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# INSIDE STORY

A report submitted by a group of ex-prisoners to the Prison Commission, drawing attention to discrepancies between policy and practice in prison administration

Published for the

## Prison Reform Council

by

HOUSMANS ● LONDON

The report and proposals published in this booklet were sent to the Chairman of the Prison Commission on 27th August, 1962, with the following letter:

Dear Sir,

*On behalf of a group of ex-prisoners we would like to submit for your attention the enclosed list of proposals regarding penal institutions which we have drawn up following a suggestion from Mr. Hugh Klare of the Howard League for Penal Reform. We are including sufficient copies for each of the Prison Commissioners and would be glad to supply further copies on request. We are also sending a copy to Mr. Henry Brooke, the Home Secretary, and to Dr. H. K. Snell, the Director of Prison Medical Services.*

*The proposals we have listed fall into two categories: firstly there are those suggesting a change in the regulations and secondly there are misuses of the existing regulations to be rectified. The discrepancy between policy and practice is of prime importance since, however enlightened official policy may be and however many reforms may be accepted in principle, there will be no actual change in conditions unless means are found to ensure that the intentions of the Prison Commission are understood throughout the Prison Service and willingly carried out. We would like to ask the Commissioners to study this aspect of the problem very carefully and will wait anxiously to hear how they plan to ensure that their intentions are not frustrated in future.*

*We hope we will be given a reply to our proposals in about two months' time. We realise that progress cannot be made in carrying out enlightened policies unless public opinion is behind the Prison Commission. We feel, therefore, that we may be able to contribute something towards penal reform by drawing public attention to the conditions that we have found to exist in some of our prisons. After the Prison Commissioners have had adequate time to consider our proposals we plan to publicise them unless we are shown that it would be contrary to the interests of penal reform to do so.*

*Yours faithfully,*

COLIN SMART,  
Chairman

MARGARET TURNER,  
Secretary.

On 11th September, 1962, the Prison Commission sent their reply:

Madam,

*I am desired by the Prison Commissioners to say that they have studied with interest the memorandum enclosed with your letter of the 27th August, and will bear in mind the points which you make.*

*I am, Madam,*

*Your obedient Servant,*

M. G. RUSSELL,  
Deputy Chairman.

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## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to submit suggestions for the immediate reform of penal institutions – suggestions which we believe can be implemented without challenging the existing official policy of Her Majesty's Government or necessitating major structural upheavals.

We have become aware of wide discrepancies which exist between actual practice and the official policy as outlined in the statement of Policy and Practice in the Administration of Prisons and Borstal Institutions in England and Wales, issued by the Home Office under the title "Prisons and Borstals" (4th Edition, H.M.S.O., 1960). We welcome the progressive attitude expressed in this document and trust that the Prison Commissioners will do all that is within their power to remedy the present anomalous situation.

The list of proposals has been drawn up by a working group of men and women who have been in prison during the last two years for their part in Direct Action or Committee of 100 demonstrations against nuclear weapons. Eight discussion group meetings were held, attended in all by twenty-three ex-prisoners, and written suggestions and comments received from ten others were discussed and incorporated in the final report. The terms of imprisonment varied in length from one week to eight months; the average time being eleven weeks. Between them the prisoners could report on conditions in twelve English prisons, but the most well-reported prisons were Brixton, Drake Hall, Holloway, Stafford and Wormwood Scrubs.

The discussion groups were attended by:

ELEANOR AITKEN	PETER DODSON	MARY MELVILLE
GEOFFREY AUSTIN	MICHAEL GOTCH	CELIA OTTER
DOUGLAS BREWOOD, SNR.	DENNIS GOULD	NEIL SNELDERS
MARY BROWN	MICHAEL HENRY	COLIN SMART
PETER BROWN	PATRICK HENRY	ELLA SALTHOUSE
JANE BUXTON	NICK JOHNSON	MARGARET TURNER
WENDY BUTLIN	OONAGH LAHR	SALLY WELLS
CHARLES CARTER		BIDDY YOUNGDAY

Miss Eileen Bell attended as an observer to represent the non-prisoner point of view and to assist in the secretarial work.

Written comments and suggestions were received from:

DOUGLAS BREWOOD, JNR.	FERGUS KING	WILL WARREN
GEORGE CLARK	OLIVER MAHLER	ARNOLD WESKER
LAURIE HISLAM	TATIANA MANUILOW	RICHARD WODEMAN
	JOHN RUST	

We have not burdened this report with full personal information about the prisoners or their prison experiences, but if requested will provide any further details that are required.

## The Report

All those who contributed to this report have been imprisoned during the past two years. There are differences in our ages, our backgrounds and many of our views but we are unanimous in our conviction that immediate action should be taken to correct the injustice, the degradation and the human suffering created by the present penal system and to concentrate on positive attempts to rehabilitate the prisoner.

We hold the view that there must be a complete revision of the prison system and a great deal of money must be spent on research, the building of treatment centres and the recruiting of staff of the right qualifications and calibre. We know that the prison system cannot be reformed simply by the correction of the faults listed in our report. What is required is a reversal of the attitudes that make such faults abound.

Our experience of penal institutions is by no means comprehensive and we may not have been permitted the opportunity of seeing constructive work being carried out. However, we think it is significant that in the twelve prisons on which we can report the situation was not seen to bear any relation to the enlightened ideas and intentions which are so clearly expressed in the Official Policy Statement.

In 1895 the Gladstone Committee expressed the view that a punitive system was not effectual in decreasing crime or recidivism and it "made for the deterioration and degradation of the prisoners and their eventual release into society neither deterred nor reformed, but brutalised and embittered". The Committee recommended that for the future, reformation and deterrence should be treated as "primary and concurrent objects" and that "prison treatment should be designed to maintain, stimulate or awaken the higher susceptibilities of prisoners and turn them out of prison better men and women, both physically and morally, than when they came in". Her Majesty's Government in their statement on Prisons and Borstals published by the Home Office state that: "these principles were accepted by the Government of the day, and their progressive fulfilment has been and remains the task assigned to successive prison administrations."

