

# **welfare: homes or prisons?**

## **introduction**

BEING UNDER 18 IS A CRIME. YOU CAN'T LEAVE HOME, NO MATTER HOW YOUR PARENTS TREAT YOU. MOST PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE YOUNG PEOPLE GET SENT TO PRISON FOR NO CRIME AT ALL. THE MOST COMMON CHARGES ARE, 1. EXPOSED TO MORAL DANGER, 2. NEGLECTED CHILD, 3. UNCONTROLLABLECHILD. ALL VERY VAGUE CHARGES.

### 1. EXPOSED TO MORAL DANGER

This can involve many trivial things, such as being tattooed, being in a car with a male after 10 p.m., liable to fall into a life of vice or crime, and being in the company of known homosexuals or criminals, whether you know it or not. Lesbianism is not a crime, but you are exposed to moral danger being in the company of a lesbian. If you are over 16, the age of consent, you still can't have sex without being exposed to moral danger. How can something be both legal and illegal at the same time?

### 2. UNCONTROLLABLECHILD

Skipping school, coming home late, drinking under age, (with your parents consent, because they are trying to teach you sensible drinking). So even when your parents are to blame you are the one sent to prison.

### 3. NEGLECTED CHILD

This usually means you are charged with a crime committed by your parents, as in the case of a mother not caring for her baby. This is a much abused law. People ring and say you are mistreating your baby, well and good if it is true. If the wrong officer is sent, one who lets his or her likes or dislikes dictate their course of action, the baby is likely to be taken. A lot of these calls are nuisance calls, yet the law protects the identity of these people, at the expense of a young baby. This is more so if the mother is under 18, and the matter isn't properly investigated because of her age. It helps less if you have been in prison yourself.

#### 4. CONDITIONS IN THESE PRISONS

When you arrive, you have to strip naked, this they say is to make sure you are not concealing weapons. After a close search, sometimes too close, you are fitted with a uniform. Day begins at 6.30, you get out of bed and line up at the foot of the bed and show your sheets, to make sure you did not stain them, and to be counted. You then go to the toilet. Line up again and your number is called, (to make sure no-one escaped down the toilet). Exercises then begin, some of them can be dangerous to pregnant girls, but you must do them if you are pregnant or not. You're not to run around the perimeter of the enclosure in case you try to escape, and you must not whistle. You must not talk before or after breakfast or in line. You may talk softly during breakfast, but you must not have your elbows on the table. You must eat the porridge that is given you even though it makes you sick when you are pregnant. Refusal to eat anything results in a visit to matron. If you mis-behave you go unprivileged, this means you go without your sweets, stand at all times, and not talk at all, standing for long periods can be harmful for you when you are pregnant, there is no exception. If you talk or answer back (question a decision), you go to solitary confinement and get put on half rations. You see no-one except the person who brings your meals and checks on you every 20 minutes. Each morning you are given your chores, (training you for your womanly place in society, HOUSE SLAVE). You either do laundry, sewing, dormitory or kitchen work, young ones go to school. After sewing they make sure all needles are returned and none have been stolen. There are virtually no recreation facilities, most recreation time is spent on hunts for allegedly missing cutlery, this is to keep you on your toes. You are not allowed pencils, paper, newspapers or listen to any news. Letters may be written under close surveillance, but only by girls who don't get visitors.

All mail both ingoing and out is censored. You are only allowed to receive mail from and be visited by close relatives. Visiting is twice a week in some places, but only once a month in others. If you misbehave during the week you are not allowed any parcels, (whatever happens to be the things in those parcels), and all parcels are closely checked. There is no pay for working all day and as a result many persons leaving these prisons get busted within a couple



of days. All girls are forced to have pregnancy tests, even if you are a virgin. There is no consultation to see what you want to do about your pregnancy, you just have your baby and it goes to another prison. When I was in Minda, I was segregated with the other pregnant girls, and rarely saw the other inmates at all. At night you are locked into your room with the light on all night. If you need to go to the toilet you bang on the door and hope to be let out in time. I was bashed by a male screw while I was pregnant, then sent to solitary for 24 hours, they would not let me see a doctor so I had no one to complain to.

##### 5. NO RIGHTS

You are told you have no rights, if you tell another they have you get heavied. They tell you to get committed, as you will be better off, (looking after their jobs). They tell you, you will have tennis swimming and be able to do a course, this can only be done during night recreation periods, about 2 hours. You are told it is a waste of time appealing, (theirs it often turns out). There is one case where 3 girls were convicted of stealing a 19 cent ring, their 1st offence, they were

sentenced to a general committal. This can be 4 or 5 months or until you are 18, depending how you get on with the screws, (they ended up doing 14 months, two of them are now in adult prison). There is now a free solicitor, one solicitor to about 20 people per day.

## 6. FACTS

All prisoners must attend church services, whether they belong to that faith or not. The age of consent is 16, and you can't get the pill without a parent's consent. (Until recently older girls could not smoke whereas boys could, (sexism, this act is full of it), when you go to the toilet it is under scrutiny. Showers must be no longer than 3 minutes and are usually cold.

## 7. AFTER EFFECTS

A high percentage of young people end up in adult prison, because they have become institutionalized, (that is they can't make decisions for or look after themselves). Often you will leave with a homosexual problem, (this is not the same as being homosexual). I myself can't stand the touch of anyone of the same sex, not even to shake hands. This can result from being exposed to homosexual screws, or from the stress of being locked up with the same sex. More so in the case of the young ones, where they are searching for a parent figure for comfort, and all they have is each other. Is it any wonder that so many of them have a problem.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The names of these places should not be shelters or homes, the name should be prison. There is no end to the degradation that these young people are subjected to. In fact if they were to have equal rights with adult prisoners, (even these leave a lot to be desired), it would be a large leap forward, because they don't even have that.

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