

# FIGHTING MY REHABILITATION

## by Model Prisoner Crim

Do I really want to be a model prisoner? The social workers and psychologists, unless they are new and idealistic, have a model of what they want me to be, as do the warders. That I must always respect their tremendous skills and abilities, that I must regret my past evil actions and exalt the lovely middle class values that the professional and custodial staff have. This is my role.

In this prison I am known as a "softee". I do not fight and I don't fit into the "butch" machine role. Like many softees, I am also a druggie, a user of soft drugs. Originally I was a drug deviant, whose drug became illegal several years ago, hence was made a criminal only recently.

So often I have almost given up fighting my rehabilitation. What they want me to do is to lose contact with my friends, family and subculture known to me before I came here. All mail is heavily censored, in and out. My outgoing letters are limited in number and length. Visits with the outside world are closely observed and censored. Reading materials are heavily censored. If a prison officer cannot understand it, it is banned.

Prison is an environment of physical, psychological and social deprivation. What little we do have here we value very highly.

There is the illicit betshop that prison officers encourage because it keeps the prisoners happy, and no harm is done. There is the very secret and quiet trafficking of drugs, sex, and sex materials. There are the few, intense love affairs, sometimes involving prison officers, and even sometimes involving sex. There is very little else here.

Occasionally, someone has a fight, or gets stabbed. Or one of the 'queens (femme males) might be gang banged just a little too hard or too often. Rarely, someone is raped.

Every now and then a naive prisoner, alienated from the hidden curriculum of the prison programme, breaks the hidden laws. He might speak up on media, or at a Royal Commission. He might let out to the public, or in court, or to his solicitor, about the true events in prison. He might charge a prison official with bribery, or corruption, or bashing.

Should he do this, the rehabilitated prisoners will put him on ice. "Wish he'd shut up and stop stirring. Let things stay as they are mate; don't make things uncomfortable for the prisoners and the prison officers".

Prisoners and prison officers have a common enemy: the public. Sometimes, some prisoners are not properly "rehabilitated". That is, they don't know who their enemy is. Custodial officers get very

jealous when we consort with the enemy. Over seventy percent of the prison population are model prisoners, that is to say, they are "rehabilitated", which is to say, that they are recidivists.

The ideal prisoner avoids getting labelled a habitual prisoner. To be labelled a habitual, means five useless years away from the real business of prisons: wreaking havoc on the public.

So - when it looks as if he is about to be labelled "habitual", the properly rehabilitated prisoner changes his "modus operandi". Instead of "break and enters" he might switch to "fraud", or "armed robs". This way, he ensures that everyone in the crime control industry: judges, lawyers, prison officers, policemen, criminologists, parole staff, social workers and psychologists, that all these people do in fact enhance their power, status, job security and promotion opportunities.

Often we prisoners will say to outsiders, "Yes, this is my last time in prison; I'm not coming back". And fellow crims (for we call ourselves crims, not prisoners) will know that we are bullshitting. As do our parole officers.

Everyone in the crime control industry knows that the vocational training programs are only producing better criminals, better at revenging themselves on the community.

Or, with white collar and blue collar criminals, that we have learnt - its okay to be revengeful on the community, but don't get caught. The eleventh commandment.

How not to get caught. We've learnt here which judges, magistrates, lawyers, police and prison officials are bribeable. We've learnt all about how the law and the out-law really works, instead of the pulp public relations myths that the public believe in.

I ask myself - who amongst my readers is going to believe that there is more truth than cynicism in the statements I have made? How can I prove it?

If I spoke up at the Royal Commission into prisons, I would never be able to prove my allegations. Like the failure of the Royal Commission into prostitution in West Australia.

It is well known that the Establishment, the System, is a very inhuman machine. When one loses his alienation from the people who actually run the Establishment machine, one learns that the real business is done by the out-laws, the hidden curriculum and the hidden channels.

