed guards but without other restraint to perform their daily labor in fields and woods, under the blue canopy of Heaven until the close of day, with God's sunshine and pure air building him anew, is it any wonder, gentlemen, that we advocates and champions of the open system, contend that our prisoner is a much better individual morally and physically when returned to society?

That the open system of the South is subject to criticism cannot be denied, and equally undeniable is the fact that much criticism has been ill-advised and unjust. We have been accused of selling men into involuntary servitude and of deriving an income from such a system. But granting this as true, is not practically the same being done every day in the North, under the close penitentiary system?

Under your system the labor of the convict is leased; under ours the convict himself is leased. Under your system the convicts are segregated, buried alive, I might say, in great grey stone dungeons, shut away from the eye of the public—a myth, a mystery and a mere mental abstraction to the great mass of your people. With us conditions altogether different prevail. Our convicts are leased outright and bodily. They are not shut away from the public eye. Their lives—their term of imprisonment—are for the most part passed in the open air, where they, their work and their treatment may be seen of all men. Any case of abuse or neglect must with us, therefore, of necessity, at once become known.

Under your system, quite another condition of affairs presents itself to

the intelligent observer. Whatever may be done within your prison walls—and I take it for granted that, as human nature is virtually the same the world over—the brutal and domineering guard is not altogether extinct with you, even in this era of progressive pedagogy. I take it for granted that prisoners are sometimes abused and maltreated even in the close system, where with unlimited means and every appliance of a highly organized and complex society at its command, better things might be expected. And I, furthermore, take it for granted that, while with us of the far South, these things are done in the open air of day, with you they are done beneath mountains of masonry, unknown, unsuspected and uncriticized by the general public.

But there are two sales to this, as to most other questions. These actions very "open air exposure" of the Florida convict system renders it an object of general comment, and the mere fact that our prisoners are employed in the broad light of day, where all who care to turn their heads may see them, renders our system subject to attack it would otherwise escape.

Now, my friends, I have already referred to the question of environment and to the convict's previous history and antecedents as having an important bearing upon his treatment. I think myself safe in assuming that the majority of your convicts come from the cities, and that of that majority the greater number have been accustomed to indoor occupations. But with us the case is altogether different. We have no great congested centers of population. Our "cities" are hardly more than large towns, and the greater part of Florida's prison population has been accustomed to life in the open air. To condemn such a class of prisoners to close confinement, or, indeed, to hard labor within four walls of a model penitentiary, would not only be dangerous—it would be fatal. Ninety per cent of our Florida convicts are negroes—men raised either at the slow hand or on the street corners of some country town. These men could never stand rigid discipline; and the impatience of the negro to acquire a trade or become a skilled artisan was long ago demonstrated in my state at least. The open air system then puts these men at work under conditions which they have from youth up been accustomed to, and I am satisfied that the result will show the wisdom of our plan. Again, practically the other ten per cent of our prison population is composed in part of the native whites who are from the rural districts, and in part by the so-called "tourist" element, men who from previous pernicious habits have sought Florida as a Mecca for health and wealth, the latter regardless of how accumulated. And now, from a physician's standpoint, I want to state that of the blacks, or negroes, based on a period of close observation covering one year, or from January 1, 1905, to December 31, of the same year, nearly 25 per cent out of approximately 500 that passed through my hands in that period, owing to previous excesses and the ravages of disease, were incapable of manual labor at the time of their entrance into prison; and out of the approximately 50 white prisoners handled during the same period 65 per cent, for the same reason were unfit for labor. Of course their incarceration in the several jails was responsible to some extent for their condition, but not enough to have a decided effect on the whole. At the end of the year 1905 the disability of these prisoners had been reduced to a fraction over 3 per cent; that is, of the 350 prisoners under observation all but 17 were at "able bodied" service. 11 were at average service and 6 incurable. While this has not been as closely watched in the previous years of my connection with the outdoor system I am certain this is an average of the condition that has existed.

