Local Businessman Has Strong Ideas on Preventing Crime

By BOB ANGERS

Lafayette businessman Jarvis Fortier has been in jail and prison throughout Louisiana on humanitarian missions and has drawn some strong conclusions on preventing crime and reforming the criminal justice system.

He is on the board of the Lafayette Community Correction Center (LCCC), sometimes known as a "halfway house," and the Lafayette Juvenile & Young Adult Program (LJJA). He calls the LCCC and LJJA "open door" facilities with no locks, no bars. Fortier works with Faith House, a Lafayette shelter for women and children in need, and the Lafayette businessman and District Attorney Nathan Stanbury have been named to the newly organized Governor's Commission on Children and Youth (GCCY).

Abuse of children is a matter of concern to Fortier. He estimates that one third of the 4,000 inmates at Angola penitentiary are sexually, emotionally or physically abused as juveniles. "The problem is hate; the solution is love," Fortier says. "I think there is a need to take the whole system and create a Department of Children and Youth," Fortier says. There are too many agencies presently involved, he adds. He reports that it costs $15,000 to $30,000 a year to keep someone in reform school. The cost of a jail cell is $500. "If we don't want to change the system from a humanitarian point of view then it doesn't make sense from a business viewpoint," Fortier said. He reported that it costs about a half million dollars to arrest and prosecute someone, build them a jail cell and keep them in prison.

Louisiana will have to build two 1,500-man prisons annually if the present trend continues, Fortier estimates. He doesn't feel that institutions get at the heart of the problem, while children rest in the home. He believes that children raised in an atmosphere of hate when they are young will end up in trouble of one form or another. "It is foolish to handle minor offenders in anything but an open door facility that permits work or schooling in the daytime and confinement in the facility, at night," Fortier maintains. He estimates that the cost is 10 to 20 percent of a jail or prison, and is not nearly as destructive to the individual.

Fortier was critical of the system of justice that seems to provide the person with money a better opportunity for legal defense than a poor person who relies on court-appointed attorneys, while the rich person can hire a more experienced lawyer.

The Lafayette businessman had some figures that tell the story of the state's problem. There were 3,648 juveniles arrested in Louisiana in 1979, and during fiscal year 1981-82 there were 1,173 juveniles committed to institutions. There were 9,661 young people admitted to hospitals for drug abuse treatment in 1979, and in 1983 there were 11,497 reported cases of child abuse.

Only Russia has more people in prison than the United States, and Fortier said Louisiana's prison population was at the 10,000 figure.

He is concerned about "the kicked out, dropped out, flunked out kids." Fortier tells of high schools that have been established in Shreveport and Baton Rouge that permit stu-

Local Businessman Has Strong Ideas

(Continued From Page 1)