

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Colbert I. King

Look What They're Pulling Down Now

Having spent a fair amount of time observing D.C. government officials blind the public with their footwork as they dance around messy situations, I confess to being transfixed by neighboring Maryland's response to the major scandal in its boot camp program for juveniles. Truth be told, as a District resident, I'm downright envious. We should be so lucky.

Keep reading and you'll see why.

Last week the Baltimore Sun detailed in a hard hitting four-part series how guards had struck, punched and thrown shackled youths to the ground as a part of the camp's regular regimen. Sun readers saw photos of injured kids with split lips. The paper also informed the public that the boot camp program, touted most notably by Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend as a good way of helping misguided offenders go straight, did little for the youths once they were released.

The series produced outrage, both from the public and state officials. Gov. Parris Glendening, in a predictable response, appointed a task force to conduct an investigation.

But then Maryland did something that would be undreamed of, if not considered downright freakish in the District: The state's investigation took only a week.

Not stopping there, the Maryland

response reached a level not within the imagination of most District residents. The governor went beyond publicly fuming, agonizing and breathing threats. He actually *did* something.

The affected boot camps had already been temporarily shut down after the story broke. But once the report confirming that juveniles had been beaten and abused was in the governor's hands, there were no long hand-wringing sessions, followed by highly publicized consultations with a laundry list of self-important political bigwigs—which is a mandatory minuet for a D.C. leader about to do something of some consequence.

Glendening accepted responsibility for the abuses, declared, "Our trust, but more important the trust of the people of Maryland, has been violated," and cleaned house.

He sought and received the resignations of the secretary of juvenile justice, the department's assistant secretary and the superintendent of the facilities. When the deputy secretary refused to go, Glendening fired him.

The time span from the end of the Sun series to the state probe and ouster of the responsible officials: less than one week.

Keep that in mind as you observe the District's investigation into city-funded group homes for the mental-

ly retarded following The Post's Dec. 5 story on neglect and deaths of group home residents since 1993.

A shocked and indignant Mayor Anthony Williams promised a full investigation and a major personnel shakeup. That was nearly two weeks ago.

District leaders can fulminate up a storm about injustices induced or tolerated by city workers. But do they really mean it?

Let's go back to Aug. 12, 1997.

That's when Willis Curry, 62, driving an overloaded dump truck that had been cited by Maryland State Police for at least 274 violations of 24 federal truck-safety standards and was once ordered off the road, ran a red light and overturned on a car at Military Road and Nevada Avenue NW, killing the driver, 17-year-old Benjamin Cooper.

Curry, now serving 10 to 30 years in jail, should not have been behind the wheel that day. It turned out he had compiled a record of at least 32 traffic violations from four states in the nine years preceding the August crash.

His D.C. license should have been yanked long ago. But when the District did come across enough information to revoke his permit, he was, instead, reissued a restricted license on Aug. 4, 1997, so he could keep working. Curry was driving in violation of the terms of a restricted

license the city had issued him when he crashed into Cooper's car.

"Poor judgment," declared District officials, as disciplinary action was announced against five key employees. Two of them, top officials, would be replaced, we were told. Three others would be suspended. Declared then-D.C. Public Works Director Cellerino Bernardino, "A change had to occur in the management culture" of the two bureaus responsible for turning Curry loose behind the wheel.

Oh yeah?

What really happened to the five Department of Motor Vehicles workers deemed responsible for the chain of events that helped get Curry out on Military Road that fateful afternoon? Let's look at the size of their paychecks when the crash occurred, at the disciplinary action taken and at what they are pulling down now:

■ Worker 1 was making \$52,377. She received a letter of reprimand, and now makes \$57,009—nearly \$5,000 more.

■ Worker 2 was making \$66,594. She was removed from her position and got a letter of reprimand. She's appealing the action. She now draws \$74,980—\$8,000 more;

■ Worker 3 was making \$45,357. He received 15 days' suspension and is also appealing. He now makes \$51,763—\$6,000 more.

■ Worker 4 was making \$37,792, no

action taken. She retired under an early-out option.

■ Worker 5 was making \$52,377. He received a letter of reprimand. He's appealing, too. Meanwhile, life's been good. He now makes \$68,395—\$16,000 more.

The above rundown was obtained from Ward 3 council member Kathy Patterson, who, to her credit, has not let the city get away with high-sounding accountability rhetoric unmatched by real action.

Patterson's also not easily taken in by the bureaucratic dance called the "D.C. Dodge." Unfortunately, too many folks in this city are.

You've seen the dance; you just didn't know its name. The steps are familiar: When a bad news story hits an agency, watch as the big boss reels back with alarm, boogaloos with outrage, twists with anger while threatening pink slips, does the slide into a reform number, then hustles behind closed doors, where she or he hunkers down until the whole thing blows over or until another scandal comes along to push the problem off the front pages.

