

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

all possible pressure until we receive a full report on the findings of any inquiry.

In our rapidly changing society it is only natural that it is very hard for prisoners just released after a few years out of circulation to cope with a changed world. Adjustment to non-prison conditions is a major problem. Any security women feel during their imprisonment is due solely to the relationships they establish with each other. It is obvious then that the right of ex-prisoners to visit friends still in jail is a very important one. W.B.B. don't feel this is much to ask, but have found that the authorities can make it harder for a women to go in and visit a friend than it was for them to get out. Recently, Pam Blacker and myself accompanied an ex-prisoner to "Mulawah" who wanted to visit her friend who's mother had died suddenly - in the hope that she could be the one to break the news as she was very close to her and could be of some comfort. No such luck! The answer given was, "Under no circumstances...".

Among the aims of W.B.B. are:

- \*to produce evidence of mistreatment and discrimination against women in prisons.
- \*to give full support to those ex-prisoners who have the courage to report their experiences.
- \*support women coming out of prison in their efforts to adjust.
- \*help women still inside by pressing for more humane conditions.

Any reader inclined to the same opinion why not contact W.B.B. and do your bit. For further information:

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Cheer up! Who knows? Next year you might have to produce your "Intermediate Certificate" to become a screw! Maybe we will be permitted to visit our friends in prison - perhaps even take them a book to read... you never can tell...

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