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This issue of CJM tackles some key debates in a lively collection of articles on crime and justice US style in the final run-up to the Presidential elections. The depth of concern expressed about a wide range of issues is given an added sense of urgency by the sheer speed of the legislative changes identified and the perceived dangers that have emerged and will continue to emerge as crucial debating points.

In the introductory article, **Andrew Rutherford** uses the term 'quantum leap' in an attempt to capture the scale and velocity of what is happening today as the prison is 'rediscovered'. In an interview, **James Q Wilson** sets out his controversial views on why he sees young black males as inevitably and disproportionately 'recruited' into crime and into the criminal justice system as well as maintaining that prison is still the most effective form of tackling crime rates in a free society.

In direct contrast, **Elliot Currie**, in an edited version of his recent address to NACRO, provides a damning overview of the speculative arguments that prison expansion is the only effective way forward. He provides four alternative scenarios for serious consideration by policy makers other than '...swelling the size of the penal gulag.'

Jonathan Simon takes on an analysis of the politically-driven facets of the US's new penology and its roots in populist demands for vengeance against malefactors. He suggests that growing levels of moral panic, underpinned by political rhetoric, have transformed the public's image of violent juveniles into alien beings, super predators who need eradication rather than enlightened non-incarcerative options. The moral panic theme is developed further by **Eric L Jensen** when he examines the impact of the substantial changes in the American criminal justice system as a consequence of the War on Drugs initiative and how this impacts unfavourably upon civil liberties. **Ben Bowling** considers the implications of NYPD's style of aggressive policing and whether this policy could survive an Atlantic crossing to the UK. **Marc Mauer** meanwhile,

provides a substantial agenda of policy directives that he would like to see developed in order to begin to respond to the growing human rights issue of disproportionate sentencing.

Looking very much to the future and with a clear set of objectives, **William E Thompson** considers how America should approach the problem of juvenile delinquency in the 21st century, particularly in the light of the pessimism of some observers who predict a rising tide of youthful homicides. Indeed, following concerns over a 125% increase in arrests of juveniles on homicide charges over the last decade compared to a 25% increase for adult arrests, **Victor Streib** takes a detailed look at the death penalty issue as far as such juveniles are concerned. He also provides us with an equally detailed account of women on death row as tabloid interest in the female death penalty becomes more intense. **Peter Hodgkinson** takes on the whole death penalty issue, the ultimate 'litmus test' for any political candidate. Popular support for the death penalty seems to be growing despite much recent research showing its discriminatory and arbitrary nature.

Bill Heberton and **Terry Thomas** take up another human rights issue that is currently under detailed discussion in the UK but now operational in the US. This is the Sex Offender Registration Scheme, currently taken up by over 40 states. Is this mere civil regulation or an invasion of privacy and a 'cruel and unusual punishment'? **Stephen Nathan's** article on prison privatisation charts the history of the involvement of commercial concerns in the 'corrections' business. The controversial political, profit-making characteristics of the prison plc scenario tend to 'drown out' the wider, essential criminal justice debate about whether such prisons are needed in the first place. Finally, **Norman Johnston** takes a sideways look at the history of prison architecture in the knowledge that it is important to step back occasionally and see how very silly the serious can be. ■

David Kidd-Hewitt & Julia Braggins