Declared Mayor Williams the week the group homes scandal broke: D.C. government employees "from top to bottom . . . will be held accountable."

Yeah, right, Mr. Mayor. In the meantime, give Parris Glendening a call.

The Washington Post

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 17 OF 45844 STORIES

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The Washington Post

December 16, 1999, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: METRO; Pg. B01

LENGTH: 691 words

HEADLINE: Top Juvenile Officials Ousted; Md. Probe Shows Teens Abused at Boot Camps

BYLINE: Daniel LeDuc, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

Maryland's secretary of juvenile justice and four other top officials lost their jobs yesterday after a state investigation concluded that teenage offenders at the state's boot camps had been beaten and abused as part of the camps' regular regimen.

In addition, State Police Superintendent David B. Mitchell said some guards at the facilities in Western Maryland are under criminal investigation for their treatment of the youthful offenders sent to the camps from all over the state.

"There was a complete breakdown in the [juvenile justice] department's chain of command," said Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend (D), who oversees Maryland's criminal justice system. She said guards at the boot camps engaged in "unconscionable abuse of authority."

Secretary Gilberto de Jesus resigned at the request of Gov. Parris N. Glendening (D). Phil Colbert, a department assistant secretary; Don Carter, the superintendent of the facilities; and Jeff Graham, the assistant superintendent, also resigned. Department deputy secretary Jack Nadol refused to resign and was fired, the governor said.

The departures come after a week-long investigation headed by former state public safety commissioner Bishop Robinson concluded there had been "unnecessary and inappropriate use of force" as part of induction at the boot camps.

Even before that investigation concluded, Glendening removed the 79 youths at the camps and temporarily shut down the facilities Saturday.

The investigation was prompted by stories in the Baltimore Sun detailing guards hitting, punching and throwing shackled youths to the ground. The newspaper published photos of youths with split lips and other injuries, and the stories reported that the youths received inadequate follow-up supervision once they completed their sentences at the camp.

Glendening and Townsend reacted angrily to the reports, demanding explanations from de Jesus, who initially told them there was no systematic violence.

The Washington Post, December 16, 1999

The governor said yesterday that the investigation concluded otherwise. "Our trust, and perhaps more important, the trust of the people of Maryland, has been violated," Glendening said at a State House news conference.

At the same time, he said, "ultimate responsibility is with me." He said once he was aware of the allegations he moved quickly to correct abuses.

"I know we are dealing with individuals, residents who have a history of violence. . . . Having said that, I must emphasize our basic values. No individual in our care in any institution, any program, anywhere in the state will be subject to physical harm or violence," Glendening said.

Townsend said she became aware of the allegations in August from a Sun reporter working on the story. Initially, she said, only one instance of abuse by guards at one of the camps was described to her. She said she instructed juvenile justice officials to make sure there was no pattern of problems. She insisted laws protecting the youths be followed.

"Department top management emphatically denied that any abuse was occurring," she said. Once she learned otherwise, Townsend said, she and Glendening agreed on the need for an investigation.

Despite the problems, Townsend said she remained committed to the idea of military-style boot camps as a way of reforming youthful offenders and said the camps should continue once reviews of operations are completed. Robinson, who will serve as interim head of the juvenile justice department, will head that review.

But at least one member of the review panel is arguing against the boot camps. Jann K. Jackson, executive director of Advocates for Children and Youth, said she believes the boot camps send abused youths the wrong message about reform with the stern, military-like procedures.

She said more needs to be done to help the youths with education, drug treatment, screening for mental illness and job training. She said she hopes the controversy surrounding the boot camps will trigger broad reforms of Maryland's juvenile justice system.

State Juvenile Justice Secretary Gilberto de Jesus resigned at the governor's request.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 16, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 1 OF 45844 STORIES

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AP Online

December 16, 1999; Thursday 13:10 Eastern Time

SECTION: Domestic, non-Washington, general news item

LENGTH: 463 words

HEADLINE: Abuse Found at Md. 'Boot Camps'

BYLINE: SETH HETTENA

DATELINE: ANNAPOLIS, Md.

BODY:

The FBI has begun investigating a possible civil rights violation at one of Maryland's juvenile boot camps, where findings of abuses against delinquents led to the ouster of the head of the juvenile justice department.

The FBI began investigating the case of Gary Johnson Jr. of Easton after The (Baltimore) Sun reported this week that his wrist was fractured by guards on Nov. 29, his first day at one of the three camps in western Maryland. The camp was temporarily closed Sunday as a part of reorganization stemming from the reports of abuse.

"We're monitoring the entire situation," FBI spokesman Peter Gulotta said today. Johnson's case is being investigated as a possible civil rights violation in which "someone acting within the scope of their law enforcement position ... would violate someone's rights through excessive force."

The secretary of the state Department of Juvenile Justice, Gilberto de Jesus, was forced out along with four other Maryland officials on Wednesday amid allegations that guards at the camps have, among other things, routinely beat the youths.

