Lister Sinclair
Good evening. I'm Lister Sinclair and this is *Ideas* on prisons.

Jim Cavanagh
With the majority of those that end up becoming criminals, from young offenders on up, it happens because of a lot of hurts that have happened to them in their lives, and then they end up taking it out on others. And if you don't deal with the person and their internal problems and help them overcome them, they become worse. And if you warehouse them, well, you're warehousing the problems for X-number of years and then bringing them back into society worse off, and then it doesn't change anything. It's a vicious circle.

Lister Sinclair
On tonight's program, we continue with David Cayley's ten-part series on "Prison and Its Alternatives." In earlier programs, he's examined imprisonment as an institution and asked whether it makes sense as a policy. Tonight he turns to imprisonment as an experience. You'll hear the stories of two ex-prisoners, who now work with those inside. And you'll meet a prison officer from one of Canada's toughest prisons and hear his story. "Prison and Its Alternatives," Part Six by David Cayley.

David Cayley
The idea that prisons are an instrument of correction is not more than 200 years old. Prisons as a way of keeping people out of circulation have been known since antiquity, but the claim that imprisonment would actually do the offender good began to be heard only in the later eighteenth century. It was then that reformers like John Howard, put forward the concept of imprisonment which is preserved in the word pentitentiary. Today it takes an effort to recall what the word originally meant, but for Howard and his colleagues, it represented the idea that prisons ought to stimulate remorse and repentance and that this could be done by the administration of what historian Michael Ignatieff calls "carefully legitimated and scientifically inflicted pain." Prisons were to be stern but humane institutions that aimed their ministrations at the offender's soul.

The husks of this dream still surround us: at Pentonville in London, at Auburn in the State of New York, at Kingston in what was still Upper Canada when the jail was built. But the faith that reformatories can reform or penitentiaries produce penitence is nearly gone. We still depend on the institution—indeed, we depend on it utterly in the sense that we have no other way of signifying serious disapproval—but who believes anymore that it has any other purpose than to warehouse problem people in miserable circumstances, and who can doubt that many of those people will come out worse than they went in. There is a demand on the political right for harsher prisons and longer terms of imprisonment, but it seems to me that this is only in the interests of exacting a more satisfying revenge, not because it is claimed that any good will come of it or because the idea that prisons deter crime is actually believed.

This is the situation this series of programs tries to address: we've become dependent on an institution in which many no longer have confidence. Subsequent programs explore alternatives. Tonight's show is about how people get into prison and what happens there, both to those that are imprisoned and those that must keep them under control.

The first story is Jim Cavanagh's. I met him at a conference at McMaster Divinity School called "Crime and Its Victims: A Christian Response" and was intrigued to learn that this courteous and mild-mannered man had once been, according to the person who introduced us, "the meanest man in prison," serving altogether 25 years in Canadian penal institutions. Today he's the director of the Kingston Chapter of Prison Fellowship Canada, a non-denominational ministry to prisoners and ex-prisoners.

Jim Cavanagh
Where the story started with me was a dysfunctional family background, where I was hurt a lot as a child because my dad was an alcoholic, drunk. And he would beat on my mother, and I would start running the streets to find the hospital where my mother was. When my father wasn't drinking though, he was a good provider, and he was one that loved the children and my mother. But I ran the streets, and as I ran the streets, I had to steal food and panhandle for money in order to survive.

Eventually when I was eight years old, I was sexually abused by people who had taken me into their place, and this hurt me. And I withdrew more, and I wouldn't tell anyone and I would strike out at things in society. I'd vandalize cars, I'd vandalize homes that I would break into and steal food from.

And at age ten, they ended up putting me in the reform

school, and in the reform school, there were adults who were supposed to look after me, give me guidance and help correct me and put me on the right path. But what I learned was that all there was in the reform school was physical abuse, psychological abuse and sexual abuse. And this hardened me and I withdrew. I alienated myself from trusting those in society, especially adults, and the only ones I associated and felt I was accepted by were others who were hurting like me. So, then we would form a nucleus and, thereby, share with one another, encourage one another and still strike back at authority and strike back at society. It was a vicious circle. Society's answer to it was just lock them up and punish them. What they were really doing was taking a problematic child and saying we'll warehouse this boy for X-number of years in a prison under harsh conditions, and that should change him.

Well, it doesn't. It doesn't change anyone. It hardens them worse. And when you're in prison, you learn more criminality from older men. So, I ended up becoming a career criminal, and I ended up becoming one who didn't care for myself. I hated myself. I hated everyone else, and I felt life wasn't worth living and I just gave up.

