

S. F. County Jail Is Too Much Like A Penitentiary

Last year, more than 600,000 Californians were locked up in city or county jails. This could mean that, barring repeaters, 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. He found filth, degradation and sordid conditions. Today, he tells about County Jail No. 2 in the San Francisco jail system—and what is being done to try and improve it.



By **PIERRE SALINGER** (alias Peter Emil Flick)
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In 1834, San Francisco was in the unenviable position of having one of the worst county jails in the State.

The old Ingleside Jail was a firetrap. It was badly overcrowded. The U. S. Government removed all Federal prisoners because the place was "uninhabitable." Grand Jury reports called it "unsanitary."

To remedy this situation, the city built the biggest, most modern and fanciest jail that money could buy. It cost \$800,000. Today, it would take more than \$5,000,000 to replace.

Last week, with Sheriff Dan Gallagher, I visited the county jail, west of the Skyline boulevard in San Bruno.

As we walked through the massive, clean establishment, he told me: "This is a fine plant. But if we had it

all to do over again, I think we would build it a lot differently... a lot differently."

MAXIMUM SECURITY

What the Sheriff meant is that he is stuck with a topflight maximum security jail—the kind of jail that would be excellent as a branch location for San Quentin Prison.

But this kind of jail is not suited for the type of rehabilitation that most penologists agree should be performed by jail institutions on the county and city level.

County Jail No. 2 is not overcrowded. The day I was there, there were 525 men. Capacity is 600.

Of the 525 prisoners, however, only 218 have work assignments. The rest are idle throughout the day.

And as Captain Paul Anderson, one of the officers who supervise the jail told me:

"You can never tell if a man is any good until you give him a break. And you can't give him a break if he is locked up all day."

2 LARGE DORMITORIES

The San Bruno jail has six tiers inside. One of the tiers contains two large dormitories — each of which sleeps 60 men. These dormitories are used for the jail trustees.

The remainder of the tier consists of individual cells. Each contains a single bed and a toilet. The men are locked in at 3:30 p. m. and not released until 8:15 the next morning.

The men are also locked up during the lunch hour. The meals are brought to the tiers in large pots and the men are fed in their cells.

The paradox here is that some of the men in these tiers work on the surrounding prison farm—where the only barrier to their escape is a low fence.

There is segregation of narcotics addicts, homosexuals, and men under a felony sentence wherein a jail term is a condition of probation. But there is no segregation of hardened criminals from first offenders.

Because of overcrowded conditions at County Jail No. 1, on Kearny street in San Francisco,

Continued on Page 8, Col. 4



An incoming prisoner shows the soles of his feet as he is searched by an inspector in examination room (Sketch drawn at county jail by Chronicle Artist Herbert Buel)

The Facts Concerning the San Francisco County Jail

Continued from Page 1

many men awaiting trial are sent to the San Bruno jail. The prisoner is returned to the city one week before his trial is scheduled, to give him a chance to confer with his attorney.

The 250-acre ranch that surrounds the massive San Bruno jail is productive. Last year, more than 230,000 pounds of vegetables were grown. These were used to feed all the county's jail prisoners and some surplus was given to the San Francisco City Prison, the Laguna Honda Home and the San Francisco Hospital.

When Gallagher first became Sheriff, the food at San Bruno was generally recognized as bad—this despite the fact that the county was spending more than 30 cents a meal.

In May of last year, 250 howling prisoners rioted because of the bad food. They did \$30,000 worth of damage. But they also focussed attention upon the poor food. Gallagher set out to make some changes.

Today, the food at San Bruno seems quite good. The Sheriff's office said the meals cost 49 cents per meal per man. This can be contrasted with the 23 cents at Alameda county's Santa Rita Rehabilitation Center — where the farm production is much higher than at San Bruno.

The manpower shortage is recognized as acute at San Bruno.

From 4 p. m. until 8 a. m. only one captain and two guards are on duty in the entire institution. This makes close supervision very difficult. And this is the primary reason why most of the men are locked up in their cells at least 16 hours of the day.

When a man comes into San Bruno jail he is taken into a small receiving room downstairs. There he is stripped, given a hot shower and dusted with a disinfectant.

There are no mattresses, but the men are given a pair of blankets to use over the iron grided bunks. Money to purchase mattresses is also included in Sheriff Gal-

lagher's new budget.

But as the Sheriff said:

"If we were building the place now, we would cut out half the cells. That would be more in keeping with the kind of work we'd like to do here."

(Continued tomorrow)