Three of the other officials who oversaw the program submitted their resignations at Gov. Parris Glendening's demand. De Jesus' deputy refused to resign and was fired.

"There is a major role for these types of camps, but you must do this without physical violence," Glendening said Wednesday.

Last week, juveniles summoned before a judge in Baltimore testified guards had thrown them through windows, stuck thumbs in their eyes and routinely issued beatings.

Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, whose responsibilities include oversight of the juvenile justice system, said a task force report on the camps showed "an abuse of power and an unconscionable abuse of authority." Its finalized version is expected to be released today.

On Saturday, Glendening suspended the boot camp program and asked the commander of the Maryland National Guard to supervise the juveniles at the three camps in the meantime.

AP Online December 16, 1999; Thursday

"Every indication we've had is that there were abuses," Glendening said. "No one under our care shall be subject to physical abuse or any violence whatsoever."

A criminal investigation also is under way to determine whether any of the guards committed child abuse.

One guard at the camps has been fired, another has resigned and 10 have been placed on administrative duty, state police said.

Camp guards "push, shove, grab and generally manhandle" youths at the state-run camps, State Police Maj. Tom Bowers said Monday in announcing the investigation. He said some youths suffered minor injuries.

Inmates at the three boot camps are called cadets, wear military-style fatigue uniforms and are expected to address their guards as "sir."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 16, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 24 OF 45844 STORIES

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

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December 15, 1999, Wednesday, AM cycle

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 679 words

HEADLINE: Five gone, including department head, in wake of boot camp scandal

BYLINE: By SETH HETTENA, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: ANNAPOLIS, Md.

BODY:

Gov. Parris Glendening asked for the resignations of the head of the state's Department of Juvenile Justice and four of his associates Wednesday in the wake of findings that juvenile delinquents at military-style boot camps were routinely abused by guards.

Secretary Gilberto de Jesus, a former federal prosecutor, submitted his resignation, as did three of his subordinates who oversaw the state-run boot camp program: Assistant Secretary Phil Colbert; Don Carter, superintendent of the camps and two youth centers, and Assistant Superintendent Jeff Graham.

De Jesus' deputy, Jack Nadol, refused to resign and was fired.

Glendening demanded the resignations after a task force he appointed last week found a "pattern of abuse" starting shortly after the first camp opened in 1996 and continuing through last month.

"The trust of the people of Maryland has been violated," Glendening said. "No one under our care shall be subject to physical abuse or any violence whatsoever."

Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, whose responsibilities included oversight of the juvenile justice system, said the report showed "an abuse of power and an unconscionable abuse of authority."

The task force amassed what its head, Bishop Robinson, called a "preponderance of evidence" to show that youths were routinely pushed, shoved, and manhandled and had their arms twisted. The task force report, a draft of which was given to the governor Wednesday, was expected to be released Thursday.

"Every indication we've had is that there were abuses," the governor said.

The state police are investigating whether any of the guards should be charged with child abuse. The five officials leaving their jobs are not targets of the criminal investigation, Glendening said.

The Associated Press State & Local Wire December 15, 1999

State police have interviewed guards and more than 100 youths and have subpoenaed videotapes made since August of the camp induction ceremonies, where investigators have said the violence was at its worst.

The scrutiny of the camps began last week after The (Baltimore) Sun published eyewitness reports that guards shoved juvenile offenders to the ground and kicked and punched them.

Ms. Townsend said there was "a complete breakdown" of the agency's chain of command.

After The Sun questioned Ms. Townsend in August about alleged abuses, she summoned de Jesus to her office and demanded it end, said her spokesman, Chuck Porcari. De Jesus dispatched Nadol to the camps to stop the practices, but abuses apparently continued.

One 16-year-old at the camps told a Maryland judge Friday that on Nov. 29 guards stuck their thumbs in his eyes because he didn't finish all the food on his plate and beat him when he went to the latrine. Another boy told the judge guards threw him through a window for talking.

Juveniles justice officials said they were unaware that boot camp officials had circulated a policy that allowed guards to use force at their own discretion.

The three camps, all located in Garrett County in western Maryland, were intended to provide troubled youths with a regimen of military-style discipline and physical exercise in addition to a strict curriculum of education. About 200 youths pass through the camps each year, charged with everything except murder.

Robinson, a former Baltimore police commissioner and state secretary of public safety and correctional services, will take over as interim head of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Operations at the camps have been suspended and the Maryland National Guard is supervising them in the interim. Monitors from the Department of Social Services are staffing them 24 hours a day. One of the camps was closed Sunday and the youths there moved to the other two camps.

One guard at the camps has been fired, another has resigned and 10 have been placed on administrative duty, state police said.

Glendening said that the report did not mean the end of juvenile boot camps in Maryland.

"There is major role for these types of camps," he said, "but you must do this without any physical violence whatsoever."

GRAPHIC: AP Photo

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 16, 1999