

Who's on First?

By John E. Peters Jr.

With years of following the Parole Board and their behavior, their decisions, I have become very educated concerning this subject matter. I make it a point to know all their policies and practices. As an old law offender myself, I have a vested interest in this Parole Board. With this being said, I am perplexed about this Parole Board. I cannot present any logical reasoning behind what is fueling them or why they are so adamant about not releasing the ones who exhibit suitability for such a deserving chance. In fact, it remains one of my pet peeves when someone accentuates what they think or feel the reason *is* behind this Parole Board's motivation. None of us knows for sure. We have opinions but we cannot know what their driving force is.

For years we all strive to know exactly *who* is in charge of this Parole Board. None of us ever gets a straight answer. Different DRC Personnel have conflicting views and keep us wondering. I say all of that to say this:

Does anybody find it at all the least bit audacious that the Director of the DRC himself, along with some County Judges, and now a handful of State Senators are all supporting a Bill to allow the old law offenders an avenue for release via "*Judicial Release*"? SB143 and HB483 have created a mechanism for old law offenders to file for release through their court of conviction, if passed.

Quoting from a source of unknown origin but relates back to an obvious foundation, *...targeting old law offenders is beneficial for several reasons; they are statistically less likely to offend, some put a strain on the prison budget with medical issues, and most do not cause any disciplinary problems*".

When you have the Prison Director, County Judges, and even State Senators coming together in a common cause collaborating the need to release old law offenders, what is wrong with this picture? What am I missing? What are all these people seeing that our Parole Board refuses to recognize? Our Parole Board labels us as "*...the worst of the worst,*" and has publically announced that they have already released the offenders suitable to be released, and *all others will be recycled through the system again and again.*" Does anybody feel that this is a slap in the face for our leaders when they cannot control their own Agency? Our leaders resort to enacting a completely different vehicle to release old law offenders, when we already have such an instrument in place to do exactly the same means. What is really going on here, I ask? Who is in charge here? The DRC Director can hire and fire Parole Board Members, but cannot manage them? Even our State Legislatures lack jurisdiction in harnessing this Agency, as evidenced by their effort in creating another means towards release for old law offenders!

During a Job Fair held at our Reintegration Center this past week, a multitude of DRC personnel attended. Among them were Parole Officers from Youngstown, Ohio. Idle conversation with them revealed that; ...*"we like old law parolees, they are well behaved and do well."* I also have a good friend out on parole who I served 15 years with. He left here 17 months ago with a two year parole supervision. With just 7 months to go before completing his parole requirements, his Parole Officer informed him that they have a dilemma. As the Officer updated him, it appears now that the Ohio Parole Board wants to extend all their parolees to a five year term in order to increase the Board's hold on the remaining old law offenders. My friend has done well; he fulfilled his contractual responsibility in completing all the necessary requirements and now is being subjected to further exploitation by our Parole Board.

Our Parole Board prides themselves by promoting the use of modern technology towards their supervision; to include: monitors, ankle bracelets, and 24 hour checkups on certain high risk level parolees. With all of their technology, what is the problem? Who is really on first?