The Government Statement continues in paragraph six of the third chapter to say that:

"The methods to be described seek to replace the negative and repressive by the positive and the constructive."

(Most prisons we have seen are negative and repressive and we saw little to indicate the positive and constructive.)

"The control of the prisoner should be no more restrictive than is

necessary to secure safe-custody and well-ordered community life.”

(Measures taken to control prisoners were often unnecessary and provocative of disorder in the community life.)

“Their treatment should at all times be such as to encourage their self-respect and a sense of personal responsibility, and these are the qualities which can be attained only by practising them.”

(While some individual officers encouraged the prisoner's self-respect, it appeared that more effort went into discouraging personal responsibility and increasing the prisoner's humiliation and degradation.)

“And responsibility should be strengthened not only in relation to their life in prison but to the life outside to which they must return, they should be encouraged to keep in touch with their families and remember their responsibilities to them and to think constructively about what they are going to make of the future.”

(In fact the present system would seem to be designed to destroy family responsibilities and social relations. Little encouragement is given to prepare for release, and such assistance as is given tends to be official and impersonal and consequently ineffectual.)

“Work should be as far as possible such as will not only induce interest in the prisoner but will help him to help himself upon release.”

(Facilities for providing work and training for the prisoner are quite inadequate. It must be recognised that extremely routine tasks performed in an institution are far less tolerable than similar activities in society, where compensations are available.)

“Apart from work prisoners should be out of their cells as much as possible for some stimulating activity, educational or recreational.”

(In local prisons in particular, prisoners were allowed out of their cells for only a few hours a day, and at weekends the period was even less. Many of the staff tend to regard the recommended “stimulating educational and recreational activities” as privileges and to treat them as a nuisance to be discouraged.)

“Above all every member of the staff who comes into contact with the prisoner should be the influence of example and advice in season, seek to show him the right way and help him along it.”

(The existence in each prison of a number of officers who were opposed to the implementation of progressive methods undermined all possibilities of officer-prisoner relationships, caused unnecessary suffering and blatantly obstructed any positive work. This was apart from the few bullies and sadists who, we regret, were also to be found.)

While we are dissatisfied with internal conditions and have restricted our comments to internal problems, we feel it must be

stressed that pre-release and after-release arrangements are completely inadequate. We believe that as much attention should be paid to assistance after release as to the administration during sentence. It is our view that society should be educated to accept the fact that, at least when they leave the prison gates, these men and women are no longer criminals.

## Proposals

### Medical

1 It is essential that the right type of person be recruited for the Prison Medical Service. Better incentives, status and medical facilities should be provided and the work should be widely recognised as extremely important and responsible.

2 Even the best people who go into the Prison Medical Service seem to become institutionalised and develop a callous “don't care” attitude towards their patients after a while. We suggest therefore that prisons should be served as much as possible by visiting consultants from outside hospitals and practices, so that they keep the humane standards that are observed outside. Special care would have to be taken that they understood the confidential nature of their prison work. If resident M.O.s are required, they should be changed frequently so that the “wind of change” has a chance to blow through the system from time to time.

3 On admission prisoners are not allowed to keep any drugs prescribed by their outside doctor. This causes great distress to people like asthmatics who depend on atomisers, etc. We recommend that the prisoner should not automatically have his drugs withdrawn but have his prescriptions renewed as long as necessary while in prison.

4 We have known a case where a man was imprisoned for four months and had a nervous breakdown halfway through his sentence but the symptoms were ignored in prison. His general practitioner could have told the prison M.O. of the man's history of mental illness but was not contacted until a friendly prisoner did so on his release and ensured that the man was sent to mental hospital. This sort of tragedy could be avoided if the M.O. always checked with the prisoner's outside doctor (*in complete confidence*) and asked for medical notes in the case of invalids. This would also ensure that people on a special diet could continue it in prison and avoid a great deal of unnecessary suffering.

5 Epileptics should either sleep in hospital or have special facilities for calling help. It seems wrong that they should be locked in at all, and sleeping three epileptics to a cell is not really satisfactory. They should always be under qualified supervision.

6 The prison M.O. seems to have to waste a great deal of his time on routine matters such as authorising prisoners to wear their own shoes or eat brown bread. The individual prisoner should choose for himself on these matters and it is a waste of a professional man's time to ask him to decide. In Wormwood Scrubs "young prisoners" had their beards shaved with the excuse of infection and this was a misuse of the M.O.'s power.

7 The prison M.O. should visit the prisoner in his cell when he is really sick and not require the man to wait around in draughty corridors when he is ill. In Holloway the women seem to get this attention and it should not be denied to men prisoners. Sufficient benches should be provided outside the M.O.'s room for waiting patients. Prisoners should not be required to stand around when ill and should also be allowed to sit when being interviewed by the doctor.

8 The prisoner should know that he has the right to report "special sick" at any time of the day, since he cannot always arrange to feel his first symptoms at the time for applications in the morning. This right must never be blocked by prison officers. Prisoners should also be able to get simple remedies, like aspirins, at any time of the day in case of need. The landing officer could easily keep a record of the pill given and report the dose to the M.O. later. The prisoner could be required to swallow the pills on the spot to ensure that he does not hoard them for misuse.

9 In Drake Hall there should be a full-time M.O. appointed (or a rota of visiting consultants) so that prisoners can report sick direct to the doctor and not have to be "passed" by a Prison Officer first.

10 The admissions medical examination seems to be purely perfunctory and the grading of prisoners for different categories of work seems to bear no relation to their fitness. We suspect that often the medical grade is more a matter of social class than medical findings. The medical examination should be a serious attempt to diagnose the prisoner's fitness and where necessary to ensure that he is put on suitable work.

11 Disposable paper handkerchiefs should be provided when a prisoner has a cold. The two cotton ones supplied are quite inadequate and unhygienic in such circumstances.

