



## FROM THE INSIDE

A copy of the following document and covering letter recently came into our possession - Ed.

'A cell in a wing in Parramatta Gaol. It is lunch time.

Dear .....

For the first time prisoners in N.S.W. prisons are united and unless the Corrective Services brings in over due reforms there is going to be trouble. The violence at Bathurst and Maitland happened only because it was the last thing, the last course of action open to us. Many guys were shot or bashed after the completion of the riots. Since then a state of virtual guerilla warfare has existed throughout N.S.W. prisons and instead of rioting we will burn one structure at a time and continue with peaceful protest sit-ins. On the 15th of December over 100 Parramatta prisoners staged a sit-in for six hours in protest at bashing of inmates with clubs and batons. A copy of our demands and suggestions was given to two representatives from the Corrective Services who promised to notify us by January 1st with yes or no answers. If we get too many no answers several sections of the gaol are to be burned whilst others will be taken over by prisoners until we see McGeechan or Waddy. On the 18th December prisoners set fire to the tailor shop at Goulburn Gaol. Unfortunately prison officers managed to put out the blaze before it got going. Both happenings have not been reported to the media. No one will be harmed on January 1st. No officers have ever been hurt, even in

the riots; it is us that get hurt. Some of the screws are real violent mother-fuckers and really dig laying batons into us. Guerilla action has proved successful against superior forces especially in the last decade and we have finally realised that we have got the bastards by the balls. Hoping you can do something for us or pass this on to someone who can.

Thank you,

A friend who is not into violence.'

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PARRAMATTA PRISONERS SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS BE INITIATED THROUGHOUT ALL THE STATE'S PRISONS SO AS TO BRING THE N.S.W. CORRECTIVE SERVICES IN LINE WITH THE GENERAL STANDARD OF AUSTRALIAN PENAL INSTITUTIONS. THE TREATMENT OF PRISONERS AND CONDITIONS NEED AN IMMEDIATE REVIEW BY SOMEONE WITH THE AUTHORITY TO INITIATE MUCH NEEDED REFORMS. ALL PRISONERS IN MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISONS RESENT THE 1950's PRISON OFFICERS ATTITUDES CARRIED OUT IN ARCHITECTURALLY ARCHAIC PRISONS BUILT HALF WAY THROUGH THE 19TH CENTURY. DO THE PEOPLE OF N.S.W. BELIEVE WADDY WHEN HE STATES 'OUR PRISONS ARE AS GOOD OR BETTER THAN ANY IN THE WORLD.' FEELINGS ARE RUNNING HIGH AT PARRAMATTA AND GOULBURN GAOLS AND UNLESS DRASTIC CHANGES IN THE CONDITIONS AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE GAOLS ARE INTRODUCED THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER BATHURST OR MAITLAND BECOMES A PROBABILITY.

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- (1) Parole system revised. Prisoners having parole deferred or refused should be granted the right to appeal to a court of law. Perhaps a panel of criminal court judges could be formed for this purpose.
- (b) That a parole officer be stationed permanently at all gaols for the purpose of answering any prisoner's queries that may occur. And that he be entitled to know of all decisions concerning his parole.
- (c) Prisoners to be given a parole date before their full time expires (sometimes their release date comes up before their parole date - this is ridiculous). Parole is being kept beyond their reach.

