aganda could, the interests interlocking town and countryside.

The irrigation schemes started several years ago have been effective, despite drought in some areas and floods in others, in raising considerably the output of crops. The return on local industries and agriculture is providing funds which the production teams and brigades and the commune itself can invest in social benefits, in the beginning of

agricultural mechanization and in new light industries and the expansion of old ones.

As I left the East Flower Commune in the Kwangtung Province, the last of the six communes I visited during my 1963 tour, and looked across the well-irrigated paddies, brilliantly green with thickly planted rice, I was reminded of the propagandists in Hong Kong, Singapore and the West; most of whom have never been within a hundred miles of a commune, who had proclaimed that the system was grinding to a halt. And I wondered whether, if all the dozens of foreigners who in 1963 and 1964 visited these "liquidated" communes and found them flourishing were to raise their voices in unison, the news might come to the ears of Joseph Alsop and his fellow experts on disaster.

Jefferson City

The Pen That Just Grew ... Patrick J. Buchanan

St. Louis, Mo.

The Missouri Penitentiary for Men is one of the oldest and largest penal institutions in the United States—and perennially one of the bloodiest. It is deplored by campaigning politicians, neglected by entrenched officials, damned by a persevering press, and run by its hapless inmates.

It has been ever thus with the penitentiary at Jefferson City. Inaugurated during the second term of Andrew Jackson with the incarceration of one Wilson Edison, horse thief, it had exceeded its then capacity of forty within the first year. By 1854, investigators found it a "school for rogues" that rehabilitated its populace with whip, bread and water, ball and chain. In 1890, a graduate of the Kansas penal system, having been regaled by fellow inmates with past experience of Jefferson City, published Twin Hells, a book in which he deplored the mixing of first offenders with incorrigible criminals and questioned the practice of beating prisoners with the cat-o-nine-tails "until the blood filled up their shoes."

Perhaps sensitive to this sort of criticism, the Missouri Encyclopedia of 1903 approached lyricism in its admiration of the penitentiary:

... discipline of the prison is perfect, morale of the prisoners is excellent due in large measure to the present and well-guarded system of employment and the influence of religious services and the library. Corporal punishment is almost unknown and solitary confinement is

found necessary in comparatively few instances. The higher instincts of the men are appealed to through kind but firm treatment, but with salutary results.

But Warden Bradberry was in charge in those days, and he once boasted: "I guess I have whipped more men than any man alive." And a former convict and a guard each wrote a book: Buried Alive, or Eighteen Years in the Missouri Penitentiary and The Legions of Purgatory and Hell: The True Story of the Missouri Penitentiary.

As Missouri grew, so did its penitentiary. In 128 years its plant mushroomed from 4 acres to 47 acres. Throughout the world, penal theories and methods of confinement changed, but the method at Jefferson City has remained the same: more buildings, more walls, more cells. The present product is described by the director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons as "a labyrinth of buildings, tunnels, roads, enclosed passageways, and stairways. . . . Some of the buildings [are] ill-adapted units, conceived and built according to a penal philosophy no longer practiced."

In one twenty-eight-month period, ending a year ago, 145 inmates of this warren were stabbed and seven died of their wounds. Nothing radical has been done to improve the odds for survival because convicts hire no lobbyists, and cadres of graduate volunteers do not patrol legislative halls buttonholing representatives for reform. A $1 million allocation to augment the guard force is not going to fatten anybody's plurality in an off-year election, while a new stretch of black top through New Madrid or Dunklin Counties just might.

Public debate on how to meet the "rising tide of crime in our streets" ends once the men thought responsible for this lawlessness are tucked safely behind prison walls. In fact, though, the attitude is shortsighted, for nineteen of the twenty who walk into the Jefferson City prison eventually walk out again, carrying with them the habits and memories of several years' existence in a quasi-jungle.

Today, however, for the first time since the riots of 1954, the climate is conducive to reform. Both gubernatorial candidates were pledged to do something about Jefferson City. The Assembly convenes New Year's Day, and State Representative Peter J. J. Rabbitt, chairman of the interim prison committee, is devoting his Saturdays to completing a report which should assure consideration of the prison problem in the 1965 session. It was Mr. Rabbitt's low-budget committee's inspection of the penitentiary which uncovered the brutality. A year ago last September, he led his committee on the required annual tour of penal facilities. He followed this up by writing a letter to the director of the Department of Corrections, Col. James D. Carter, suggesting correction of a few outstanding abuses.