12 The diet for pregnant women is not up to the standards generally recommended outside. They are only allowed one egg each week and one pint of milk each day. We recommend that they have more milk, an egg every day and more fresh fruit.

13 Pregnant women should be able to ring their bells and be sure of having their call for help answered. Other special cases, such as the mentally sick, should also be treated with compassion and allowed to have their light on at night, etc., when needed, and without any difficulty.

14 Women are given V.D. tests in Holloway without their permission being sought. In actual fact we find that prisoners have the right to refuse but they are not usually aware of this at the time and are frightened into submitting. The woman should always be fully consulted and the need sympathetically explained. We recognise the importance of the correct diagnosis of venereal disease, but would like to stress that the diagnosis depends on several factors, none of which is entirely reliable on its own. In suspected cases of gonorrhoea, serological and careful gynaecological examination are important, not simply the indiscriminate taking of a vaginal swab, particularly as gonococci are so difficult to culture bacteriologically. When a vaginal swab is necessary it should be taken in a private and gentle manner; at present this is often done in a brutal way and seems to be regarded as part of the general punishment.

15 Women prisoners find the lavatories, which have no inside bolt, very degrading and embarrassing; they feel this leads to constipation as well as to loss of self-respect. We suggest that the lavatories could be fitted with a flimsy latch (which could be forced easily enough by an officer in case of emergency) or they should have a simple catch and an "engaged" sign.

## Social and Mental Welfare

1 The whole question of sex in prison is not tackled by the authorities. It should be recognised that segregation of the sexes in prison leads, as it does anywhere else, to unhealthy emotional stresses and homosexuality, particularly among Y.P.s in Borstals and approved schools. In mental hospitals, where there are always men and women together in the same building, social contact between the sexes is allowed. This is beneficial to the patients and staff. We would urge that some research be undertaken on the possibility of co-education in prisons and would suggest co-educational evening classes as a first step.

2 Sexual offenders should be housed and treated in separate centres. To commit them to prison is an aggravation of their problem instead of rehabilitation.

3 It is essential to have qualified psychiatrists attached to every prison, since so many prisoners need this help. Present staffing is inadequate and often the only cases that can be helped are extreme emergencies such as threatened suicides.

4 When a prisoner is discovered to be mentally sick during the course of his sentence full use should be made of the existing machinery for removing him to a mental hospital for treatment before the end of his term. Prison can only aggravate his condition and in the long run the burden both to prisoner and the State will be all the greater. The Welfare Officers, recommended below (5), should be able to refer possible cases to the psychiatric staff, as recommended above (3), for professional diagnosis at an early stage.

5 In Holloway there is one Welfare Officer to cope with 400 prisoners, which is inevitably quite inadequate. She should have two if not more assistants. Chapter 4, paragraph 53 of the Policy Statement mentions local prisons where no welfare officer has yet been appointed and says that the possibility of employing resident Welfare Officers at some central prisons is "under consideration". We would urge that enough Welfare Officers be appointed to every prison to reduce each one's case load to one hundred.

6 An enquiry should be made into the practice of young girls in prisons and Borstals of slashing themselves in the arm when in a state of frustration and rebellion. This is clearly a symptom of mental disorder, but because it is so general inside it seems to be regarded with surprising complacency at lay level. If the authorities understand this phenomenon (which does not occur in a healthy society) they should treat it. If they do not understand it they should set up an enquiry immediately.

7 Mothers with babies should go to a separate centre or special part of the prison. They should not be separated from their babies during the first few years, which are so important for the child's emotional development. A nurse should be in charge of these mothers and every effort be made to teach them child welfare.

## Hygiene

1 It is essential that new chamber-pots be provided throughout. They should preferably be of polythene and *always* have handles and lids (in punishment cells, too). Cleaning and disinfecting of these must be taken seriously and adequate materials be provided.

2 One lavatory and sink for over a hundred prisoners, as at Stafford, is hopelessly inadequate and leads to disgusting conditions. Extra lavatories on the landings must be built and it is suggested that adjacent cells be converted. The expense is completely justified. We are aware that the Prison Commission are trying to improve conditions but we are not convinced that they appreciate the urgency of these reforms. The work must be given top priority and more use should be made of prison labour.

3 Especially when men have to share cells the pot system is disgusting and the emptying of slops by a line of prisoners is a degrading procedure that must be avoided. Prisoners must be allowed out of their cells during the night to visit the lavatory even though this might mean increasing the night staff. Michael Randle was recently (May, 1962) put on report in Wormwood Scrubs for insisting on calling an officer to let out a fellow-prisoner suffering from diarrhoea who was in great pain. This incident is typical of many we have experienced ourselves.

4 At present cells are often dirty when the prisoner first goes in them; chamber-pots are smelly and rubbish buckets on the landings are filthy. Inspection of cells, bathrooms and recesses and supervision of wing cleaners could ensure that everything was in a healthy state, as there is no shortage of prison labour. There should never be any shortage of cleaning materials – such as exists everywhere at present. Brushes, soap, non-poisonous disinfectants and detergents must be freely available on the wings and in the kitchens. In Stafford prisoners were told to scrub floors with their nailbrushes as no others were provided. In Bedford and Brixton kit inspections required that toothbrushes were laid out on the lids of chamber-pots. All of this is in direct contradiction to paragraph 21 of chapter 8 of the Policy Statement which says: "A high standard of cleanliness is enforced, both in the premises and in the persons of the inmates."

5 At present it is not possible to get hot water for washing or even for shaving in some closed prisons. Hot water is a necessity if prisoners are to observe the "high standard of cleanliness" which is recommended in the Policy Statement and it must be laid on for each landing.

6 The cheap razor blades provided in prisons hitherto have made shaving difficult and painful, but we understand that blades of good quality will be provided in future. Provision of good quality blades must continue. Prisoners should have adequate time for shaving. In Stafford at least half an hour longer should be given before breakfast for washing, shaving and cleaning the cell. This is very necessary when there are three in a cell.