Meanwhile I would look at other people in the community, and I would see that they would have a wife and children, they would have a home, a car. And my heart yearned to have the normal things. I wanted a normal job. And at one time after getting out of prison, I managed to land a part-time job and a full-time job as a freight handler and in a dairy factory. Then a policeman who I had had a run-in with earlier in my childhood found out I was working there. He told the employer and he had me laid off and fired. And I had been happy. I wasn't doing any crime or anything when I was working. I felt self-worth. The pay cheque was low, but I was happy and I was getting by. My father said, "Well, you'll get another job." And I said, "It'll be the same thing all over again. I've had it."

So, then I went back to the streets. I picked up the gun, and I went back to that sort of life. You can do armed robberies or safecrackings or other criminal acts and get away with maybe ten times of pulling offences, but the police need only catch you for one and then you're going back. And I went back into prison, and it cost me over the years, in and out, on four sentences, it cost me 20 years of my life in the federal system and five years of it in the reform school.

David Cayley
As a teenager, Jim Cavanagh escaped from that reform school in Shelburne, Nova Scotia, and while he was out, committed a series of automobile thefts. He was arrested, given three concurrent three-year sentences and sent off to the federal penetentiary in Dorchester, New Brunswick at the age of only 15.

Jim Cavanagh
When I was being driven up in the car, the one policeman said, "Kid, they'll fix you up there. They'll use you as a woman." And so forth. And he was trying to frighten me. And my response to him was, "The first one bothers me, I'll kill him." But I was scared. Then I started settling in to the prison, and the first prisoner that did stroke my hair and say, "You're a cute kid," and that, I smashed him in the head with a chair. It was in a classroom, and we got in a fight. I poked another guy with a wire that I had made to a point at one end. And the word spread that that kid won't take it, so if you're going to deal with him, you're going to get hurt unless you're going to hurt him first. And others looked at me then and sort of took a liking to me and said, "That kid's got a lotta spunk. He's fighting for himself."

And then I fell in league with guys that were from the Montreal area that were well schooled in a lot of criminality, and that's when I was taught how to safecrack and plan and execute armed robberies.

David Cayley
During one of these robberies, Jim Cavanagh shot and wounded a police officer, for which he received a 15-year sentence. He escaped and was re-captured, which lengthened the sentence. Eventually he ended up in the so-called Special Handling Unit at Millhaven Penetentiary in eastern Ontario. This was in the early 1970s, and Millhaven was then a new maximum security institution, built to house many of Canada's most dangerous prisoners. There he killed a fellow prisoner.

Jim Cavanagh
In 1975, I took the life of a man in Millhaven. He was sexually imposing himself on another young prisoner, who I knew, and when I found out about it, I approached him and I asked him to leave the guy alone. I said the guy had enough to do with serving his sentence, and it isn't right, what you're doing. He mouthed off to me and got very abusive. I won't use the language here. And he got off his bed, and he reached into his locker, where a weapon was

and he tried to intimidate or threaten me with this weapon. And that made me angry and upset, and I wanted to get into an altercation with him right then and there, but in the back of my mind, I said just wait. And I backed out of the cell, and I let it go for a while.

And then I finally decided after I seen he was still bothering the person. I went and got a weapon and I came back. I confronted him. I gave him the opportunity to say, "Okay, I'm sorry for what I said to you. I'll leave him alone." His choice was, "No, I'm going to do what I feel like I want to do, and that's it." And I said, "That's too bad." And I pulled out my knife, and we got into it and I did kill the man.

When I reflect back on it years later, as a changed person, I believe that I was taking out on him what I couldn't take out on others who perpetrated themself on me when I was younger. And it's sad because, like, there was nobody to come and claim his body. He had no family members. Nobody. And when I reflect that this man had a messed-up life, like I did, I think it was unfortunate that we locked horns. Due to my anger and his anger, we got into that altercation and I killed him. It's sad.

David Cayley
How did you finally extricate yourself from this?

Jim Cavanagh
The only thing that brought a change about in me—it was years later—was that one time an ex-prisoner, who was a bank robber, Ernie Hollands, came to visit me. This was after he had written me a card, and he told me he had changed his life. And when I seen him in the visiting room, I could see the change in him. And he was my friend, and I knew he wouldn't lie to me. And he said, "Jim, do you know Jesus Christ?" And I said, "No, I don't know Jesus Christ, Ernie." He says, "Well, you're honest about it. I'll pray for you." I said "That's fine."And I said, "I know there's a God." I said, "Anyone with an ounce of intelligence can look at life in general on this Earth and know there's a Creator to all this."

