

Ann Aungles, *The Prison and the Home*

Sydney Institute of Criminology Monograph Series, 1994,
ISBN 0 86758 903 5

With the prospect of a federal election on the horizon we can be assured that we will be hearing much of home and family in forthcoming months. Although at the time of writing the federal Coalition are being somewhat coy on the policy front, we might assume perhaps that John Howard will seek to rework the particular images of home and family presented in the manifesto for the 1989 election, *Future Directions*. The home in this neo-liberal wonderworld was Federation, leafy, replete with white picket fence. The family was the regulation unit, indeed unitary, (anglo) couple with two kids plus dog. The 1995 renovations can be expected to gesture in the direction of greater diversity and multiculturalism, belated recognition that a shrinking proportion of Australian homes and families conform to the *Future Directions* image.

It is doubtful though that the renovations will go so far as the recognition of a forgotten and outsider group who inhabit the social space between prison and home. It is that space, the relationship between domesticity (the home) and penalty (the prison) that Ann Aungles explores in *The Prison and the Home*, an important and path-breaking work. We may indeed hear John Howard talk of the prison, but only as a site where "criminals" should be sent (more and for longer) as part of a reorientation of the criminal justice system away from pandering to the concern with prisoners' civil liberties to standing up for the victims. Absent from the images in this picture will be the group "families of prisoners" who inhabit the spaces and the relationships between prison and home. This group comprises predominantly women and children of male prisoners, and it is to them and their travails that this book is dedicated.

The study is based on an impressively wide reading of the international social science literature in social welfare, political economy, criminology, penology and feminism, especially in the realm of the family and penalty. This is accompanied by detailed interviews with families of prisoners. The major focus is the relationship between penal and domestic spheres. The author identifies four key dimensions of this relationship:

- 1 "the family in the prison", where family life is incorporated into the prison, as in the examples of the pre-19th century prison in which prisoners generally ran the internal routines along domestic lines, and the family labour prison colony or settlement;
- 2 "the family outside the prison", with the clear segregation of the two spheres of control and the home rendered invisible in penal discourses;
- 3 "the family outside but entering the prison", as the boundaries between the two spheres become more permeable in the reformative discourses of imprisonment and the home is promoted as a key treatment agency in penal discourses;
- 4 "the prison in the home", as the domestic sphere becomes the site of penal control in various forms of home and electronic detention and community corrections.

These dimensions are investigated in terms of a sophisticated reading of the feminist work on care and caring and in particular the nexus between care and dependence. The caring labour of people with family obligations to prisoners needs to be seen in the context of the

penal sphere as condensing the myriad relations of the broader society. The radical critique of penality *a la* David Garland has usefully emphasised not only the lessons of punishment and control, power and authority but also the role of the prison in the constitution of individuals and the construction of sensibilities. What this work has tended to underplay from a feminist perspective is the relationship between the public realm and the realm of domesticity, and in particular the role of domestic labour in the form of caring. It is this interdependence between the prison and the home that *The Prison and the Home* seeks to elaborate.

At the risk of being seen as a lazy reviewer, I can do no better than set out the author's summary of the major arguments in the book.

- 1 that domesticity is incorporated into the system of punishment and control in Australia through the nexus between caring and dependence that characterises the relationship between the state and the family in other areas of public policy;
- 2 that this incorporation involves a mutual interdependence yet a mutual incompatibility between the penal and the domestic spheres;
- 3 that this contradiction is resolved by the marginalisation or the formal invisibility of this incorporation of the family into the punishment system;
- 4 that these two processes — the incorporation of the family into the penal realm, and the marginalisation of that process, place major burdens on those individual people who have a family obligation to prisoners and to prisoners' children;
- 5 that it is women rather than men who are most at risk of taking on the double burden of marginalised care for prisoners;
- 6 that most domestic work of caring that is incorporated into the system of punishment in this invisible intersection of the domestic and legal-penal realms is three-dimensional, having economic, emotional and political components: the domestic work of caring for people drawn into the penal realm is about labouring, loving and controlling;
- 7 that the nexus between caring and dependency that is characteristic of the social relations of public, private and domestic life in the wider society takes on a particularly condensed form in the realm of penality;
- 8 that the incorporation of "the family" into the realm of penality through this nexus of caring and dependency takes different forms in different periods of the development of the political economy;
- 9 that the basic contradictions between philosophies, practices and policies between the public, private and domestic spheres are made more complex and contradictory with the shifts in philosophies, policies and practices in the realms both of the "the family" and of "punishment". These shifts reflect and modify the changing social relations of the wider society. Moreover, these changes are not necessarily sequential but, rather, are layered onto sets of policies and practices. (p6–7)

These arguments are woven through an historical treatment of the social construction of domesticity and penality in chapter two, and the four dimensions of the relationship between prison and home, including issues such as conjugal visits, co-ed prisons and forms of electronic monitoring in home detention schemes in chapter three. The recent proposal by the new ALP government in New South Wales to introduce home detention for certain

offences as an alternative to imprisonment makes the author's discussion of the tendency to conflate family with community and the other effects on domesticity likely to emerge in such schemes all the more relevant.