7 Prisoners find unhygienic the officially approved practice of washing up eating utensils in bowls used for their personal washing in their cells. Yet washing-up facilities on the landings are non-existent. Sinks with hot water and detergents should be provided on the landings; otherwise prisoners do their washing-up under the sluice – next to the lavatories, which is most unhealthy. On some wings this sluice is the same place where chamber-pots are being emptied.

8 In Wormwood Scrubs Y.P. Wing one sheet was changed every two weeks so each sheet had to serve for four weeks, and at Brixton sheets which had only been used two days were given out

to be used again by other prisoners. These standards of cleanliness do not meet with the requirements of the Policy Statement.

9 Women are fastidious by nature and when in prison they should not have to lower their standards of personal hygiene. We welcome the recent introduction of free deodorants in Holloway and recommend that shampoos also be provided.

## Clothing

1 There is no excuse for the constant shortages of clothing in most prisons. There should be adequate stocks of clothing in a complete range of sizes so that prisoners can get an issue that fits them properly and not be required to wear tattered clothing that is only fit to be used as rags.

2 The worst shortage for men seems to be in underpants. The ones with elastic tops were the only ones that ever fitted and these were in short supply and a black market existed. The others lost their buttons and had to be knotted to fit, which made them impossible for the next wearer. A sufficient supply of elastic-topped pants must be provided.

3 One clean shirt per week is shockingly inadequate when the prisoner has to use one of his two shirts for nightwear. Two clean shirts a week plus a nightshirt would be more reasonable if the intentions of the Policy Statement (chapter 8, paragraph 22) are to be carried out: "An inmate's self-respect should be maintained in his personal appearance." Similarly one pair of socks per week is not adequate for hygiene or self-respect; two pairs are essential.

4 Old shoes in bad repair cause more discomfort than any other item of clothing for men and women. The issuing of leaky shoes should not be tolerated, as it was at Stafford. Prisoners should be allowed to wear their own shoes unless the prison shoes are really comfortable.

5 Civil prisoners are in theory allowed to wear their own clothing but in practice this is denied to them unless their clothes conform to the authorities' arbitrary standards. Since prison standards are so low, nearly every civil prisoner would look smarter in his or her own clothes – and the choice should be the civil prisoner's right. The civil prisoner should be allowed to wear some items of his own clothing and some prison clothing if he finds this more practicable the choice should not be restricted to all of one or all of the other. He should not be penalised for wearing his own clothes by being denied the chance of going to an Open Prison or doing outside work.

6 Men prisoners have great difficulty getting their clothes mended, buttons replaced, etc. There should be a repair shop available where the mending is done by other prisoners, or where they can obtain the materials to do the repair themselves.

7 All clothing issued to prisoners should be clean and it should be laundered frequently. Jackets and trousers have been issued at Stafford without being cleaned or laundered after use by a previous prisoner. Women often find their cardigans are filthy and sometimes not changed for months; their dresses are only changed once a week. It happened last September in Holloway that several Y.P.s were told that there were no clean dresses for three successive weeks. Women should change their dresses twice a week and their cardigans whenever necessary.

8 Except in exceptional cases prisoners have no protective clothing. Sou'westers should be provided for men and women prisoners working outside and for prisoners wishing to exercise in wet weather. Waterproof capes are also necessary for any exercise outside.

9 Prison clothing for women is inadequate in winter. The capes should be longer and have warm linings. Gloves should be provided.

10 The felt slippers issued to women in Receptions should not be passed on to anyone else. They should be kept for wear in the cell and when outdoor shoes are wet. They should be scrapped when the prisoner is discharged.

11 We are told that crêpe nylons are to be issued to women prisoners. As far as we know they are being hoarded on the shelves at present. They must be put into use because one pair of lisle stockings per week is quite inadequate. The prisoner cannot wash them and have them dry for the next day, so is presumably expected to wear them seven days; this is too degrading.

12 We understand that women prisoners are allowed to keep their brassieres and suspender-belts if they ask to do so. They should be told in Receptions that this is permitted; otherwise they have no way of knowing and may be uncomfortable for their whole sentence.

13 Winter underwear for women is scratchy and biscuit-coloured. It is most uncomfortable without being warm. The authorities should provide underclothes that are up to acceptable standards – such as in the women's services.

14 The embarrassing practice sometimes employed of asking women prisoners to display their knickers before giving them in for laundering should be abolished.

## Food

1 A check should be made on the food at Brixton to ensure that it has improved since December 1961. Everyone who experienced it up till then reported that it was so unpleasant as to be inedible. If the same ingredients were used as in other prisons there must have been something vitally wrong in the kitchens.

2 The prison diet is said to provide calories equal to those in the average diet outside, but these are provided by the very cheapest foods and are therefore mainly starch. If the prisoner cannot tolerate all this stodge he becomes undernourished. We cannot see how a prisoner is helped in any way by having his health undermined. Meat should not be of such inferior quality. Eggs should be part of the regular prison diet as these would be a cheaper way of providing protein than poor-grade meat. Milk and sugar should be in adequate quantities and some fresh, uncooked vegetables or salad given occasionally, as there seems an almost total deficiency of vitamins, particularly of vitamin C.

3 In Chapter 8, paragraph 23 of the Policy Statement it is said that "the special needs of Borstal boys and young prisoners are met by substantial additions to the dietary, which include extra bread, potatoes and a weekly egg". This extra allocation of starch (alleviated by a weekly egg) is not sufficient to prevent adolescents from feeling constantly hungry. This emphasis on carbohydrate foods is quite erroneous as they do not supply the essential need of young people when they are laying down body tissues and require high protein and milk diets.

4 Although adolescents and manual workers are often very hungry, food is sometimes returned to the kitchens rather than issued as second helpings. This may be because of the mistaken idea that ill-feeling would be caused if it were distributed to just a few. In fact, the only ill-feeling caused is resentment against the officers who return the food.

5 More care should be taken in the preparation of food and the cleaning of cooking pots. The taste of dishwater permeates much of the food and is probably responsible for the unpleasant taste of prison tea. This could be avoided if enough soap and hot water were used.