And as he kept visiting me, one time he asked me to pray for him. And the first night I prayed for him, it was a simple prayer: "Please watch over Ernie Hollands. Give him a safe passage to Bermuda. Let him reach some of the men in prison. Give him a safe passage back to Canada. Amen." And then I prayed for his family and my family, and it escalated.

But one night in June in 1978—I can't tell you the date because I was too shook up—I paused, and I asked something for Jimmy and it was very simple. I said, "Lord, forgive me for my sins. Give me the strength, patience and wisdom to get through each day." And I had a warmth that went through my body that time, and that shook me up. And I sat on my bed in the darkness, and I analyzed that, and I said to myself, "Did I really feel what I believe I felt there? Am I imagining it or am I self-inducing it?" And I was struggling with this. And then finally I got to sleep, and I said to myself, "If it's for real, it'll happen tomorrow night."

So, the next night again I got down on my knees, and I said my prayers for my friend Ernie and all the others. And I paused, and I said, "Lord, forgive me for my sins. Give me the strength, patience and wisdom for to get through each day." And I received that warmth again. And I broke down, and I cried that night and I cried just like a baby. It was like a cleansing inside of me. And I sat in my bed with my chin in my hands, and I was saying to myself, "I don't know. I don't know. What's happening? What's happening?" I didn't realize there was a spiritual struggle going on there. I had no concept of evil spirits and good spirits and how these forces affect humanity. And I finally got to sleep.

I refer to myself as the Doubting Thomas, who had to put his fingers in the scarred hands of Christ, and I had to go back the third night. And I prayed, and I said the same prayer, but I did not receive the warmth that night, as I did on the two previous nights. And again I analyzed it, and then all kinds of thoughts flooded through my mind: People won't want to talk to you, people will think you're crazy. And it went on like that. And I realize today it was the enemy trying to steal away this new spiritual reality and freedom that I had received.

I knocked on the steel-lined wall and talked to my friend Eddie in the next cell. I said, "Eddie, let me share with you what I experienced." And I told him. And he said, "Jimmy, are you going sideways on us?" In other words, crazy. And I said, "No, Eddie," I said, "I'm not going crazy." I said, "You've known me for years. I'm serving 19 years federally. I'm under the Lieutenant-Governor's General Warrant for the Province of Ontario"—which is an indeterminate sentence—"I'll probably die in prison here." I said, "You've known me for years." And I said, "I'm in the Special Handling Unit here in Millhaven and will be for the next three years. Then they'll send me to

some maximum somewhere. Do I have anything to gain by lying to you?" And he said, "No, you don't, Jim." I says, "I don't understand it all, Eddie, but there is a spiritual reality that is there. It's for real. I've experienced something," I said, "I believe." And that's when my walk of faith began.

David Cayley
About a year and a half after his conversion, Jim Cavanagh suffered an aneurysm, which left him paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair. He was told he would never walk again, but he forced himself out of his wheelchair in the yard at the Collins Bay Prison, and today he walks with only a cane. He applied for parole, was denied three times and then finally released.

Jim Cavanagh
Some guard staff and some prisoners apparently made the statement, "Oh, yeah, Jim Cavanagh's got his parole now. He'll lay his Bible down and you won't hear anything more about it." There was one guard who said, when I was going in through the security clearance at one prison, "Jim, keep doing what you're doing. I'm pleased with what you're doing." And he said, "A lot of individuals bet that you wouldn't last six months." And he said, "I took them up on that bet." And he says "I made big." So, I said, "Well, good for you." And I said "Well, it's sincere." And I said, "If it wasn't, I would have no reason to come back to the prison." Believe me, when I was approached to go back into the prisons, I didn't want to go back. There's no way I wanted to go back in those prisons, but the motivating factor is my heart goes out to those who are hurting inside.

David Cayley
Out of this sense of obligation, Jim Cavanagh has built a ministry to prisoners and ex-prisoners in the Kingston area. Between his years as an inmate and his years as a chaplain, he's known the institution of imprisonment all his life. He thinks of it, he says, as a way of putting problems off and, thereby, often making them worse. Troublesome people are temporarily gotten out of the way but only by impounding them in an environment in which they are isolated from the consequences of their acts and in which they must further harden their hearts just to survive. What he would like to see instead is much more of an emphasis on restitution and much more of an effort to put the offender in touch with what he has actually done.