- (d) Persons who have their parole revoked after being released are not told why such action is being taken. Quite often the reasons are minor technical ones which could have been cleared up if the parole officer had contacted paroled person before revoking parole. A person also should have right to appeal against revocation of parole.
  - (e) All prisoners should be taken before the parole board before any decision regarding parole is taken. Is it right that a panel of people can have the power to refuse, grant or defer parole without once laying their eyes on that person?
  - (f) That the parole board desist in refusing parole to those who at the time of their sentence were recommended by the sentencing judge to be granted parole at the expiration of the non-parole period. Something more conclusive than gaol reports (written by warders, many of whom haven't the intelligence of an amoeba) to be produced to the board when considering parole. Warders are purely custodial yet they have the power to act as sociologists and psychologists when they are asked to produce reports on a prisoner.
  - (g) That outside employment not be an important factor when the board considers an application for parole. Is it realistic to expect men who have spent years in prison to have a job waiting for them on release?
  - (h) Parole 'problems' are one of the main factors causing unrest in the gaols. It must be radical change - and soon.
2. Prisoners are entitled to statutory remission but those released on parole are deprived of this remission on the sentence they served up until the time of their parole minimum. Therefore, this remission should come off a prisoner's minimum sentence which would bring his parole date forward. As it stands now, remission is only meaningful if a prisoner gets parole refused.
- (b) Remission should come off both maximum and minimum sentences. They do in the State of Victoria.
  - (c) Remission on parole earned prior to release on parole is not taken into consideration if one breaks parole and for the majority who don't get re-paroled they have to serve time without remission earned prior to their parole release.
  - (d) Concerning solitary confinement: three days remission are lost for every single day in the solitary cells. Surely a small cell without anything but a thin mattress (only given at night), no books or any 'luxury' is enough punishment. Prisoners do up to 28 days in a solitary cell with only a toilet for scenery.

The luxury of a mattress comes only at 4 in the evening.

- (e) Like Parole remission is a major cause for prisoner complaint.
3. Why is it necessary to be locked up at meal times in our cells? We spend a total of 18 hours a day in our cells. Every day.
4. Portable battery operated television sets to be allowed to be purchased at prisoners own cost. Friends/relatives should also be permitted to send them in.
5. No restriction on the size of transistors allowed in the gaol. These can be obtained by same sources as television.
6. Any prisoner should be permitted to communicate with the ombudsman, Civil Liberties, Prisoner Action Groups and solicitors of their own choosing. This should be a basic right of all prisoners.
7. No limitation on number of letters we are allowed to send (we are permitted 6 a month) and all censorship of incoming and outgoing mail to cease.
8. To be able to write to any one we care to. We are not permitted to write to ex prisoners, political figures, judges or radical groups. Parramatta prisoners are not permitted to write legally to 2jj radio station. Prison officers do not inform prisoner if his letter has not been sent. The same goes with any incoming mail they decide to withhold.
9. Those prison officers under investigation for atrocities committed on prisoners during Bathurst Gaol riot should not be employed as prison officers here (or anywhere else) until such time as they are exonerated, (which they will be of course).
10. Gaols should be open to inspection by reformist groups and any organizations conducting surveys concerning prisons.
11. To be permitted to form a Prisoners Union or Committee to deal with grievances in a non-violent manner.
12. A prisoners cell is his home and as long as it is kept clean he should be allowed to decorate it as he wishes.
13. Prisoners must be given the right to be legally represented on any occasion where a visiting justice is at the gaol hearing allegations against prisoners.
14. All information pertaining to any charges against a prisoner be given to prisoner involved. This must be in writing. We are not permitted to prepare for a gaol court case.
15. A lifer's committee to visit the gaol at least once every three

months to interview persons serving life sentences.

16. Prisoners awaiting appearances before the visiting justice should not be placed in 'circle'. The circle is a segregated section of the gaol that is a series of 10' by 8' cages.
17. It should be made clear to prison officers that prisoners are in gaol as a punishment and not FOR punishment.
18. Exercise time to be increased for all prisoners in circle. Circle prisoners only exercise for 3 hours a day. They spend 21 hours a day locked in their cells.
19. More visits and of longer duration. We are permitted one visit a fortnight for 20 minutes only. Any number of people should be able to visit prisoners on these visits.
20. Why can't prisoners be permitted to make at least one 'phone call a week? Some prisoners have sick relatives who are unable to visit the gaol.
21. In cases where there exist serious domestic problems prisoners should be allowed to have 'contact' visits with relatives. All prisoners in maximum security prisons are forced to talk to their visitors through reinforced glass and wire. At no stage is it possible to touch our visitors. Many of the speaker systems for visiting purposes are defective in some gaols.
22. Wages be increased from \$2.00 minimum for all prisoners. Some prisoners aren't even getting \$2.00 per week.
  - (a) Chemical spend be purchased from chemist shops instead of a food store so as to ensure more of a selection in goods.
  - (b) We should be permitted to purchase health foods out of our private cash money.
  - (c) We would like our other purchases bought from anywhere but Woolworths as they are robbing us blind (3 oranges for a dollar one day).
  - (d) Most prisoners who smoke find they can only buy one packet of tobacco a week on the miserable wages.
  - (e) We are given 45 cents a week so when we get out we have something but the catch 22 is that this 'gate money' stops when the magnificent total of 30 dollars is reached. It takes 2 years to earn that \$30.00.
23. Medical facilities are poor. A nurse should be on hand 24 hours a day. The doctor who visits the gaol three times a week treats every case as a fake and doesn't believe anything

