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## “EDITOR'S NOTE”

-Howard Davidson

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In a pamphlet we use to promote the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* we highlight our emphasis on publishing a new kind of research: research which is not about something happening "out there" but which is a closer look at "where we are." Much has and will continue to be written about crime and punishment from a distance. What is needed is the "insight and analysis of people for whom imprisonment is or has been the reality of their daily existence." Thus, it seems appropriate that I should use this space to describe "where we are" after the publication of the first issue of the *Journal*.

One major difference between this and the previous issue is the input of many more people in the selection of the articles. When the deadline arrived in September there were twenty-three submissions. These were sent to members of the editorial board for their recommendations. With these comments in hand, the editorial board met in October to select the articles for this issue. This was our first meeting.

Before we could choose which papers to publish, the board had to decide if it wanted each issue to have a theme or some issues to be a collection of articles on a variety of topics. We decided on the latter. While the first issue focused on the question of prison abolition, this issue explores a number of questions: space and time, disciplinary procedures, the life sentence from two perspectives, methadone treatment, and the correctional enterprise as a whole. The Summer (1989) issue will continue in this vein. Several articles which arrived in time for this issue will be published in the summer, and a number of the articles which were returned for revisions have been resubmitted. With new articles arriving regularly, it seems quite likely that we will be able to develop several theme issues based on the topics discussed in this growing collection of work.

A second point which arose at the meeting was the composition of the editorial board. As it

presently stands, the board represents contributors and readers. Several of our members are teaching or studying at universities, others are working for community-based groups, and two are presently imprisoned. Because of the obvious difficulty of prisoners attending board meetings, we are trying to develop strategies which will increase prisoners' participation. One approach is to establish an advisory board consisting of prisoners. Members of this board would be regularly questioned for their positions on issues which concern the *Journal* and asked to represent the *Journal* in their particular prison. The first question the Advisory Board might also address is why we are not getting the *Journal* to as many people inside as outside. Anyone wishing to participate on the advisory board should write to me for further information.

In addition to the above, the board spent time discussing our immediate future. Because we believe it is crucial to remain completely independent of the government for funding, for several months finances were touch and- go. At present, however, we have received numerous subscriptions, the *Journal* is being used in several university courses and community-based programs; in fact, we have distributed all but a few of the one thousand copies of the first issue. Several people have contributed generous donations, and we have received a grant from Ontario Region PLURA. PLURA was approached because they support efforts which "seek to challenge, through alternative models or lifestyles, prevailing individualistic ideologies, and in doing so bring about a more just society."<sup>1</sup> On behalf of everyone connected to the *Journal*, I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank these individuals and PLURA for their support.

On several occasions the *Journal* has been criticized for not publishing articles in French. We tried to correct this problem for this issue by publishing abstracts to each article in French. Unfortunately, our desire exceeded our abilities. Beginning with the Summer (1989) issue, we believe it will be possible to include the French abstracts and to publish articles submitted in French. On that note, I want to encourage contributors to submit papers in either language.

In closing, I want to try to convey the enthusiasm which was shared at the editorial board's meeting and the solidarity which is often expressed in letters. When the *Journal* was

founded there was at best a sense that it was necessary to create a forum that would encourage a different kind of dialogue on crime and punishment, a dialogue in which prisoners and former prisoners would consider "*How does this work?*" As we move into the production of the third issue, I believe it is becoming very clear that if *real change* is going to take place, there must be a real change in who has the power to ask and answer questions about how and why prisons operate as they do. People who have done so much of the "talking" in the past need to start listening to new voices. There is a long way to go to create this new dialogue, but the people who are contributing to the *Journal* and reading it seem more certain than ever that this needs to be done. Keeping people informed about "where we are" in that process through these notes should contribute to this end.

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<sup>1</sup>See "Funding Criteria for Ontario Plura." No date.