Jim Cavanagh
I know from past experience that one of the hardest things for an offender is to face the victim who they hurt, because they feel bad. They would rather not see that person. And to me, they should be confronted with the victim, and the victim should be able to be in control, where they won't lash out at the person but say, "Do you know how bad you hurt me? This is what I felt like." Because then they become conscious of the feelings the victim is going through; otherwise, they're not in touch with the reality of what the victim is suffering and has felt.

I'll give you one example: A prisoner took the life of his girlfriend, and the girlfriend's sister was a Christian. And years went by, and she eventually got to visit in this one prison when a special function was going on. And she approached a prisoner in that prison and said, Do you know this man named so and so? And the guy said, "Yeah, I know him. He's over there." And this guy was a very rowdy, tough character. And she walked over to him, and she says, "I want you to know I am the sister of the person that you killed, and I want to tell you that I forgive you for what you did to my sister." And he told me later that that was such a shock and an impact on him that it brought about a change in him. It was just like somebody hit him in the head with a hammer, to have somebody come up and say, "I forgive you for what you did to my sister and the hurt that it caused me. I'm a Christian and I forgive you." This man has turned around today; and, I believe, if that incident hadn't happened, that man would still be maintaining that hard-core, angry, anti-social attitude that he had in the past. But today he's changed tremendously.

David Cayley
Change, in Jim Cavanagh's view, is what corrections ought to be about. Change can occur in prison—his own story attests to it, and so does the one he just told—but this has nothing to do with the prison as such. Prisons generally impose conditions on their inmates that make it harder for them to change. Consequently Jim Cavanagh thinks that most of the people currently in prison ought to be held to account outside of prison walls. Nothing stands in the way, he says, but prejudice.

Jim Cavanagh
In all the prisons across Canada, there's only a handful in each prison that need to be detained behind the walls. The rest of them can be out in some sort of community-work programs or some alternative things. They don't need to be warehoused. But the thing is you're in a dilemma. You

have a lot of people in society who are angry over a lot of issues, so when crime comes into the picture, they're just saying lock 'em up and throw the key away, lock 'em up, throw the key away. And they don't realize that by using that stance and that attitude, they're compounding and escalating crime in Canada. They're making it worse. Instead of saying, hey, I'm the taxpayer. What is being done to change these individuals and make them responsible for their actions? And what's being done to help the victim monetarily and also to restore a relationship between the victim and the offender to find out, hey, why did you do this to me?

And believe you me, if you talk to a lot of individuals that are in prison for victimizing people on the street, they would rather do anything than face their victim. They'd rather work on a rock pile and break rocks all day than go and face the victim or the family of the victim. And to me, that should be part and parcel of the response to crime. We need to help people to change, first off, and to realize that, yes, they are problem cases but still to ask, What is the problem making them act out in the way they are? What's led up to this? And second off, making them accountable, not just warehousing them and saying that's your penalty, you're being warehoused.

David Cayley
In prison, what Jim Cavanagh calls your warehouse becomes your world. But because it's the world of those who have been placed outside of society, it's an upside-down world, a demonic parody of conventional society with all the rules reversed. On his way to Dorchester Prison at age 15, Jim Cavanagh had to make a conscious decision: if he was to preserve some kind of personal integrity and avoid being exploited and degraded, he would have to become so wild, dangerous and unpredictable that other prisoners would leave him alone. Prisoners have to learn to live in prison. Which often means developing habits and associations that will keep them coming back for much of their lives.

Monty Lewis, like Jim Cavanagh, has given a lot of thought to the question of what keeps people coming back to prison. He's the director of the Cons for Christ Prison Ministry in Fredericton, New Brunswick, and he's published, along with writer Joanne Jacquart, an autobiography called The Caper, a title which puns on his Cape Breton Island origins and the many criminal capers in which he was involved as a young man. Monty Lewis gives the book away as part of his ministry and says that there are now more than 200,000 copies in circulation. It relates his rebellion against a father who beat up his mother and his descent into the world of alcohol, drugs, crime and prisons. Many other prisoners, he thinks, would tell a different version of the same story: a futile and doomed search for what they never had at home.

Monty Lewis
Family is supposed to provide love, value, acceptance and discipline. All those things are very healthy, and, I believe, in one way or another, we're all looking for them and, if we don't get love, value, acceptance and discipline at home, it is built into us to try to find them. And my experience has been, with gangs and prostitutes and cults and prisons, is that most of the ones you speak to that are honest will admit that that's what they're looking for. A little prostitute will find love, value, acceptance and discipline in her pimp. It's the counterfeit, but she accepts it because most of them have never really known the real thing.

