

PRISONS

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the use of tear gas (to remove forcefully unco-operative prisoners from their cells) and solitary confinement remains frequent.

Solitary Confinement

A word should be said about solitary confinement. This is a practice which the prison authorities call "administrative dissociation", and it involves isolating an inmate in a small, unfurnished cell for 23 or 23½ hours a day. The cell is called "the hole" by inmates and guards, and euphemistically an "environmental control area" by prison administrators. Inmates are placed in solitary confinement at the discretion

"Inmates who were first shackled, sometimes hands and feet together, were then beaten with clubs, made to crawl on the floor, and finally gassed."

of prison officials, either for some breach of the regulations, for some apparent threat to security, or because the authorities deem it to be in the inmates' own interest. Prisoners are sometimes isolated in solitary confinement for continuous periods of up to a year or more. British Columbia Penitentiary inmate John Emmet McCann spent over four of seven years between 1967 and 1974 in dissociation, including an uninterrupted period of two years and twenty-four days. As might be imagined, this type of punishment (or "protection") has extremely dehumanizing effects. The Inmate Committee of the Archambault Institution in Quebec recently gave this report concerning an individual who had just been released from solitary confinement:

"We asked him how long he was there, and he replied, 'I think three days, four days, maybe a

week.' He had been in the hole two months. He had completely lost his feelings, what you call his sensory perception."

Imprisonment a Failure

Confinement to prisons is meant to punish serious anti-social behaviour. Historically, dealing with such behaviour in this way is a relatively new practice—until about 200 years ago criminals normally paid for their deeds with capital punishment, corporal punishment, exile, or fines. But why do we punish offenders by imprisonment today? Punishment just for the sake of punishment is absolutely pointless. And if incarcerating offenders is meant to **accomplish** something—to protect society, to rehabilitate delinquents, or to dissuade wrongdoers—the statistics are telling us that it is a miserable

failure. Our prison system is doing nothing but eating our tax dollar and inflicting incalculable pain on thousands of individuals to no apparent purpose.

We should remember also that the State is quite discriminatory in defining the types of anti-social behaviour which are punished in this way. Acts like theft, fraud, assault, and the selling or possession of narcotics are declared to

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be criminal, whereas other acts equally harmful to the well-being of society, such as speculating on land, commodities and currency, polluting the environment, or becoming excessively rich at the expense of workers and consumers, are tolerated. In these circumstances the great majority of prisoners come from already underprivileged groups like the poor, the unemployed, and native peoples.

Crime is essentially a social, not an individual problem. Under the present form of social organization certain acts are defined as criminal, and social inequality creates the conditions in which they are committed. Yet even within the present social framework, morality and self-interest demand that we find some alternative to the existing prison system. The Parliamentary Sub Committee has suggested reforms which might make this system a little more workable and humane. However, the fundamental goal of any correctional procedure should be the formation of positive social attitudes in persons who have behaved in an anti-social manner. This cannot be achieved by removing them from society and thereby accentuating their hostility towards it, although some form of detention and supervision may be necessary in the case of exceptionally dangerous individuals. For the great majority of offenders, what needs to be created are alternatives to incarceration which will enable them to develop satisfactory relationships in the real world.

NFLD. UNEMPLOYMENT

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extend the qualifying period for unemployment benefits.

Yet another common myth is that because a large proportion of the unemployed are young people and women, who unlike the "man in the family" are not the main bread winners, the current unemployment levels are less than serious. However it is clear that both women and young people work out of economic necessity, and many working women are the sole means of support for their families.

Conclusions

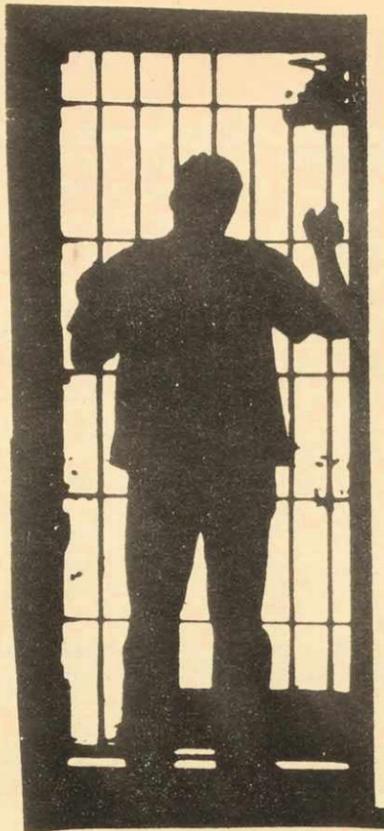
According to projections from the Federal Department of Manpower, the official unemployment rate in Newfoundland is due to increase by 2 per cent over the next two years. The people affected by this increase matter little as far as government policy goes, because

lowering the inflation rate and providing a healthy climate for private investment take priority.

All of this should help to maintain a good credit rating for Newfoundland with the major investment agencies on Wall Street in New York. (Newfoundland's credit rating is currently the lowest of any province in Canada). That is of prime importance to people like Bill Doody, Newfoundland's Finance Minister. In reply to the Canadian Paper Workers' Union Brief on maintaining the operation of Labrador Linerboard in Stephenville, (which affects 5,000 jobs directly and indirectly), Doody stated: "Excellent, impressive, but ineffective". How is that? Because according to Doody, if the provincial government were to assist the Linerboard Mill any more, then the province's credit rating would fall.

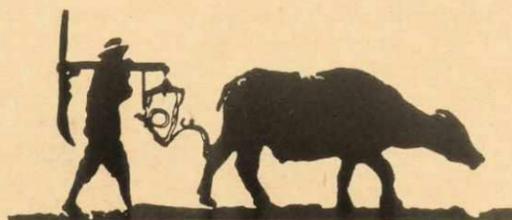
That's a fairly blunt admission that government policy is less responsive to the needs of the

mass of people in Newfoundland than it is to a handful of powerful New York financiers. Perhaps the occupations of Manpower offices by unemployed workers in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia are a vain effort. It is their intention to bring government attention to the problem of unemployment there. The assumption is, of course, that elected representatives of the people both have the power to affect unemployment and are interested, when pushed, in helping to alleviate it. In fact, however eager the government might be to solve unemployment, it has very little power to do so when the major investment decisions which create employment and unemployment are in the hands of private corporations, whose main criterion for investment is a high rate of profit. Even so, without political action on the part of the unemployed and others with related interests, this system will never be changed and the curse of unemployment never removed.



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