

Letters

Dear Sir,

Mr. A.Oliver wrote on 5 April 1995 requesting permission to reproduce the contents of the Journal of College Medicine and that unless he heard to the contrary he would proceed with the printing.

The College had no objection to this, but is it not conventional to acknowledge the source by

printing its name alongside the excerpts?

I am sorry to note that nowhere in the Prison Service Journal No.99 have you acknowledged the fact that the extracts are from the College of Prison Medicine Journal.

I would request you to rectify this by mentioning the College Journal in the next issue and

also printing this letter in the letters section.

**A. Kumar.
Secretary
College of Prison
Medicine.**

[Apologies are due to the Journal - Editor.]

Dear Sir,

In view of the current level of debate surrounding ministerial interference in the day to day running of the service, one of the points from Sir John Learmont's report strikes a chord.

Paragraph 2.229 which deals with applications highlights the way they are endlessly referred upwards, often going past governing governor level to area manager and beyond.

There seems still to be a culture in the service and especially among prisoners that if you do not get the answer you want, you keep going higher until you do. As a wing manager in my last posting I encouraged my officers and Senior officers to deal with applications at their level and only refer those to me which specifically required my input. Similarly I would only refer on that which had to be seen by a governor grade. The old favourite of "To see the

governor personal " would be returned " See personal officer - governor ". At any stage of the process the only avenue of appeal allowed was access to the request / complaint procedure.

Where all our determined efforts failed was with the prisoner who would not accept request / complaint as his avenue of appeal. He would invariably storm out of the office with the words " You will be hearing from my M.P. / solicitor about this ".

I do not find the level of paperwork estimated by the enquiry to be circulating the service surprising; we have enough of our own making, which is going towards implementing programmes designed to promote security, control and order in establishments across the country. What we can do without is the vast amount of

investigation and paperwork involved in answering questions from M.P.s and solicitors which should only come to us, if at all, after the internal process up to and including the ombudsman has been exhausted.

I would estimate 10-15 per cent of my time as a Principal Officer was devoted to dealing with investigations resulting from a prisoner's query to his M.P. or solicitor which more properly fell within the internal process.

The sooner the Home Secretary's office educates M.P.s of the need to refer all problems initially to the internal process, rather than sending them on to the Director General, the earlier we will be able to get on with the business of getting out of our offices and onto the landings.

**M. Fitzsimons, a
governor currently
seconded to the APEX
TRUST.**

VERBALS

"There is good reason to be relatively satisfied with the first six months of the Ombudsman's existence. The setting up of a new organisation, the volume and spread of complaints, the thoroughness and speed of most of the investigations and the positive feedback from both prisoners and staff are all reasons for some satisfaction. The Ombudsman's office has clearly been established as an important and positive part of the prison system and a greater degree of self-regulation has been observed as a result.

[A Review of the Work of the Prison Ombudsman 24 October 1994 - 23 April 1995]