And it's like Dr. Billy Graham said when he was in a town a few years ago, and there was a rash of counterfeit money being passed and everybody in the town was tricked by the counterfeit money except one man. And Billy Graham went to see him, and Dr. Graham said, "Sir, you must really have studied the counterfeit in order not to be fooled by it." And the gentleman replied, "No, sir, I know the real thing."

I was told by the most important man in my life I'd never amount to anything, I couldn't be depended upon to do anything and I'd never be any good for anything. If you can't believe your dad, I don't know who you can believe.

And so, I went out, and I found a place where I believed I was loved and where I believed there was a value system, because the code of the street and the prison is a value system. I was accepted, and there was a certain amount of discipline there, because you always had to watch out for the police in the activities I was doing. And there is also a hierarchy in the criminal world. I found a place where the crazier I was and the more violent and aggressive, the more recognition I got. I didn't realize that at the time. I'm looking back now in hindsight and seeing how totally blind I was.

You see, the thing about being deceived is, when you're deceived, you don't know you're deceived. And I didn't know I was deceived all those years. But all the while, I

was getting accepted, I was growing in the hierarchy of that kind of life, people were looking up to me. I would deal drugs, I was popular, I wore the earring, the high leather boots, the leather coat. And all of those things, I thought, were love. I thought they had value to them. I was accepted and I needed to be accepted. And I went around, like so many in those days, saying, "Well, what you see is what you get, and this is the real me." So, they seemed to be accepting me for what I was. And because I didn't know the real thing at home, I settled for second best.

And I'll tell you: One day I was looking out of the window of my apartment. Lots of drugs, money, music playing, a friend with me. I saw a man and woman walking up the street, and I vaguely knew them and I knew they didn't have very much materially. They had a couple of children. And they were laughing and smiling. And I was looking out the window at them, with a few hundred dollars in my pocket and a few hundred dollars worth of drugs in my arm, and I said to whoever was with me, "Why are they so happy, when they don't have half as much as I have?" And he said to me, "I hope you don't think they're like that when they get home, because he probably beats his wife and locks the children in the closet." And because that was the only definition I knew of life, I thought, yeah, that must be true for everyone. And so I continued to live that way, and the people I lived with continued to live that way, and what we thought was normal I see today as very abnormal.

David Cayley
Monty Lewis, as he portrays himself in The Caper, was a man full of wild rage, who left a trail of broken heads and broken bones right across Canada. Then in 1977 in the hole at the London, Ontario Detention Centre, he was converted to Christianity. He changed, but the difficulties he faced when he came out of prison showed him just how hard it can be for ex-prisoners to make a new life.

Monty Lewis
I was 33 years of age when I came out of prison with a desire to serve The Lord, as I became a Christian in prison, and a desire not to go back to prison. And I wanted to work, but I didn't know how to work, because for 33 years of my life, I really had only worked a total of probably 11 months. I was a drug addict for 11½ years, put a needle in my arm. I drank alcoholically from the time I was four-and-a-half years of age. What I did for a living was fraud and deal drugs and run bootlegging houses and steal and really try and support a habit.

So, when you went for a job application and were asked, "Where have you lived the last five years?" well, Bath Institution, Kingston Penitentiary, London Detention Centre, Dorchester Penitentiary, Westmoreland Prison. Every employer is just waiting to have someone like that fill out an application form. "Also list the type of work you've done the last five years." Well, I ran speed houses, bootlegging cans, forgery operations, wrote prescriptions for drugs I was using at the time, stole and robbed all across Canada. Every employer is just dying to get hold of someone like that.

So, these were some of the things I was up against when I came out of prison. I had changed. I knew I had changed. I had a desire not to go back to prison. But in order not to go back to prison, I needed a job, I needed support in the community, I needed a place to live. All of my old friends lived back in the East Ends of the cities, with drugs and alcohol. And they're fine people, but they couldn't help me do what I knew I wanted to do.

David Cayley
To change, Monty Lewis says, you have to have people around you who are willing to support that change. Prison generates a culture, and it's the culture, as much as the prison, that holds people captive.

Monty Lewis
The thing that I have found—my experience has been—is they can't seem to break that cycle. And if you realize that you can't break that cycle, then you realize you're going to come back to prison, and if you realize you're going to come back to prison, you have to come back as a person that can fit back into the system and fit back in with the people that you're going to live with. 'Cause if you're going to spend a lifetime in prison, you want to live it in the population, with the population; you don't want to be locked up in a little cell the rest of your life in prison. And so, I think in talking to most of the men in prison, the majority of the men in prison don't want to be in prison. The majority of the men in prison don't want to stay in prison. The majority of the men in prison or women want to get out and make it, but they don't know how.

