

# Well — Why Not

“ANON”

*Anonymous contributions invariably raise problems of one kind or another. Short of putting Scotland Yard on the job, we had no means of finding the anon whose work appears below and so we were deprived of any opportunity of putting the critical finger on him\* direct. But we are not easily cheated of our simple editorial rights and pleasures and we would suggest that the sooner he emerges from his current ‘Frank Norman’ period and achieves his own style, the better it will be for whatever literary future he may have.*

*\*We cannot imagine that a woman would do this to us!*

THIS PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL begins to have possibilities.

I mean, the Editor says let's not be too cautious or complacent and they print some bits by two of the boys and best of all they let this geezer C. H. Rolph have a go about this not letting fellers write what they want when they want while they're inside and then taking it out with 'em.

Now I would like to support this Mister C. H. Rolph 100 per cent and then I'd like to put in another 100 per cent on me own account.

You see I reckon its like this. All what Mister Rolph says about there not being many us'd write anyway is dead right and that about some of it being real hot is right an' all. But what is not many out of 25,000 odd people? I don't know. You don't know. No one knows. It might be 20 and it might be 200. And if some of the writing's real hot well what about it? It's not

a bad way to get it out of yer system is it? And some of the writing might be real cool if you know what I mean. Real cool. Of course most of it'd probably be a load o' tripe hot or cold but I reckon most people who have a go at writing have got to write a lot of tripe so as to learn how to write at all. And if it makes you feel better and gives you summat *positive* and *creative* to do while you're in the nick then that's O.K. even if it is tripe.

But they won't let you do it. Or at least they'll let you write in notebooks what have to be specially issued or on bits of paper you get for e.g. evening classes because of course you could generally manage to get simple stuff like paper and pencils anyway if you really had to. But they won't let you take it with you even if it ain't about the nick and they won't let you send it to no publisher while you're inside

and you can't scarcely show it around to sort of share it with somebody not without some screw poking his nose in and asking "What rubbish you got there?" etcet, etcet.

Now I've looked into this matter as you might well guess and I've talked about it with responsible Officials with a capital "O" and they have done their best to explain why you can't send it out or take it with you. And what they say comes to this.

1. Inmates (which is what we are Oafshily called) might let slip a few names or give a few too many details and some of 'em might not be true at all and if they was true some of 'em might be embarrassing etceterah rah rah! Furthermore some bright boy might use his writings to work a flanker on the Official Channels such as Petitions to the Home Sec. and letters to Em Peas and all that cobblers.

And all this would mean

2. Infinite labour, real hard graft for the censors who have enough to do with all those letters what people outside are inconsiderate enough to write to people inside and vicey versey.

3. They say that author type inmates would maybe be able to make lolly while they was doing their bird and this wouldnt be fair to plumbers and general dealers and seven day drunks who might not be able to hold a pen let along write with it.

Well now I don't think these reasons are worth a row of beans

never mind a quarter of snout. And here's why.

A. If anyone wants to rabbit a few names and details about the place he can do it dead easy. He can certainly do it when he gets out and half the books by ex prisoners (sorry inmates) do just that. I mean there's plenty of embarrassing details and names of staff and stuff like that tho' of course the publisher's lawyers take care of the real naughty and libellous bits.

B. I will grant you that the censors have a lot to do and how they manage to read half of it I don't know. P'raps they don't. But what I'm getting at is that while we artists are all against *any* kind of censorship (because if there wasn't no censors we couldn't 'alf write some best sellers!) if we got to have censors the censors what censor letters ain't no good for censoring novels and plays and poetry and such. You got to realize that the censor in prison is just an ordinary screw what's been told to censor. He may be O.K. at looking out for names and pack drill and requests for files, gins, pneumatic drills, a hot bird or cerotic literature, and he would probably recognize a plan to bust into the nearest bank if he saw one but when it comes to the finer things of life he generally don't know whether his fundament is bored or punched. I mean if they come across a bit of James Joyce or Dostoiyefsky they'd think they was nutters and get them in the hospital and maybe certified.