Forty-eight hours later, a perturbed Gov. John M. Dalton hurried before TV cameras that the committee investigation was a publicity stunt, ordered Colonel Carter to ignore its recommendations, and decreed this "usurping" of his executive powers. Rabbitt re-
plied that he was only following state law, and it seemed for a few weeks that the lid was back on that embarrassing box. But then in mid-October, a 19-year-old boy was stabbed to death in the prison shower; shortly thereafter, a 24-year-old St. Louisan was cut to pieces in his cell and a third inmate, 57 years old, was knifed to death by his cell mate. This brought a “crackdown” by prison officials and the comment — “There isn’t much you can do about it; these are hardened criminals”—from a more subdued Governor. Rabbitt’s committee was called to the capital for an emergency session.

In executive session, prison doctor, Hugh W. Maxey, testified that an appalling 489 acts of violence had been reported during the same months that the 145 stab- bings aforementioned occurred. They ranged from clubbings, burnings with acid, lye and coffee, on down to fist fights. Colonel Carter recom- mended that the prison be closed and a maximum security institution be constructed to house the “300 hardened criminals” in the peniten- tiary; meanwhile Warden E. V. Nash instituted a “stepped up” program of inmate shakedowns.

The investigating committee linked the brutality to gambling, drugs, sex affairs, poor physical facili- ties and low morale among the guards. What makes these problems—existing to some degree in almost every prison—next to insoluble in Missouri is the physical make-up of that 47-acre amalgam of walls and cells. The rambling, unorgan- ized premises can conceal a thou- sand knives. A typical cell has two bunks, an overstuffed chair, shelves of canned goods, a homemade table, walls plastered with obscene pictures; every cell is a storehouse, causing one guard to lament, “You just can’t shake one of them cells down.”

Supposedly the prison is a maximum security institution, but the large population—1,600, down from 2,200 a year ago—compels officials to run it on a medium security basis or abandon any attempt to rehabilitate the majority. Lack of qualified guards compounds the problem. Inmates act as “hall tenders” and “lever men,” taking the count and overseeing the cell blocks. One ex-lever man told me that his functions had included transportation of syringes, eye droppers and dope. For four packs of cigarettes he would open doors to two cells so that inmates having affairs could visit together. He also managed the clandestine commissary.

Newly arrived prisoners have been reassigned to cells “for the benefit of other inmates,” as Ward- en Nash delicately phrased it. One guard, recently caught at this form of pandering, was forced to resign. Rabbitt himself heard testimony that one youngster was “shifted ten times in a month.”

The dope, the gambling, the com- missary debts and the homosexual affairs promote the grudges; me- dium security allows for their vio- lent settlement. While prison offi- cials were rightly castigated for covering up the bloody statistics and for complacency in the face of appalling conditions—thus guaranteeing that an uninformed assembly would take no action—they are nevertheless confronted by a dilemma. If they provide movies, library and relative freedom at this prison, they have violence. If they prevent the violence by locking the place up at 5 P.M., they may also end the chances for rehabilitation. No one contends that prison officials have made the best of the difficult situation, but it is doubtful that any acceptable solution exists in the context of Jefferson City.

Thus Rabbitt’s committee logically recommended considering a new maximum security prison. The Governor again took to TV, pooh-poohing the 145 stab- bings as “part of a cycle,” and adding, “It would be nice if we had $100 mil- lion for a new prison, but I’m not in favor of stripping away our state financial support for schools to give someone a country club.”

That is the way the Southeast Missouri political mind works. While the above comment might snap the editorial pages of the big city press to indignant attention, it would strike a sympathetic chord elsewhere in the state. That the $100 million figure came out of the air, that no one had suggested a “country club,” that there was no need to divert funds from anywhere, let alone from schools, failed to inhibit
the Governor's politically sound pitch.

The year 1963 closed typically with New Year's Day papers carrying stories of how a berserk prisoner had murdered a 20-year-old inmate by opening his skull with a meat cleaver. January also brought Rabbitt's committee back for a surprise inspection of sanitary conditions in the kitchen and hospital. Convicts had told Rabbitt that the man to see about dope consumption in the penitentiary was James E. Carter, a forger employed in the prison hospital. But prisoner Carter was nowhere to be found when Rabbitt looked for him, and a brief investigation determined that he was no longer in residence. He had unearthed a gun in the prison and turned it over to Dr. Maxey. Prison officials had hastily called the parole board, which refused to release Carter; they then went to the Governor, who speedily commuted Carter's sentence to the time served. By the time of Rabbitt's "surprise" visit, his prime witness was headed for the Pacific Northwest, a free man and, one must assume, the bewildered beneficiary of an incredible display of executive dispatch.

