

THE RUTLAND NEWS, FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 1921.

WINDSOR PRISON'S CONDITION BAD

**Special Report to Governor
Says Women's Quarters
Inadequate.**

ONE MATRON.

**Mrs. Lillian Olzendam, After
Investigation Urges Removal
of Women Prisoners.**

Montpelier, Jan. 28.—Conditions found in connection with the women prisoners confined in the state prison and house of correction at Windsor is the subject of a special report prepared by Mrs. Lillian H. Olzendam for Governor Hartness, and presented to him at Montpelier. Mrs. Olzendam accompanied the legislative committee on penal institutions on their visits to Windsor, and what she found there is set forth in her report.

Mrs. Olzendam, in her report, calls attention to the following facts in connection with the women prisoners. The building where they are confined is very old and worn; it was condemned five years ago by the state board of health, but is still being used by the State. The construction of the building, with inadequate inside appliances, makes it one of the worst possible fire-traps. The bedrooms for the women are on the fourth floor of the building, and there are no facilities for safety in case of a fire.

Six Rooms For 24 Prisoners

At the present time there are 24 women prisoners, confined in six small rooms, four narrow beds in a room, the beds being about an arm's length apart. The bare soft wood floors are worn to a mass of splinters and slivers. There are no coverings for these. The furniture is described as "junk," and long past its usefulness. For the 24 women there is just one toilet, and one old-fashioned iron sink, with one bath tub, which is situated in the basement in a little room off the laundry. At the foot of the last flight of stairs leading to the women's quarters is the lounging room for the men officers of the prison, and, up a short flight of steps, are the bed-rooms of the guards. The women prisoners take care of these rooms, also wait on the men at meals.

No Privacy For Women

There is no privacy for the women, day or night. There is no provision for recreation for them. They spend their leisure time in the laundry, a dark, damp, steamy room in the basement, perpetually lighted by electricity. They have almost no out-of-doors exercises. There is no place for it, except to the street, and the women object to going into the street. They are provided with no vocational training of any sort.

There are no hospital facilities for the women prisoners. When new prisoners are brought in, as many of them are, with contagious and communicable diseases, they are lodged and kept with the other women of whatever physical condition. At this time there is a life prisoner there, demented, a cripple, and who spends a greater part of her time in bed.

Guards Quell Riots.

First offenders, who are often sent there for terms that far exceed in severity the offense committed, according to the prison officials, are kept with the more hardened criminals, with disastrous moral after-results. After the lights are out at 9 o'clock the guards are often called to quell "riots," when hair-pulling and obscene language are the diversions indulged in by the prisoners, and the young first offender has every opportunity to absorb much that cannot but be of the gravest detriment to her.

A young woman now confined in the prison is about to become a mother. Her time expires in March and, her mother refusing to allow her to return to her home, she will be turned out with no place to go in her unfortunate condition.

Matrons Duties Serve.

There is but one matron and an assistant for the institution. This matron's hours of duty are 15 each day. She must arise at 4:45, prepare the breakfast for the women, and then be on duty until 2 p. m. Off duty until 4, she returns to stay on duty until the lights are out at 9 p. m.

The opportunities of communication with the men prisoners and guards by the women are numerous. Two of the women's rooms face the recreation yard for the men. The results of this condition have been observed by social workers in the state, who say that the present condition cannot be helped while the women remain in the prison as things are now.

It should be stated that these conditions are in no way the fault of the superintendent of the prison. They are partly the result of combining the house of correction with the prison partly the result of inadequate provision for women prisoners under such a combination, and mostly the result of the obsolete and almost universally abolished system of keeping men and women offenders in the same building or even in the same town.

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