David Cayley
Can you remember that, wanting to get out but finding yourself back in?

Monty Lewis
Of course. Oh, look, whenever I left, I'd say, "Hey, guys, that's it. I'll see you. Never again." I remember many nights looking out the back bars, the snow falling down, saying, "Never again. Never another Christmas in here. I'm going to quit drinking, I'm going to quit drugs. I'll never be back again." And where would I be next November on my birthday? Back in jail or back in prison. I couldn't break that thinking I had. I couldn't get away from that kind of thinking. And all of my friends were in the bars or the drug houses—that's the only associations I had until I came to The Lord Jesus Christ. Then I began to read the Bible and renew my thinking and my mind and got involved in, with some volunteers that kind enough to come into that institution and show a little interest in me and say, "Look, we believe in you. You can make it." And it's all progressed out of that.

They met me when I came out of prison. Of course, I had a desire to go to work, I had a desire to change. I went to AA, I went to church. I prayed, I read the Bible. And they helped me get a job for $3 an hour. And, David, I didn't like it, I really disliked it. But I worked to the best of my ability. And, you know, when I did go later to Canada Cement Lafarge for a job, it was the character reference and the work reference that I received from the $3-an-hour job that got me the job at Canada Cement Lafarge, a real high-paying job and a good job. But if it hadn't of been for those people in the community sending me a postcard once in a while just to let me know that they were thinking of me and saying, "Look, we believe in you"—and, of course, I took their advice as well about certain decisions that I was making in my life. You see, I wasn't famous for my good decisions, and so, I began to realize that, and I began to realize if I wanted to change, I had to listen to some people that were doing what I wanted to do. And that's largely the reason I'm here today, because of Jesus Christ and the Word of God and then the people. Without them, I could never have made it.

David Cayley
In the years after he got out of prison, Monty Lewis never forgot the friends he left behind and never lost his desire to share his newfound freedom with them. He began visiting the prisons and taking prisoners on weekend passes into his home. Jim Cavanagh was one of his first such guests.

Eventually his ministry occupied so much of his time that he had to quit his job and make his prison work his full-time occupation. Later he and his wife, Lynda, would move their family to Fredericton, where Cons for Christ is based today. There he has continued and expanded his work. One recent project is a summer camp for inmate's children.

Monty Lewis
You know, little children that normally wouldn't get to go to a camp in the summer, catch a fish, ride a horse, have a swim, have some fun. Last summer we had 27 children there, the summer before we had 22, next summer we plan to have more. We also have cottages at this place that were built by the men in Renouse Prison, David. We sent the lumber in, and these men prefabricated the cottages, and then we took them out and put them together on site at our camp, where we have a big lodge building. So, we do that.

We also try to help where we can with men coming out with a place to stay and groceries. Of course, we can't do it with everyone, David, because we don't have a halfway house. But what we do is we welcome them into the church community, and we try to get them a job interview and help them with the necessities and just be a friend. And if they're having a struggle, which they're going to have, they need someone they can identify with and we're there to identify with them and try and help them. Basics.

When a man comes out of an institution, most of them have to get a Social Insurance Number, they have to open a bank account. They don't have vehicles, they don't even have a Driver's Licence. And just faced with that when they come out of an institution, just that frustration of coming out of a place where you've lived in a cell either alone or with a partner for the last 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 years and you come out into an environment where maybe sometimes you have to stay in an emergency shelter, where it's 40 or 50 people, just the trauma of that, let alone having to worry about getting your Birth Certificate, your New Brunswick Medicare, all of these simple, little things that we take for granted in everyday life become a trauma for a man.

And then I know, myself, that I thought everybody was looking at me. I believed everybody knew where I came from, and I was full of guilt and shame, because I, like most of the men in prison, was ashamed of the things I'd done. And even though people maybe don't have an idea where you come from, you feel that inside. You're not used to eating in a restaurant or with fancy knives and forks. All these little things that are just taken for granted.

The prison usually locks down at 11:30 and opens again at 1 or 1:10. And what do you do? You're locked in your cell, you usually lay down. So, if you're on the job—me, anyway, when 11:30 used to come, I'd fall asleep on the shovel sometimes. I had been so programmed over the previous couple of years.

So, these are some of the practical things we try to do. We try to help men's wives and children. Right now it's Christmas time, and we have requests from inmates. We'll probably need 400 gifts for little inmate children to try to help them out at Christmas. And we'll also try to help some of them out with some groceries—they didn't commit any crime, and they're only guilty of loving their daddy and waiting for him. And the same with the wives. So, we help with wives when we can. We're a non-profit organization, and it all depends on people's giving and that enables us to do what we're doing.

