



graphic by Jim Yarbrough

## CAGED SISTERS REBEL

In Raleigh, N.C. women inmates have begun taking action against North Carolina's racist and barbaric prison system.

Riot equipped guards moved in to break up a peaceful sit-in by about 250 prisoners at the North Carolina Correctional Center for Women last week.

By the time the June 19 action was over, at least 17 prisoners were in-

jured, some seriously. A number of guards ed minor injuries.

The attack by the 150 guards came after North Carolina Prison Director Ralph Edwards decided to end negotiations with representatives of the inmates, who had been carrying out protest actions against prison conditions for the previous four days.

The protests began June 15, when 150 women staged an all-night sit-in at the prison's exercise yard. Early the next morning, guards attempted to lock the protesters in the prison gymnasium. A brief battle broke out, which left at least 11 inmates injured. The prisoners were then allowed to resume their sit-in outside. For the next three days, most of the women boycotted their jobs in the institution, especially those required to work in the prison laundry, which was one of the main targets of the protests.

Negotiations over grievances began June 16 between inmate representatives and prison officials. Several members of an outside feminist prison reform group, Action for Forgotten Women, were included in the negotiations at the prisoners' insistence.

### GRIEVANCES IGNORED

Inmate grievances fell within four main areas:

**\*Abolition of the prison laundry.** The laundry at women's prison handles the cleaning for a number of prisons. Working conditions are very bad, with temperatures of over 120 degrees. Large tubs, weighing several hundred pounds, must be pushed across a dangerously wet and slippery floor.

**\*Better medical care facilities and replacement of members of the present medical staff who are considered to be incompetent or indifferent toward the prisoners' welfare.**

**\*End delays in processing inmate grievances.** The women believe that some prison personnel refuse to forward their grievances to the proper authorities for the hearings to which they are entitled by law.

**\*Appointment of Morris Kea, a Black man who has been acting superintendent**

at the prison, to a permanent post as superintendent. The position of superintendent has been vacant since November, when Juanita Baker, who was liked and trusted by the inmates, was fired.

Shortly after the protests began, the inmates were told that the prison laundry would be abolished within 90 days and that needed changes in medical care would be examined. Jubilant at this seeming victory, they ended their sit-in, but vowed to boycott work until after they had gotten a written response to all their demands from prison officials later in the week. As they marched from the exercise yard one woman shouted to reporters, "They had the sticks and they had the clubs, but we still won."

But when the written reply came, Prison Director Edwards had backed away from his promise to close the laundry. He said instead that in 90 days the laundry from other prisons would be taken over by a new state facility near Goldsboro, N.C., but that the laundry here would be kept open with a reduced work load to handle the requirements of the women's prison itself.

The response to medical care grievances also was less than it had seemed. The head of the North Carolina Medical Society was to be asked to set up a committee to study the medical facilities at the prison. No deadline was set for a report. Nor was there any mention of the changes in medical personnel the prisoners had demanded.

Edwards also announced that Morris Kea would not be appointed permanent superintendent at the prison because Kea already held a position in the prison system that ranked higher than a warden of one prison. Kea had only been asked to fill in at women's prison

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VIBES

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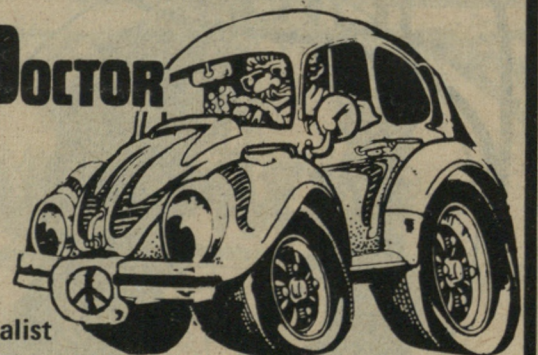
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