Again, taking the above into consideration, a death rate of 2.5 per cent for the years 1904, and 1905, out of a prison population averaging 1250, and 2100 prisoners handled per annum. And yet, gentlemen, this is the record of the much criticized, publicly condemned so-called lease system of Florida; and when I state to you on my honor as a physician that at least 20 per cent of the prisoners received into our prison bear the brand of immorality—syphilis—and 7 per cent are infected with the dread tubercular germ, can you doubt that I could stand for any other than the open air system of

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Elia:—What makes you think he loves you? Did he say so?  
Ida:—No, but he hugged me. That is a roundabout way of letting me know it.

The Word He Wanted.  
She:—Ever since I was a mere child I've had trouble in pronouncing certain words that have an "s" in them.  
He (anxiously):—I—I hope you don't find any difficulty in saying "yes."

Back from the Honeymoon.  
Maud:—When we get back let us try to create the impression that we are not newly married.  
Jack:—All right; you had better carry the bag and the rag-strap, then.—London Scraps.



Great.  
First Actor—What success did you have on your trip?  
Second Actor—Great! Hundreds thronged away.  
First Actor—Did your doorkeeper turn them away?  
Second Actor—No, they didn't give him a chance but turned away themselves.



The Prodigy Class.  
Master—Name the four seasons.  
Young Prodigy—Salt, pepper, mustard, and vinegar.—London Scraps.



What is to be done with the growing power of socialism all over the world? asks the New York Mail. That is perhaps the greatest problem that confronts the statesmen of today. It is particularly urgent in Germany, where socialism has made great strides in the imperial Parliament. Prince Bismarck believed in annexing socialism to the monarchial state. He was overruled, and socialism in all Germany, although many measures have been conceded to it, has grown into a great army whose soldiers are mainly inveterate enemies of conservative society and the monarchy.

Chancellor Von Buelow has distinctly declared himself in the Prussian House of Lords as in favor of a "sharp application of all existing laws against the common enemy," meaning socialism. This preface an intensification in Germany of a struggle which, by the Liberal and Labor victory in Britain, is in the latter country brought nearer than ever to a compromise.



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In County Court, Volusia County, Florida. By the County Judge of said County: Whereas, Albert Turner applied to this court for letters of administration on the estate of F. M. Murchinson, deceased, late of said county of Volusia. These are, therefore, to cite and admonish all and singular the kindred and creditors of said deceased, to be and appear before this court, on or before the 15th day of October, A. D. 1906, and file objections, if any they have, to the granting letters as aforesaid, otherwise the same will be granted as prayed. Witness my name as County Judge of the county aforesaid, this 3rd day of September, 1906. J. LEE McROBY, County Judge.

Notice of Final Discharge  
NOTICE is hereby given that six months after date, to-wit, on the 15th day of October, 1906, I will present to the county judge of Volusia county, Florida, my final account as executor of the last will and testament of Martin Allen, deceased, and ask for final discharge.  
CHARLES W. RUSH, Executor.  
New Smyrna, April 4, 1906.

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Notice of Application for Tax Deed Under Section 8 of Chapter 1008, Laws of Florida.

NOTICE is hereby given that Edward E. Jones, purchaser of Tax Certificate No. 208, dated the 3rd day of July, A. D. 1906, and has filed said certificate in my office, and has made application for tax deed to issue in accordance with law. Said certificate embraces the following described property situated in Volusia county, Florida, to-wit: All the 1/2 of DeLand.

The said land being assessed at the date of the issuance of such certificate in the name of J. F. McQuinn. Unless said certificate shall be redeemed according to law, tax deed will issue thereon on the 9th day of October, A. D. 1906.

Witness my official signature and seal this 7th day of September, A. D. 1906. SAM'L D. JORDAN, Clerk Circuit Court, Volusia County, Florida, By Hon. F. W. C.

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