6 Some kitchen officers (as in Holloway and Brixton) do not appear to understand the principles of dietetics. The fact that vegetarians are often given jam as a substitute for meat and the value of pulse foods is not appreciated, leads us to have no confidence in their ability to provide a balanced diet for the prisoner in general. When rations are so poor, a proper understanding of food values is essential.

7 It appears that foods rejected for use outside are considered good enough for prisoners. Reports from three prisons state that Grade III pigmeal is used for prisoners' porridge and dates supplied have been mouldy on top. There is a great danger that substandard food may be delivered by contractors, knowing that there will be no complaints from prisoners. We would urge that this be investigated and the principle accepted that prisoners have a right to wholesome food of good quality.

8 Bread and cake that are baked in prisons go stale almost immediately. If inferior or stale ingredients are being used this practice should cease.

9 Prisoners mistrust the cocoa because it is most peculiar and unlike anything that is served outside. We are told that there are no drugs in it but that it is the cheapness of the cocoa that makes it so extraordinary. Since cocoa at 7 p.m. is the last "meal" before breakfast in the morning it should be a palatable and nourishing drink *made with milk and sugar* instead of the watery and unpleasant mixture served in most prisons

## Exercise

1 Exercise on overcrowded yards is degrading, depressing and of little benefit to the prisoner. The existing grounds should be used to better advantage so that prisoners have the maximum amount of space and more facilities for games. While prisoners appreciate pretty gardens and lawns, they should be given full access to these and the flowers should not be just a show-piece for visitors.

2 Provision should be made for exercise in bad weather. Some prisons have gyms which could be used during the day and not just for evening classes. Elsewhere gymnasium huts should be built in the grounds.

3 Prisoners who are already doing heavy physical work should be informed that they do not need to exercise round a yard and are allowed to sit outside. Other prisoners should be given the choice of the exercise yard or the gym.

4 The P.T. Instructors who are mentioned in Regulations should be actually appointed to every prison and exercise should be made more positive and enjoyable. Netball could become a regular thing at Holloway if proper facilities were provided.

## Letters, Visits etc.

1 The authorities should reconsider what they are doing when they cut prisoners off from their friends and families and then deny them adequate contact. They are creating enormous problems for



the future, which will only have to be sorted out by the other social services. We do not believe that the censoring machinery would be overburdened if prisoners' letters were unrestricted. Things would settle down to a manageable level quite soon, since most prisoners are not great letter writers. It should be easier, too, for prisoners to have special, regular visits in order to prevent marriages breaking up. This whole question requires a change of attitude on the part of the authorities if the intentions expressed in paragraph 6 of Chapter 3 of the Policy Statement are to be taken seriously.

2 The prisoner should be allowed frequent home visits and weekend leave. This will help to keep marriages on a more normal footing and help to keep the prisoner in touch with the normal life that he is to return to one day. We recognise that something is being done in this direction but urge that these privileges should not be confined to prisoners serving terms of over two years but should be extended as widely as possible.

3 The reception letter and reception visits are most important because the prisoner has many problems and anxieties to be settled on admission. Prisoners must always be allowed to see their relatives and write to them fully on admission; these contacts should never be withheld as a punishment (as has happened when prisoners did not give their names at court). The admission visit should last at least half an hour since the prisoner and visitor are often upset and need time to sort out their affairs. The admission letter should be a full two-page one; single-sheet notepaper should be abolished altogether.

4 The letter-censoring officer should never be the same person as the landing officer, and anything the officer learns from a letter or during a visit should be confidential and not used as taunts and jibes against the prisoner. This has happened at Holloway, Brixton and Stafford.

5 The prisoner should be told clearly what the censorship machinery is for. He should know what is forbidden to be mentioned in letters and visits and (if possible) understand why.

6 In open prisons prisoners are often ordered to tidy themselves up for visits, yet in closed prisons it is often forbidden. Prisoners should be given an opportunity and the facilities to tidy themselves before seeing their visitors and should be encouraged to do so.

7 Women prisoners appreciate flowers sent in by their friends. Ex-prisoners sometimes like to send flowers to women they have become friendly with inside, but these are confiscated by the authorities if the ex-prisoner is honest enough to use her own name. Prisoners cannot and should not be prevented from making friendships among themselves and it would be better to recognise this and

not discourage kindness and thoughtfulness in this way. The authorities appear to be afraid of encouraging homosexual friendships but these are already being engendered by the system of segregating prisoners from a normal sex life and the sending of flowers will make no difference to this one way or the other.

## Libraries

1 Holloway prison has an excellent main library, and the standard achieved here should be possible in every prison. Prisoners should be able to browse round the shelves at leisure, since this is the way they will learn wider and better reading habits. Administrative reorganisation will probably be necessary to make this possible and to ensure that the recommendations in paragraph 6 of Chapter 3 of the Policy Statement are put into effect, so that prisoners are "out of their cells as much as possible for some stimulating activity, educational or recreational".

2 Remand libraries and the Y.P. libraries are often seriously short of good material and the books are dilapidated and incomplete. If the supervision of these libraries were taken over seriously by an officer or red-band they could be well kept and well run.

3 The main library should be used to its full extent and not denied to any class of prisoner. Civil prisoners are not always allowed to use it and remand prisoners and Y.P.'s cannot do so. This is claimed to be necessary in the cause of segregation, but administratively it should be quite possible for the different categories to use the libraries at different times.

4 Every prisoner should be allotted a certain time to go to the library and be informed of his right to go at that time each week.

5 The restrictions on books allowed to be sent into prison appear to be arbitrary and unintelligent. Books should be freely allowed unless obviously pornographic.

6 Newspapers sent in are not used to full advantage because they have to be returned before the next issue can be received, and they must not be passed on to other prisoners. Girls waiting for places at Borstal were not allowed to have papers sent to them in Holloway. These restrictions seem pointless since there is no harm in prisoners keeping themselves well-informed on current affairs. Newspapers should circulate as much as possible.

