

Jail Expose

Sex Perverts, Extortionists Run the Cells

Last year more than 600,000 Californians were locked up in city or county jails. That means just about one out of every 18 men, women and children in the State was behind bars for some time.

A Chronicle staff writer, under an assumed name—Peter Emil Flick—and unknown to his jailers as a reporter, did time in two of these jails. Today he tells how kangaroo courts and sex perversion flourish in some of these jails—because there are not enough jailers and in some cases unfit and untrained jailers.



By PIERRE SALINGER, (alias Peter Emil Flick)

Copyright 1953, by The Chronicle Publishing Company

A 23-year-old electrician, convicted of drunk driving, was shoved into a large tank cell in a Southern California County Jail two weeks ago.

A squat man, languishing on the lower bunk of one of the small cells inside the tank, rose to his feet.

"What's your name," he asked in a kind of growl?

"Heton," the new prisoner said softly.

"How much dough you got on you, Heton?" the squat man—who was the tank judge, asked.

"Well . . ." and Heton started to stammer. "They let me keep a little," was the answer.

"How much?"

"Four bucks."

"Four bucks. Didya hear that?" the squat man said,

turning to two other prisoners sitting around in the cell.

"Okay, Heton, you're guilty of breaking into jail. Fork over two dollars," the squat man said emphatically.

Heton started to protest.

"Fork it over," the squat man said, menacingly this time.

Heton, who was small and frightened looking, reluctantly dug into his pocket and produced two dollars.

COURT OVER

The kangaroo court was over.

Kangaroo courts are only one of the vicious inmate practices which flourish in California's county jails—principally due to the fact our county jails are in almost all cases undermanned and in many cases staffed by untrained personnel.

The custody of county jails is in the hands of law enforcement officials for the most part. They are not trained in custodial work and they find it uninteresting work in contrast with the prospect of running down criminals.

Visiting a Southern California county jail, I met a deputy sheriff on duty as a jaller.

He said in an offhand manner:

"I've only got 435 more days to work in this jail before I get rotated back to catching crooks."

To that jaller, the 435 days be-

Continued on Page 2, Col. 1

Jail Shakedown



The kid had to cough up two bucks

Jail Expose---Perverts, Extortionists Rule Cells

Continued from page 1

fore he was transferred back to patrol duty was just as much a sentence as any of the terms being served by the some 1000 prisoners he was being paid to guard.

And in most of California's counties, the number of custodial officers on duty at the jails is very small. The officers can do little to keep the prisoners from running the jails themselves, sometimes in a brutal and dictatorial fashion.

This was violently demonstrated last year in one of these county jails.

A young man was put into a tank with two ex-convicts while awaiting trial for speeding.

A short time after being jailed, he was beaten and then forced to commit a number of indecent acts with one of the two ex-convicts. He later sobbed out his story to the officials and the ex-convict received a stiff prison sentence. But proper supervision could have prevented this sex perversion.

The personnel problem in the jails attracted the attention of Governor Earl Warren's special Commission for the Study of Adult Corrections and Release Procedures two years ago.

The Commission found that: Forty-two per cent of the county jails in California had NO full-time employees.

Only 34 per cent of all the county jails in California are operated entirely by full-time personnel.

The Legislature has given the State Department of Corrections the right to inspect county jails in California, if requested to do so by the authorities in any particular county. Reports on investigations conducted indicate the seriousness of the county jail personnel problem.

These reports are sent to the Sheriffs and Boards of Supervisors of the county involved for their information and guidance.

Because these reports are of a confidential nature for the guidance of the counties involved, The Chronicle has not named the counties.

But here are actual quotations from the reports:

County A, in the San Joaquin valley: "Prisoners are not supervised. Jail cells and tanks are not cleaned regularly and adequately. Gambling with cards and cash goes on as long as there is enough light to see. Sex perversion can go undetected."

ANOTHER ONE

County Jail B, also in the San Joaquin valley: "Male prisoners inside the jail are not supervised continuously. This condition causes the delegation to prisoners of the authority to administer the jail inside. As a result, there is the danger of prisoners inflicting punishment on other prisoners without being detected."

"It also is possible for some prisoners to exact payment in money or goods by strong-arm methods for services normally offered by the county, such as feeding, medical care and bedding."

County Jail C, in Northern California: "The Sheriff does not have adequate jail staff to insure a degree of supervision which would prohibit kangaroo practices. Visitors are allowed to come up to the living quarters of the inmates, allowing the importing of contraband."

In the two jails in which I "did time" it was a rare occasion indeed when I saw a jaller. Most of my contact was with my cellmates and other prisoners acting as trusties.

(Continued tomorrow)