David Cayley
Imprisonment gets trouble out of the community, at least for the time being. But the trouble doesn't actually disappear by being put out of sight and out of mind; it's just put in a new place, where someone else has to deal with it. This is what is asked of Canada's various correctional services and their front line, the prison guards. They bear the scars of imprisonment as surely as their prisoners, but these scars are not always counted among the institution's costs.

Jeff Doucette is a correctional officer and a former head of the Emergency Response Team at the maximum security Millhaven Institution in Eastern Ontario. He started there in 1985, after six years in the maximum security federal prison in Edmonton. The emergencies to which his team were called ranged from removing unwilling inmates from their cells—cell extractions they were called—all the way to full-scale riots. He estimates that during his 16-year career, he has been involved in quelling at least a dozen major riots and smash-ups in which part of the prison had to be retaken from the inmates. He has been exposed to suicide and torture and more murders than he can remember. Eventually the violence and the horror that he'd seen began to take its toll, and in May of 1995 he had to stop work. His bloody memories would no longer give him any rest or any relief. He is now being retrained in informatics and computers. We met in Kingston at the end of 1995 at the offices of his union, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and he told me a little bit about what had happened to him.

Jeff Doucette
We had an incident: One officer had his throat cut by an inmate. The officer opened the door, and this inmate, my understanding is, had a razor blade melted into a toothbrush. And as soon as the officer stepped out, the inmate just cut his throat and the officer almost died. I was the team leader of the team that went in to take the inmate out afterwards. It was a fairly clean cell extraction. Everything was videotaped. And the last thing I said to my people going in was, "We don't go to court, we're not going to hurt this person." We took him out, and I guess the part that always comes back to me is kneeling in this officer's blood to handcuff this guy. The next time you go for a response, it's the same coveralls, it's the same boots, and the blood is still on the boots but you're busy with another one.

One other one was a really violent murder: The inmate had his hands tied behind his back and his feet tied together. He was trapped in a cell by another inmate, and he was stabbed 42 times. Another officer was just starting his range walk, and he heard the screams and went down. And of course, you can't open a door by yourself, especially if there's two inmates and one has a knife and he stood and watched the whole murder. And there was just nothing he could do to stop it. I can remember going into J-Unit, and as soon as the barrier opened, I could smell the blood. And then I got to the corner of 1-K, and this inmate that had been murdered had been taken out into the corridor, a narrow corridor, and it was just pure blood. Probably 20 feet. This inmate had lost everything in that corridor. And to get to the staff, which was the reason I was there, I had to walk through this. Then I got there and saw the looks on the faces of the staff there. I can still remember walking around the corner and looking at one fellow I had worked with for years. He's a friend—and he's got that thousand-yard stare, and, you just know, he's lost. You don't know if you can get him back. We spent till five o'clock in the morning talking to all the staff that were right on site, and I spent till five in the morning talking to this one officer. Even today he's affected by that.

David Cayley
So, these things stay with you.

Jeff Doucette
Oh, yeah, yeah, they certainly do. You try and put them away, you try and keep distracted, you try and keep busy, you try and do a lot of things. But for myself, the best way I can describe it is that, at its worst, you're waking up with

nightmares. I used to have this film that played. It was like I was watching a screen in front of me, and I'd be talking to you, and it would be through all these bodies and blood and situations. And these played non-stop, 15 years of them. And you can't function all that long. You sleep two hours a night, because the nightmares are bad, and when you wake up, you just sit and smoke cigarettes or something, 'cause you're not going back to sleep. That's just not an option at the time, right? It's easier to be awake, I guess. And it doesn't take too long before you're exhausted.

Thank God, I've got a really supportive wife. I don't know how she's stuck with me through this, but, thank God, she has. When you come home with this stuff and someone says, "Well, how was your day?" you can't talk about it. And if you try and talk to your wife or your spouse, you know, they're not going to understand it. So, you just sit there and you just go, I know I'm having a problem with this, I don't think anybody else is, 'cause no one else is showing it. So, you withdraw and you just push them away. Then there's guilt feelings, 'cause you're not handling it well, you're not communicating. Depression's a big part of it a lot of the time.