7 Similarly the newspapers provided by the prison authorities are not used to full advantage. They may be issued for half an hour and then withdrawn (as in Holloway Star Wing) or just on view in the library so that they are only seen once a week. Papers should be freely available every day in association rooms for every class of prisoner.

8 In many prisons there is a prejudice against left-wing newspapers and journals. *Peace News* was sometimes withheld at Stafford and even the *Observer* was frowned upon in Drake Hall. Political pressure of this kind must be removed.

## Discipline

1 Although a dangerously-violent man may have to be isolated until treatment is available, the general practice of punishing prisoners by solitary confinement and semi-starvation is too brutal and senseless to be continued. The experience does not reform but only increases the prisoner's state of rebellion. By denying to Y.P.'s all outlets for their natural energies and aggression it gives rise to more violence and bravado.

2 The cause of the prisoner's rebellion or misbehaviour should be sought and treated. Prisoners are individuals with widely-differing needs and we cannot therefore recommend stock punishments as alternatives to confinement and withdrawal of food. However we would recommend the intelligent and discriminating use of withdrawal of privileges or the giving of extra chores (some constructive work). Governors should be more flexible in their attitudes. Prisons should not be run like military units where the individual is subordinate to the carrying out of some strategic operation, but as an establishment whose main purpose is always the rehabilitation of individuals.

3 Violence in prison is often a product of the present system. This should be recognised and the vicious circle broken. Some violent prisoners need psychiatric treatment; in other cases it may stem from some social problem such as illiteracy, trouble at home etc., and the prisoner needs help in some practical way.

4 Some of us have witnessed brutality in the course of the infliction of punishment. Since the officer has enormous power over the inmates and the prisoner has no redress, the only way the Governor can prevent bullying is by knowing his officers and removing those who cannot be trusted in this way. The Governor himself, if he comes from the services, will be imbued with disciplinary ideas which may have no part in the running of a prison which hopes to reform individuals. We would recommend the abolition of the military structure in prisons. The practice of ordering prisoners around "at the double" at Wormwood Scrubs is a particular instance of the military legacy.

5 Regulations state that prisoners should have a fair hearing when brought on a charge in prison, but many prisoners are inarticulate by nature and most others are overwhelmed by the repressive atmosphere when brought before the Governor, so in fact they have no chance to defend themselves. The prisoner should have someone

to speak for him – a legal representative or at least a Welfare Officer to act as defence counsel. This might encourage in the prisoner some respect for prison administration and justice.

6 We appreciate that the open prison is a great step forward in the penal system, but the necessary atmosphere of trust which can do so much for the self-respect of the inmate may be entirely destroyed by an over-disciplined administration. This is the case at Eastchurch, which is run on the lines of a military detention centre and seems to be staffed largely by ex-military personnel. Four formal parades a day, four spot-checks in between and the marching of prisoners in military fashion typify the discipline that is imposed humiliating the prisoners, and denying him all sense of responsibility. The important part played by the attitudes of the staff appears to be recognised at Drake Hall Open Prison but at Eastchurch staff-inmate relationships are probably worse than in most closed prisons. This unhappy misapplication of the open prison system must be rectified.

7 Loss of association is a punishment to some, but it is a relief to others. Open prison is considered by the authorities to be a privilege but it is a punishment to some prisoners. When awarded privileges such as association and open prison, the prisoner should be given the chance to refuse.

## Education

1 Education should be an important feature of prison life and recent financial cuts by the Treasury should be challenged. Cutting expenditure on education is a short-sighted policy because it will reduce the chances of rehabilitating the prisoner and will increase the chance of his becoming a recidivist and a constant burden on the Treasury. There are waiting lists for classes in many prisons now, so there is a need for more money – not less.

2 In view of the waiting lists, qualified prisoners should be allowed to instruct their fellow prisoners. Classes for illiterates should be run during the day.

3 In view of the waiting lists it is ridiculous when prisoners are not allowed to leave classes when they want to (as has occurred at Stafford and Holloway). Privileges must not be made compulsory. In actual fact there is no obligation to attend and the prisoner should be given a free choice. If prisoners are to benefit from this further education it is essential that they are free from the element of compulsion which only poisons the atmosphere and causes the classes to be regarded as just one more part of the punishment.

4 Administration of prisoners' educational facilities should be improved. Repeated requests at Stafford by one prisoner for a correspondence course remained unanswered and other prisoners

often missed their classes through not being unlocked at the right time. Officers tend to mistrust the prisoners' motives in asking to attend classes and some of them resent educational privileges. Any interest in education shown by the prisoner should be made full use of and never neglected or disparaged.

## Work and Pay

1 Work must be useful and constructive and if possible keep the prisoner in touch with life outside. There are jobs in the community that could be done by prisoners (by all except the dangerous and violent) such as clearing bomb sites, building playgrounds, decorating old people's homes, farming, allotments etc. The more work done outside the walls of the prison the better, since the prisoner can then feel he is still able to play a part in the life of the community and the ordinary citizen outside can realise that the prisoner is not a different animal to be feared and isolated, but a human being who needs help.

2 The jobs in prisons which we should try to abolish are the soul-destroying ones like dismantling gasmasks and telephone equipment, sewing mailbags by hand, cutting rings from mailbags, pulling out hair mattresses, unstitching mailbags and rolling balls of twine.

3 We would urge that the problem of finding suitable work (especially for the short-term unskilled prisoner) be discussed with the T.U.C. The Unions are in a good position to provide the answer and would surely give help if their interest were aroused in the needs of their fellow workers in prison.

4 Pay should be comparable to rates paid outside, with a deduction by the Prison Commission for board. The remaining wage can be divided for (1) an allowance for dependents (rather than the family having to claim National Assistance); (2) recompense to the victim (to enable the prisoner to appreciate that justice is being done); (3) saving for the prisoner's release (to prevent his being stranded without money and resorting to crime again); and (4) provision for his personal needs in prison.