So if you've got to censor an

inmate's literature you better have someone who knows summat about it such as the Tutor Organizer or the feller what takes the Eng. Lit. classes or whatever. Or why not have Mister C. H. Rolph as the Chief of a panel of censors up and down the country? I mean you don't mind people like that giving their opinions of your writing. They might be useful.

C. Now there's been a great deal of talk lately (and there's always a great deal of talk and not much else in this racket) about helping people to lead a good and useful life on discharge and we need lots of After Care and look how many full time Welfare Officers we've appointed and we're going to employ a lot more and so on and so on. Well O.K. But what does this Welfare Officer and After Care man try and do to fit you (as the book says) to be *able* to lead this good and useful life? Well if a feller's a carpenter or a shoe repairer or whatever he'll try and fix him up in his own trade. I mean that's just common sense ain't it? If a feller hasn't got a trade but he fancies having a bash at some particuar kind of work what the Welfare Officer can fix up for him they'll have a try for that and that makes sense too. But if you go along and say you're a author or you want to have a go at being a author they're likely to die of laffing if they ain't actually rude about it. They think authors is all finely cut geezers with long hair bow ties and delicate perfume. They never even heard of Ernest Hemingway. And Brendan Behan

they just don't want to know about. And I'm not just talking about Welfare Officers either. As a matter of fact they're better than most when it comes to not being unpleasant. But when you first go in the nick they ask you what your job is and if you can go back to it and then a bit later on they have something called a Review Board. This Review Board is for geezers what's doing over 12 months and you go in and there's some sort of Governor (generally a Dep.) and a Chief Screw and a Chaplin and a Welfare Officer and other geezers such as a Head Shrinker and a Tutor Organizer if they've got one. And they're supposed to find out if they can train you and what are your prospects and whether you can go to an open nick or not. And the Governor or Chief nearly always asks you like "What are your plans for when you go out?" And his voice says I bet this feller never had a plan in his life and if he did he'll still come back to prison. And as like as not his voice ain't far out but it's a bit irritating for the one or two here and there who do have some ideas. It sort of discourages freedom of speech if you know what I mean. You see what I want to say is "Look Sir, I'm doing a 2 stretch or a lagging (or whatever it is) and in me own time after I've done me stint on the mailbags I'd like to have a go at being a author Sir. I'd like to send me writings round the publishers Sir and if they take 'em then I'll have some money waiting for me when I go out and I shan't need no public funds

which can be spent on some less fortunate geezer and I'll be real chuffed and maybe I'll have a sort of satisfying job then Sir. And if the publishers won't look at me writings then I'll know I'm not going to make no lolly that way and we can see about getting me a job as a bricky's labourer or summat in time for me discharge." Mind you all the time I'm saying it I don't really think much about the publishers *not* taking me writings. With a talent like mine they ought to just jump at the chance. Me a bricky's labourer! I'd rather be in the nick.

Still perhaps you see what I mean. There's inmates what can write the "revelations" and "reminiscences" of the nick like Mister Rolph says and that's all. So that's all right for them. There's other inmates can write about the nick if they want to but it don't really take their fancy all that much, not to write about it directly that is. For them it's the *people* what's interesting and the things they do and the things they say and the way they think,

not The System. And for just a few inmates who are *real* creative there's an urge to write about any dam thing under the sun any way they feel like it.

So I reckon The System ought to let 'em and it ought to let 'em try the publishers if they want to while they're still doing their bird—the writers not the publishers that is, though there's some publishers who might benefit from a bit of bird at that especially them what turn down my writings.

And while we're about it the same goes for any inmate what can paint or draw or make pots or baskets or invent things etcet. etcet. etcet.

I mean they let inmates do corrispondence courses and take degrees and City and Guilds and all sorts of things to help 'em when they go out. So why not the artists? Why can't we have a go at improving ourselves? What's the difference? I ask you to please tell me what is the difference? I can't see any. Really I can't

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