Rebecca

I do a lot of explaining to the parole officer to get Owen out of it. Emotionally and physically it's just exhausting. (I go) between the welfare worker and priest and police sometimes when he's had to sign on report every day to the police and sometimes he's been too drunk, I've had to go to them and talk to them or get a medical certificate. Sometimes with the parole officer, he just doesn't want to talk to her. He says you'll just have to talk to her for me (p212).

The second half of the book looks in a more grounded way at developments in New South Wales from the 1980s on in the recent history of struggles around caring for imprisoned men in New South Wales, "labouring, loving and controlling". These sections of the book are marked by the skilful interweaving of personal accounts of women and children of prisoners in their own words with the more analytic and theoretical discussion. The material context of caring is examined in its economic, temporal and loving form, including the particular difficulties and moral contradictions of caring for children of prisoners, the "double load" of caring. State policies in relation to social security, health, housing and community are all examined under the general rubric of control as neglect. Particularly perceptive sections deal with the control of the prisoner and the carers through gossip, the contradictory construction of carers as the road to rehabilitation on the one hand and as accessories or moral enemies on the other.

Gwen: Husband in CIP. Daughter aged five

I think that's what you mainly have to tell the kids, that it is not their fault that they're there, because I think kids tend to think that it's got a lot to do with them, that's why it's happening. I said to her 'Its not your fault, you don't have to be punished for it. He did it ... It's his problem. Me and you we're just here because we're with him and we just got stuck in it and ... you know, that's all (p134-5).

The degradation involved in prison visiting through manipulation, inflexible visiting times, travel and economic difficulties, strip and other searching, uncertainty, sudden cancellation of visits, substandard visiting conditions, control over information and other such features is made clear.

Elizabeth

I do 170 miles and 170 miles back in one day and its just for twice a week, and I have another 13 months to go ... I get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and I leave home at quarter to six. I get a bus to Lithgow then I get the train to Sydney the bus from Sydney out here (to Long Bay). Then I repeat the process coming home. I get home at 11.30 at night (p122).

Fay

I went all the way up to Maitland. They were on strike. I sat there and they say 'you might not be able to go in, they're on strike.' I sat there. At 25 past 12 they said 'No, you can't come in.' I said 'I've just missed the train back.' I had to wait two and a half hours for a train back to Sydney. An elderly lady about 80 she was crying. She had to go all the way back to Sydney. It's just as though they say 'stiff shit' after all that time and all that money and that was my pension week (p123).

Aungles argues that the liberal response to the prison "crisis" of the 1960s and 1970s was to "attempt to reinsert domesticity into the penal sphere". The liberal reforms which ensued were "layered onto the more conservative, masculinist and segregative penal policies" and brought some benefits for the families of prisoners. But she is also concerned to stress that the increased recognition of the family in penal control has "also resulted in in-

creased costs as their labour and their family commitment is more manifestly incorporated into penal life" (p245). With the development of measures such as home detention these pressures are likely to intensify. This book seeks to make those costs more apparent in the debates around penalty and seeks to increase the political visibility of the families of prisoners as political subjects currently marginalised in both penal and feminist debates.

This is a very important book which deserves a wide and international readership. It joins a number of others in what has become an excellent series put out by the Sydney Institute of Criminology. My only criticisms are that the text is a little dense in places, the work bearing traces of a PhD thesis. The persistent use of feminism in the singular, "the feminist analysis" (p10), "the feminist challenge" (p242), "the feminist analysis of bureaucracy" (p124), overplays the unity and undervalues the differences within and between feminisms. I wondered also whether the many complexities admirably teased out in the discussion are adequately rendered within the overriding framework of modes of "social control". It is perhaps a tribute to the detail and the subtleties of the author's treatment of the "maze of contradictory interdependencies" (p242) and the "nexus between caring and dependence" (p111) that they seem to burst beyond the bounds of "social control".

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