In this connection we would question the conclusions arrived at in the White Paper "Penal Practice in a Changing Society" (para. 74) that "it cannot provide a general solution of the prison earnings problems until the general level of productivity and efficiency of prison industry approximates much more closely to that of outside industry". This seems to accept the principle that economic considerations must be of first concern rather than the rehabilitation of the prisoner through responsibility. Prison industries must be brought into line with modern methods, but until they are they will never "pay their way" or compete with outside industries in productivity or efficiency, and prison workers should not be penalised because of it.

5 Until prisoners are paid at economic rates their pay should be increased at least to a level that would eliminate tobacco baron-ing. This is a big problem in every prison and the cause of much misery for those who borrow at high interest rates. Failure to repay often results in violence and many prisoners have to ask for the protection of the authorities. This unhealthy situation must be recognised and remedied.

6 The piece-rate system does not appear to be practicable in prison for several reasons: (1) in many prisons there is not enough work to last the day; (2) officers are unable or unwilling to assess each individual's output fairly to the satisfaction of the prisoners; (3) prisoners are frequently called from their work in order to see visitors or the governor or to have a bath, and consequently lose working time for no fault of their own.

7 On discharge a prisoner finds his insurance card is unstamped for the whole period although he has been working inside. This leads to embarrassing questions from prospective employers, necessitating the cooking-up of some story by the ex-prisoner. It can also mean very real hardship in the loss of benefit since none but the most wealthy can afford to pay the contributions in arrears. When the State takes a person into custody it should recognise that it takes on the responsibility of keeping that person a paid-up member of the Welfare State.

8 Just as the National Insurance system makes it virtually impossible for an ex-prisoner to gain employment without confessing the fact of his imprisonment to the employer, having to provide a P.A.Y.E. return poses similar difficulty. The prisoner has to explain why he has paid no income-tax over the preceding months. As suggested by Pauline Morris in her Fabian Pamphlet "Prison After-Care", 'It is all the more urgent, therefore, to extend the scope and amount of prison labour and adjust wages accordingly so that a man can pay normal insurance contributions . . . and receive an adjusted P.A.Y.E. form.'

9 In the mailbag shop in Brixton talking was forbidden amongst prisoners. There seems to be no particular reason for this. When work is of a boring nature there is a special need for conversation among workers.

## Supplies

1 Some closed prisons such as Wormwood Scrubs and Stafford have no heating in winter on some floors, and at Stafford no attempt was made to repair broken windows, so the temperature was arctic. We consider these prisons to be long overdue for demolition but unless they can be replaced immediately they must be made habitable by the renovation of their heating systems. Much more

use could be made of prison labour in renovating the buildings and repairing windows etc.

2 Prisoners are bound to lose some items of their kit and replacements should be made from stores without fuss. Otherwise prisoners are encouraged to steal from each other and organise rackets in items in short supply. One prisoner at Holloway asked an officer if her lost toothbrush could be replaced and was advised to steal someone else's! If the authorities were reasonable about replacing those losses there would be no need for this dishonesty in prisoner or officer.

3 Storekeepers seem to have an intrinsic dislike of handing out supplies. In some prisons there may be actual shortages of items which must be rectified by the Prison Commission. But in others the administration of stores must be investigated to ensure that supplies are not hoarded on shelves when prisoners are in very real need of new clothing etc.

4 The unwillingness to issue and exchange clothes so that prisoners can dress respectably may be due to the desire of some officers to make the prisoner feel ridiculous and inferior. A prison where the inmates are dressed like freaks should be regarded as a reflection on the Governor. If his administration were good the prisoners would look reasonably smart and not be ashamed of their own appearance.

5 At Stafford there were only enough knives and forks to supply thirty out of 250 men. It is degrading for prisoners to have to shovel their food with spoons and adequate supplies must be made available. If the shortage is due to losses within the prison a more efficient system of checking should be devised.

6 Teaspoons should be supplied in all prisons.

### Information to prisoners

1 Every prisoner reports that his or her first few weeks in prison are spent in a state of bewilderment because of the lack of *clear* information about routine, regulations etc. The printed regulations do not by any means cover everything they need to know and the official jargon is difficult to understand. At the moment prisoners only learn the prison routine by trial and error – they contravene the regulations unwittingly and are shouted at and often abused. This causes quite unnecessary misery to the prisoner and must surely make the work of the prison officers extremely difficult and irritating. We suggest that every intake of prisoners should have a "briefing meeting" soon after admission, when the idiosyncrasies of prison life and what is required of the prisoner are explained as reasonably

as possible. Even the most intelligent prisoners find it hard to understand what is going on, so it is probably impossible for a person of low I.Q. or a foreigner who does not understand the language.

2 Special provision must be made for prisoners who do not understand English. They need an interpreter during the first day or two – to translate the "briefing" and they need constant visits from someone who speaks their language. It should be possible for each Embassy to have a rota of approved visitors who are willing to visit prisoners and speak with them in their own language. It has happened that a foreign prisoner who did not understand what was going on went quite berserk with fear, was put in a padded cell and then threatened with Broadmoor. This sort of tragedy can be avoided and the disproportionate suffering of every foreigner can be minimised if help by interpreters is always given.

3 Prisoners are often discouraged from making appeals by being told that their sentence may be increased if they appeal and lose. Well-founded advice and full legal information should be available to the prisoner. The prisoner should be allowed to receive legal books when he requests them.

4 Some of the confusion about prison regulations occurs because officers interpret them in an arbitrary way according to their particular whim. The false idea is fostered that one can only see the Governor with the P.O.'s permission. We can quote other cases where the officer has tried to keep back information about the prisoner's rights. Where the prisoner is aware of this and refuses to be intimidated he can probably get fair treatment, but prison officers must have a higher standard of integrity and be just as anxious as the prisoner that justice is carried out.

