

THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

Where The Spirit Of The Lord Is, There Is Liberty

II Corinthians 3:17

EUGENE C. PULLIAM, Publisher

"Let the people know the facts and the country will be saved." — Abraham Lincoln

Incredible Laxity

Incredible laxity and extremely bad judgment are evident in circumstances surrounding the escape from Central State Hospital of Robert E. Schmidt, 47, the criminal sexual psychopath charged with the kidnap-slaving of Jerry M. (Mike) Bayles, 10-year-old Star carrier.

Schmidt, who was indicted on charges of sexually molesting dozens of young boys, was committed by court order in August, 1969, to Norman W. Beatty Memorial Hospital at Westville because tests purportedly showed he was incompetent to stand trial. Yet he was transferred to what can only be called the incompetent custody of Central State Hospital in the middle of an Indianapolis residential district.

Why?

In spite of Schmidt's foul record he was placed in an off-grounds work program at Central State. If he was sufficiently competent to take part in an off-grounds work program, was he not competent enough to stand trial? He was even permitted to buy a 1970 automobile which he kept parked on the hospital grounds. Why?

Schmidt then violated the terms of his "work-release program" and was returned to 24-hour confinement, according to Dr. John U. Keating, superintendent of the hospital and acting state mental health commissioner. Nevertheless, Schmidt escaped. Why?

His escape was not reported to Indianapolis police until five days later. Why?

Police learned that any one of several criminal sexual psychopaths could have been at the scene of the boy's kidnaping, 100 yards from the hospital's main gate. It was learned that such individuals are among patients who have the run of the grounds. Why?

Whether Schmidt is guilty of the Bayles slaying or any other criminal psychopath committed to Central State Hospital was involved in the murder remains to be seen. But the handling of Schmidt's case and the unbelievably sloppy security at Central State demand stern official review and appropriate action.

Alan R. Kimbell, director of public safety, is absolutely right in saying that Central State should not be required to treat criminal sexual psychopaths and that such persons should be confined to an institution capable of maintaining tight security and in urging that legislation dealing with the problem be enacted in the next session of the General Assembly.

Meanwhile, the public interest demands that executive action be taken at once to transfer criminal sexual psychopaths and any other potentially dangerous patients from Central State to Beatty Hospital or some other mental institution with a maximum security section.

And in view of the many atrocious crimes committed by supposedly "cured" mental patients, we urge a thoroughgoing official review of policies governing the release of potentially dangerous criminal sexual psychopaths being held in any of the state's mental and correctional institutions.

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