a prisoner tells him. Buzzers need to be installed in all cells for cases of serious illness. As it is now we are compelled to bash away on steel doors until someone sometimes decides to come. If they do come it is not usually very quickly. Several persons have died in cells because of this lack of buzzer situation.

24. Shorts, singlets and thongs to be worn in summer.
25. Prisoners are sent to the circle for committing minor breaches of gaol rules.
26. Up dating of library is a must. No ban on any literature being sent into the gaol that is on sale outside, Playboys etc. and some political literature (leftist lit., Gay mags and feminist mags). Don't ask me why they aren't allowed - they won't tell us, which makes me think they don't know themselves.
27. Prisoners are persecuted for radical political beliefs.
28. The cookhouse is filthy and would be condemned by a health inspector. Facilities are primitive and outside the cookhouse is a slop pit housing all sorts of creatures; rats and cockroaches being the most prolific. There is not enough variety in food and rations allocated to the cookhouse are far from satisfactory.

A health inspector should come in at least once a week to inspect food.

A qualified catering officer to be employed in cookhouse to supervise prison cooks.

29. Prison officers involved in bashings of prisoners should be charged and while waiting for trial should be suspended.

A full enquiry to be launched to investigate our claims that officers are bashing prisoners. On a few occasions when they admit to using batons on prisoners, they claim the prisoner was 'deranged' and that he was 'subdued'.

30. Some prison officers are victimising prisoners involved in recent peaceful demonstrations within the gaol.
31. Authorities need to deal more directly with prisoners. There is poor communication between prisoners and the Department of Corrective Services.
32. Innates to be allowed to buy complete sets of materials for hobbies, e.g. if a prisoner buys \$20.00 worth of oil paints

they should be permitted to buy oil and turpentine otherwise the paints are useless.

33. Any property taken from prisoners cells during searches be handed to the officer in charge of the prisoner's wing until or if he is allowed to have it back. During a recent full scale search of the gaol many articles were destroyed or indiscriminately thrown out of cells. Many transistor radios were destroyed. They were not replaced.
34. A sewerage system to be installed in the remand section of the gaol. It is 1975 and prisoners in three wing are housed in cells half the size of a normal cell which is only 12' by 8' so you can imagine how small the 3 wing cells are. These prisoners also are forced, due to the absence of sewerage, to defecate in tins which remain in their cells all night.
35. The welfare officer should be more privately placed so inmates can discuss private and family matters with him without a hundred prison officers listening as well.
36. Applications made by prisoners are not being forwarded on to the Department of Corrective Services.
37. Can sporting and current educational films be obtained through the Corrective Services.
38. More sporting opportunities to be introduced into the gaol. We have a small oval of sorts but we are restricted to using it once a week in winter and none at all during summer.
39. As no prisoner is engaged in any hard or meaningful work apathy and laziness are rife. If the oval was available for jogging purposes it would keep them healthy as well as active.



*'I think these  
eggs got five  
years as well'*

40. The Corrective Services fail to encourage sport and furthermore refuse to supply much in the way of equipment.
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WE BELIEVE WE HAVE GONE ABOUT THIS IN A REASONABLE WAY AND IF THE CORRECTIVE SERVICES GOES ABOUT IT THE CORRECT WAY ALSO, MUCH TROUBLE WILL BE AVOIDED.

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

On Friday, 12th March David Brown and Tony Green of the N.S.W. P.A.G. had a meeting with the Chief Secretary (Minister in charge of Prisons) Peter Coleman.

A copy of the demands of the Parramatta prisoners was put to Coleman, and formed the basis of the discussion. Coleman noted that "on the face of it many of these proposals seem reasonable", undertook to give them detailed and proper consideration and to come back to the P.A.G. with an answer. We look forward to his reply with interest.

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