Royal Commissions are basically surface, in-law, appearance functions. They do not reach the soul of those who are truly in the Establishment, the soul of the role-playing prisoner/criminals, the role-playing judicial, custodial and rehabilitative staff. Whilst the public relations razzle dazzle blinds the public, the people in the Crime Control industry remain unaffected.

It is almost to suggest, by the tone of this article, that I am soon to sell out my idealistic philanthropism in favour of the harsh pragmatic compromises that are put to me. Will I eventually become a model prisoner/criminal, a rehabilitatee, a recidivist, like most of the men who pass through the prison program?

I find the pressures to retain my honesty very difficult. I have seen a system where honesty is punished, where sweet-talking servitude to those whose rôle is to control and command, pays immense dividends. I have learnt that my controller, whether he be a judge, policeman or prison officer, will ensure that I do not have to worry about day-to-day living.

Whilst my friends, relatives and family live outside of gaol, I know that I don't have the problems they have of day-to-day urban survival. I know that it is useless worrying or really being interested in their problems, because here in prison there is nothing I can do to help them. I know that my imprisonment has brought them social and personal embarrassment, that they sort of care for me, but don't know how to cope with this Establishment that has given me my new life-role.

Often I have regretted the pain, money, time and effort that they have expended in visiting me here in gaol. I wish sometimes that they would disappear, that they could forget about me and let me live my new life as a prisoner and "crim". To maintain contact is very difficult because of the prison set-up, and so emotionally damaging to me.

I know that prison has reduced me, and most men around me, to a terrible child-like state with our relatives, friends and families. We here in prison often make irrational demands. Most of the time we don't express our demands, our feelings, to those outside of prison. Nor do we express it to those around us.

To serve time easiest in prison, one represses and hides emotions. One tries to be as manly as possible, strong and cooperative, always, or at least as often as you can.

This is very difficult here. We do not have drugs such as alcohol, nor easy non-punitive access to analgesics or other medical treatment. Nor access to expert help of other kinds. The price it pays to be a model prisoner-crim is very, very high.

Over the months, or years, we build up a reserve of vengeance, or revenge. We learn how to control our strong and weak emotions, to fool everyone. The best model prisoner-crims get on very well with the Deputy, the Superintendent, the Overseer and the Governor of the prisoners. The model would have been many years in prison, and always a pleasurable sight to a prison officer. He rarely spends time out of prison, yet he must get out, to give the custodial and rehabilitative staff the façade that they are doing a good job.

A few prisoners react violently to prison. They think that the prison armament, the tear gas, mace, batons, hand-cuffs, leg-cuffs, strait jackets, the boots, fists, helmets and shields,

are to be used on them. These prisoners attempt to pupil the environmental expectations that they be violent. They soon graduate to being an inmate at Grafton Gaol. After release they return to the community, rehabilitated. They have successfully graduated from the school of violent expectations, of hate, alienation of repression and of revenge. Most of all - revenge, which is the real business of prisons. A good example of this are the Baker and Crump model prisoner-crim in the Long Bay "Katingal" Concrete Coffin. Both are Grafton graduates.

Often the released prisoner has less than a few weeks survival money in his pockets, no non-prisoner-crim associates, no job, and learnt no new ways of dealing with his emotions and his needs.

So he starts applying the lessons he has learnt. First, don't get caught, make sure that it is not for all of the crimes, and not for the serious ones. Often he may become a "legal" criminal, such as selling used cars, or involved with gambling.

The only losers in this game are the public.

Meanwhile, back at the prison, the warders are awaiting the arrival of those prisoners-criminals who are coming back home.

Prison is the conscious, and more often, unconscious home of the truly rehabilitated prisoner-crim. When 786 K.W. 2 years comes back, all his home mates will welcome him, and the rehabilitative and correctional staff lay out the red carpet: no more food and clothing supply problems, no more uncertainty, no more decisions to make, for our substitute parents have taken over. This is the real prison.