In January, Myrl Alexander (now Federal Prison Director) and three experts also made a seventy-two-hour study of the prison. Their report was devastating. The guard force of 302 officers, consisting largely of former bellhops, taxi drivers, farmers and clerks, each earning $262 a month, was "underpaid, undertrained, uncertain of advancement, and unrecognized, except when trouble arises." These men were found to be "marking time along with their 2,200 charges."

Both Warden Nash and Colonel Carter expressed surprise that for eighteen months there had been no in-service training of guards. Communication at the prison "had all but broken down."

The Alexander report concluded: "The present inadequacy of the guard force . . . suggests that even a minor incident might trigger a disturbance of major proportions. To Missourians with memories of 1954 this meant only one thing—riot. Haunted by that specter, Governor Dalton demanded that the merit system for prison officials be jettisoned, that the man who was taking the responsibility should be given the power to hire and fire. Carter said Nash "had been too nice a guy" and Nash acknowledged "gross complacency down the line."

Warren Hearnes, soon to be elected Governor, then contributed to the controversy what is best described as his "2c worth" when he recommended that all 1,900 prisoners not needing "maximum security" be put on parole, thus saving Missouri $25 million a year. This "idealistic" proposal failed to catch fire and has been forgotten.

But the report did produce a flurry of activity; salary hikes for guards, new sanitary standards for kitchen and hospital, new administrative and training procedures and a new coat of paint for "A" Hall. "A" Hall is a tale in itself.

If the penitentiary is a disgrace to Missouri, "A" Hall is an embarrassment to the penitentiary. Built in 1868, its three-man cells have historically housed Negro prisoners. When fire gutted "A" Hall in 1927, it was described as an "example of what a modern prison should not be." It was hastily rebuilt on the old model.

In 1938, a federal commission reported to President Roosevelt: "We cannot recommend that ['A' Hall] be continued in use at all unless alterations are made and the practice of confining six or seven men to a cell is discontinued." This summer, twenty-six years later, five and six Negroes were still being shoehorned into "A" Hall's cells. They were moved this fall, but not before one of the bloodiest episodes since the 1954 riots.

Common sense in a border state with a record of violence like Missouri's would almost dictate that prisoner integration not be attempted except in a ratio that would give the Negroes, as one white ex-con put it, "some protection in numbers." But Carter and Nash, in what must be the most savage example of token integration on record, divided eleven Negroes between two all-white halls in one cell block.

Within days of the shift, four of those Negro inmates were brutally knifed in mass and planned attack; one died. There have been no prosecutions for the murder; it would be optimistic to expect any, for the Cole County prosecutor has tried just one prison case in ten years.

The warden locked the halls up and removed privileges, but was forced to rescind his orders when the penned-up inmates became ugly. The din of their suckus floated over the wall to Carter's house one weekend evening and he informed neighbor Nash who went across the street and shot the pacifying tear gas into the cells himself. Privileges were restored and it seemed that the inmates had decided to settle the matter themselves: the first day, as one of the "suspects" went out into the yard, he was crowned with a baseball bat.

In the last two months there has been a shifting of convicts to the new Moberly prison, to farms, honor camp and sawmill. Population at the penitentiary is down to about 1,600, but it would be folly for the new governor or assembly to think the problems have been solved. "A" Hall is being retained as a disciplinary cell block. Convicts still hold authority, still run the prison. That means that gambling, drugs, sex affairs and violence will continue. Reducing population does not reduce the need for guards; there remain the same number of towers to man and cells to watch. The parole board needs more men; they are carrying twice the recommended work load.

The interim committee needs more than the niggardly $3,000 budget it got for inspecting prisons last session. The new committee chairman needs more cooperation from the new Governor than his predecessor got from the old one. But, in the end, an acceptable solution—one providing both rehabilitation and prisoner safety—cannot be found until that 128-year-old anachronism overlooking the Missouri River is scuttled. A fresh coat of paint for "A" Hall is not enough.