



PRISON ACTION IN N.S.W.

MAITLAND - AFTER THE FIRE

In the last issue of the Journal we noted that all of A & B Wings at Maitland were now converted to "tracs", with the necessary alterations being made to the structure of the gaol. We also wondered what was in store for those prisoners who were associated with the disturbance.

It seems that Maitland has now become a particularly brutal scene, with regular beatings of prisoners. Several prisoners have slashed one or both tendons in their ankles to get out, and some have had to be taken to Long Bay hospital because of lack of room in Maitland hospital. One prisoner went so far as to swallow a safety pin wrapped in a rubber band, thereby necessitating an operation.

Apart from the bashings, the Department has been using the Visiting Magistrate at Maitland to hand out 14 and 28 days to large numbers of prisoners for petty infractions of the rules. This was a course of retaliation we predicted in the last issue. Anything to avoid public hearings in open courts.

However, there have been a number of charges laid. Three were brought before Maitland Court of Petty Sessions on January 23 on charges of malicious injury to property at the gaol and pleaded guilty. A fourth pleaded not guilty to a similar charge. We believe more charges are to follow. Hopefully, some of these cases will be

the facts to the knowledge of the general public. No doubt there will be attempts made to ensure that the cases are all dealt with as guilty pleas and with a minimum of publicity.

WOMEN BEHIND BARS



Michelle kisses Natasha, the baby who took a beating with her mother.

Two weeks ago Michelle House, recently released from 'Mulawah' detention centre at Silverwater made certain allegations to the press (Sunday Mirror) regarding the conditions and treatment of women in prison. Michelle told of being bashed when five months pregnant, girls' babies being used as a form of emotional blackmail if they didn't 'knuckle under' and various other abuses. Michelle signed an affidavit to this effect and was willing to substantiate her claims in the case of an inquiry. However, having no evidence of any report on the matter Michelle went to the Journalists Club on Thursday 27th November to confront personally the Minister for Corrective Services - Mr. Waddy - about the issue.

When asked by Michelle publicly if her case was being investigated Mr. Waddy replied: "I refuse to answer that question, it has nothing to do with this debate". The subject of the debate being "Law and Order", I fail to see his distinction.

So, it would seem the 'powers that be' have little interest in anything Michelle has to say but such is not the case with "Women Behind Bars" an organisation who are more than interested and intend to give Michelle their full support and who will stop at nothing to make the public aware that we will no longer tolerate the mediaeval policies of the prison authorities. We are determined, furthermore, to exert