

PRISON: From the inside

This week, the GAZETTE is publishing the first installment in a series of articles on prisons and prison reform. The author is Tracy C. Goodrich, an inmate of the Maritime Federal Penitentiary in Dorchester, New Brunswick.

I am currently an inmate of Dorchester Penitentiary, but I hope to be released on parole in October of this year. I also hope not to be deported back to the United States; I have been in Canada since June, 1969, in protest to the Vietnam War.

To return to the United States at this time would mean a probable prison sentence for me. I have been in Dorchester since June, 1971. This is my first (and last) time in prison.

Since being here, I have become involved in prison reform. I am a member of the Halifax Civil Liberties Association. I've learned, as a result of my imprisonment, that there is a drastic need for change in our penal system: designs, programs and personnel. Effective change can only occur if we speak out openly. This is the aim of this series.

I've done some research on prisons and penal systems in the U.S., Sweden, France, England, Italy and Canada. We do need changes. Some areas of this research will be discussed in forthcoming issues.

If some of the articles seem vague, and some answers to questions indirect, please remember that I am an inmate. As such, my mail is subject to censorship, specifically out-going mail.

If you have any questions at all, write to me care of the GAZETTE. The questions will be answered with each installment. Your name will be kept confidential if you like. Please feel free to ask any questions you like, with the exception of ones about specific inmates or ex-mates. I will not be allowed to receive your mail if you mention names. We will try to answer all your questions as quickly as possible.

Address all inquiries to : Tracy Goodrich, in care of Dalhousie Gazette, Room 334, SUB.

by Tracy C. Goodrich

"We have succeeded in finding ways of keeping a man in jail, now it is time we find a way of keeping a man out of jail."

We live in an affluent society — in an age when man is exploring the moon in much the same ways as the pioneers and settlers explored this country. But yet, with all our knowledge and advances in science and technology, we have a prison system that is almost the same as that of yesteryear.

We can no longer take an offender and place him in confinement to "pay" for his crimes. By doing this we only succeed in assuring that he will return to his life of crime.

Society does not classify a prison



and its inmates as part of its community, but as something detached from society. We speak of prison reform and rehabilitation. How can we place a man into a society conducive of crime and expect him to rehabilitate.

Far too often there are inadequate facilities for the person to better himself. He has to choose other offenders for his friends (while he is an inmate and when he is released, the prisoner is not supposed to associate with criminals). What can we expect as an end result? Adding fuel to the fire won't put it out!

I believe, first of all, that one of the first steps we should take to the eventual elimination of prisons as we know them today is to limit the prison population to no more than 100-150 inmates (depending on area size of the prison). To employ a fully qualified staff of counsellors, medical persons, and a competent psychiatric unit. And to have these people working together; to have everything on a personal level as much as possible.

Eliminate walls, cells, and bars. Offenders are homo sapiens, not four-legged animals. Have each inmate eligible for at least one eight-hour pass each month. Encourage him to try to participate in "free society" as soon as possible.

If each of us were solitary and self-sufficient, each would rule himself and would have no need to control the actions of others or to be controlled by others for the sake of others. However, we are neither solitary nor self-sufficient.

Man is a social creature. To flourish, or even to survive in isolation from his fellows, he would have to be an utterly different creature than what he is.

All history testifies to his need for society. We cannot alter this verdict nor would we want to do so.

A child could not survive without the family; a man could not flourish

without the co-operation of others. The burden of securing food, clothing and shelter would be too great in isolation.

If each of us had to produce, unaided with our hands, all our material needs, we would have barren and precarious existence. In co-operation with others, we produce wealth and not merely subsistence.

When we put a person in prison, we are, in fact, making him a solitary person. Solitary in the respect that he is no longer a member of free constructive society. He is put into an unreal society — unreal in the sense that it is a closed and confined society.

The prisoner is given clothing, food and personal hygienic needs. He can see a movie three times a week — free! But when a prisoner is released, he can no longer receive free clothes, food or shelter. He must pay for these and his recreational activities. The sad part is, he is not prepared for this drastic change while behind the walls.

How can you help?

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Friday:
7:00 p.m. — Technical aspects
8:30 — SOCIAL

Saturday:
1:30 — Philosophy of Journalism and the Gazette operation

Sunday:
All day — the production process

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