5 Prisoners have the right to appeal to Visiting Magistrates but the cell card does not explain this properly or give information about procedure. The purpose of the magistrates' visits should be fully explained to the prisoner at his admission briefing. It should also be made clear that the prisoner has a right to see the magistrate without a prison officer being present. It seems that normally a senior officer attempts to stay within earshot so as to get to the Governor in advance of the magistrates to prepare him to meet the complaint.

6 The Policy Statement (Chapter 4, para. 35) says: "A petition form is given without question to the prisoner who asks for one, and whatever he writes is submitted for the consideration of the Secretary of State, unless it deals with a matter within the competence of the Visiting Committee in which case it is first laid before that body."

From experience it is often the case that officers and P.O.'s will discourage prisoners from making petitions (admittedly this is sometimes out of concern for the prisoner's welfare). Every effort should

be made to ensure that prisoners are not discouraged, and the widespread belief that some petitions never leave the prison buildings should be investigated. Points made in paragraphs 4 and 5 above are relevant in this respect.

## Other Matters

1 A certain amount of segregation of prisoners into categories for administrative purposes is probably necessary, but the present system seems to have several disadvantages and anomalies if it is intended to prevent undesirable contacts. Innocent and guilty, first-offenders and recidivists, all mix within the remand category and yet they are strictly segregated from the rest of the prison population. Then in the Star Wing all types of offenders mix together; this category contains prisoners of widely differing crimes, of every grade of seriousness – the only quality they share may be that it is their first conviction. This type of segregation, by complicating prison administration, produces many injustices – especially in the case of remand prisoners who are confined in their cells at 4 p.m. and debarred from film shows, concerts etc.; it also results in restriction of exercise and library facilities for some classes of prisoner. Prisoners should be diagnosed and treated according to their need rather than their type or length of sentence. Those with similar problems, such as drug addicts and alcoholics need special facilities, attention and understanding and they should be grouped together where treatment is available.

2 One most obvious mistake in grouping prisoners together was the confining of sex offenders with violent prisoners in one wing at Stafford. The sex offenders were despised by the others and were constantly being beaten up. This kind of grouping should be broken up immediately and sex offenders should be put on their own as they are likely to be victimised by every other prisoner.

3 The Receptions procedure is an exaggeratedly long affair; in an efficiently run establishment a prisoner would not need to be kept hanging around for five hours on admission. The officers in Receptions also seem to adopt a more bullying attitude here than elsewhere in the prison and it may all be part of a policy designed to impress upon the prisoner his abject state and crush all spirit of rebellion out of him on this first day. It seems to be forgotten, however, that the prisoner has already probably had to face the strain and tension of a court hearing and the shock of receiving a prison sentence. It is inhumane to protract and increase his suffering further and it should be everyone's aim to complete the admissions procedure as quickly and painlessly as possible.

4 When mothers come into Receptions with their babies they should not be separated for any longer than is strictly necessary. Either special reception rooms should be available or the mother and baby should be given top priority and complete the procedure very quickly.

5 When a prisoner is discharged and given a travel warrant to his home town the warrant is clearly marked "H.M. Prison". This makes the prisoner feel branded and conspicuous and it should be quite possible to avoid this added humiliation by omitting it on the warrant.

6 There should be healthy exchange of ideas between prison staff and ex-prisoners so that the staff can appreciate the prisoners' point of view and know better how to treat them. We feel, for instance, that it would be very helpful if groups such as ours could meet members of the Prison Officers' Association. It appears, however, that this would be impossible since prison staff are bound by the Official Secrets Act not to discuss prison matters with those outside. We recognise the need for secrecy regarding the confidential history of prisoners, but there should be no need for secrecy regarding the administration of the prison and its day-to-day running. There is a great danger of the Official Secrets Act being used here as a cloak for inefficiency and malpractice. If the Prison Commission wish to keep the confidence of the public regarding the standards maintained in their institutions they must show themselves willing to allow democratic discussion and the free exchange of ideas.

7 At most prisons a special show is arranged for the visits of Prison Commissioners. Table cloths are put out, special meals are served and little extras like condiments and water appear on the meal tables, which are not usually considered important. This window dressing does not give the Commissioners a proper picture and only increases the prisoners' contempt for what he considers to be the dishonesty of the authorities. Surprise visits are the only way of seeing prisons in their normal routine.

8 More encouragement should be given to the general public to view the inside of our prisons and they should see the whole picture – not just an attractive show. We also support Lord Rea's view that it might be desirable that a week in gaol should be experienced by every judge and magistrate . . . before he is allowed to pass any sentence of imprisonment. Even if this were not practicable it might be possible for every Prison Governor and Commissioner to spend some time as a Prison Officer.

9 In some prisons (notably Stafford and Gloucester) radios blare out all day over every part of the prison through loudspeakers and the prisoner has no choice but to listen and has no say in the selection of programmes. Radio sets, intended as a benefit to the prisoner, must not be so misused as to constitute an additional persecution.

10 Men and women prisoners feel it is unnecessarily degrading to be addressed by their surnames in prison. They should be addressed by their Christian name or by their title; officers should be able to learn whether a woman prisoner is Mrs. or Miss, as they would if they were in any other community.

## The Prison Reform Council

*The Prison Reform Council, which is sponsoring this publication, has been brought back into activity following the many reports of unsatisfactory conditions in our prisons. The reports have been brought out by men and women concerned with the nuclear disarmament movement who for reasons of conscience found it necessary to carry their campaign into the courts and thence to prison.*

*The Council was originally founded in 1941 by a group of conscientious objectors who were shocked by the prison conditions of that day and decided to do something about them. In so far as certain improvements were embodied in the Criminal Justice Bill after the war they were successful, and the Council was disbanded. It is a condemnation of the system that in the subsequent twenty years conditions should have reverted, apparently because our prisons were no longer under objective scrutiny from outside.*

*We are convinced that, when they are made known, democratic public opinion will not tolerate these conditions. It is through public opinion that we aim to press the Authorities into action. This pamphlet is the first of a series which we plan to publish.*

Hon. Secretary, 25 Mervyn Avenue, London, S.E.9