

LORTON YOUTH CENTER II

The Youth Corrections Act was a progressive example of much needed penal reform. Young offenders who appeared to be likely candidates for rehabilitation were committed for indefinite terms, usually six years, and could be paroled at any time they had accomplished education and other goals and were believed ready to return to a life without dependence on crime.

Alsbrook had been put in this program by me, but I was advised there was no room available in the special Youth Center facility and that he would have to be placed in the adult facility at Lorton. This was obviously not an isolated case; and it appeared that the Mayor, Walter Washington, was compelled for bureaucratic reasons to give the Youth program short shrift. More significantly, it was, in effect, an executive challenge to judicial authority and an indirect local repeal of the Youth Corrections Act.

I ordered the Mayor to build a new Youth Center, deciding that it was an occasion to start vindicating the Third Branch, which had been hampered in recent months by fund cutbacks and staffing restrictions.

Mayor Washington was an outstanding public servant whose common sense and understanding of the city played a major role in getting Home Rule off to a good start. We were friends. I had eaten many luncheon sandwiches with him as a lawyer working with a small group for Home Rule. He sent Gil (Gilbert) Hahn, Chairman of the City Council, to see me. We talked in chambers. Gil said the city could not find the money and the Center could not be built. I kept a straight face and said, "I'm very sorry for the Mayor." Gil looked startled and asked why. I said, "An

order is an order. You know that. You're a good lawyer. Contempt is how orders are made to work." He left somewhat upset. A few days later he came by again and simply said, "Judge, you'll be pleased. We found the money." Youth Center II was built.

Someday this precedent may prove useful.

United States v. Alsbrook, 336 F.Supp. 973 (1971).