We went to Ottawa, and my wife calls it "Our Tenth Anniversary in Hell." It was right in the midst of all this stuff. And I can remember in the midst of that, telling her, "I think, it would be easier if I just walked away right now, 'cause I can see the pain I'm causing. I don't know why I'm causing it, it's just there, and it would just be easier if I just walked away," which devastated her. And friends? Well, friends don't really understand either, do they? Let's say you get involved in a situation at work where maybe you've used force, or it's been really bloody or there's been a murder and whatever. You come home, and, no, you don't want to go to the mall; no, you don't want to drop over to the Joneses for the evening. Your mind's just in a whole different spectrum.

And the worst problem is that, when you've worked there 10, 15, 20 years, whatever, you take that as normal. That's your normal daily fare. I've had a chance to sit back and look at it, and it's not normal.

David Cayley
What did you do eventually?

Jeff Doucette
At the end of it, my doctor booked me off. I was pumping adrenalin 24 hours a day, severely depressed, just non-functional. I spent a lot of time with a really good psychologist, who explained to me about post-traumatic stress disorder, and I was given a lot of homework to do on post-traumatic stress disorder. When I started reading the material, it was looking in the mirror. I was, like, "There's a name for this. Thank God."

There's people in institutions you don't walk up behind and touch, because they turn around fighting, and that's just the startle response. And I was like that. You're wired all the time. You can't get down. And it goes right to the point where you're numb inside. If you don't numb out to this stuff after the years, you don't live with it, I guess. I've talked to officers who'll say without any emotion, "Well, my little girl fell down and broke her arm," just like, oh, it's another situation, let's get on with it. So, you numb out, but, I guess, the side-effect is that it carries over to your family and friends and to everybody else.

David Cayley
Jeff Doucette was not your average prison guard. He had one of the toughest jobs in what might be Canada's toughest prison. But he thinks that there are plenty of other officers who've been through something like what he experienced, and he thinks that too many of them have felt that they had to deny or suppress their suffering. He's now trying to do something about that in the Kingston area by setting up groups in which guards can talk out the things that have happened to them. One such group is for officers from the Collins Bay Penitentiary. A number of them, Jeff Doucette says, are still pre-occupied by an incident that occured more than 15 years ago.

Jeff Doucette
In 1978, there were two staff members killed. My understanding was, one of them was pretty well decapitated. They were just very ugly murders, and a lot of staff were involved. Some of those staff members are drinking themselves to death, some are just in complete denial, some are suffering from severe depression. I don't know how many marriages have broke up. There are just a lot of ramifications from that event, and they're still ongoing. They don't go away.

And, I think, one of the reasons they don't go away goes back to what post-trauma is. It's an event that overwhelms you, but it's not recorded in regular memory. It goes into an adrenalin-based, chemically based memory. And the only way you can get rid of that is to integrate it back into

regular memory, and there's a few processes that can do that. The group format is very, very powerful. It's just people sharing common experience. That takes the pressure off. And it's interesting: You sit there with a peer, and you say, "Well, this is how I felt, and that scared the hell out of me." And they go, "I thought I was the only one that was scared." And you start to take the power away from the situation.

And, I know, with one group that we were running, at the start of the group, those individuals talked very seriously about how they'd contemplated suicide 'cause it didn't seem like there was any other way out of what they were feeling. When we started off, there were people sweating, they were wringing their hands and just very, very tense. And at the last meeting I was at, they were sitting back and laughing and relaxed. The black humour was gone. It was just peers sitting down that had done something together. You could see the difference in the people. And one thing I'd like to say about these people is, if they didn't care, it wouldn't mean anything. If they didn't care how they did their job, if they didn't care about other people, if they didn't care about a lost life, then it wouldn't mean anything, would it. So, it's the officers that care that generally run into a lot of problems, depending on what they get involved in.

David Cayley

Canadian prisons are violent places, unusually violent places according to a study produced for the Research and Statistics Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada in 1990. The study found that, when compared to 40 American states, Canada's federal prisons had the highest seven-year mean rate of prisoner suicide and the fourth highest rate of homicide. Comparison to European jurisdictions would be even more unfavourable. Prisoners in Canada's jails are also frequently victimized by other inmates. The October 1993 issue of the Canadian Journal of Criminology reported a survey of criminal victimization in male federal prisons conducted by sociologist Dennis Cooley. It involved 117 federal prisoners at all three security levels. Cooley found that nearly 42 per cent of his respondents reported having been personally victimized at least once in the last year and that more than 60 per cent of these incidents involved physical assault.

What these results seem to point to is an insecure and exploitative environment, in which the threat of violence is never very far away. Prison officials can make a sincere effort to improve this environment, and prisoners will reform in spite of it but its fundamental features persist. So, in the end, we have to face the question: What, on the evidence, can we reasonably expect from such an environment but more crime.