

# LETTERS to the Editor

## Prison Punishment at Christmas

By Ian Y. Lind and Meda Chesney Lind

IT WAS THE WEEK before Christmas and, it seems, a good time to beat up prisoners. During December's "shake-down" at the Oahu Community Correctional Center, a large number of inmates were attacked by groups of armed guards and beaten while they stood naked and obviously unarmed. Some men were beaten very badly. A few were subjected to obscene forms of pseudo-sexual abuse.

But most people in Honolulu were already caught up in the holiday season and in no mood for hearing about, much less responding to, serious issues.

They did their best to avoid the wives, mothers, and girlfriends of inmates who told tearful tales of violence and systematic brutality.

Lawyers also tended to be immersed in office parties, on long-scheduled vacations, or otherwise "busy" until the new year.

Social agencies usually attentive to prison problems seemed too weighed down with holiday cheer to respond effectively. The governor, to his discredit, refused to observe the season of Christ's birth with goodwill to all people and instead closed his eyes and ears so as to avoid or suppress the truth.

It was, after all, the week before Christmas. A good time for the state to beat people.

**BENEATH THIS SEASONAL callousness, however, lies a public sentiment far more ominous in its implications: "They are only prisoners, so why should**

*While state officials deny prisoners were beaten, two Island residents concerned with the condition of inmates decry what they claim was a brutal crack-down last December.*

we care if they were beaten and brutalized? They are in prison — they must deserve it."

A few people — friends, liberals, "progressive" figures in this community — had the courage to express this view directly. In most cases, however, it was implicit in the silence of people who should have known better. It was Christmas, but they are only prisoners. No room in our inn — or our overcrowded hearts — for them.

The public's understandable but dangerously exaggerated fear and hatred of all "criminals" distorts and obscures two fundamental realities.

First, we need to remember that only a very few of those people in prison are guilty of violent acts.

Second, whatever their crimes, prisoners are people too. This is something that we have learned painfully while teaching at the prison school.

Prisoners may have been convicted of a crime and sentenced to do time, but they have not surrendered their basic human qualities or their basic human rights. They are able to laugh at some

of the institution's arbitrary aspects, get angry at the misuse of official power, fear for their own safety, agonize over the well-being of their families, and reflect on the meaning of their own situations.

**IT MAKES LITTLE SENSE — and creates considerable injustice — for the community to make scapegoats of the men and women confined in prison.**

It is even more outrageous — and dangerous — for politicians to manipulate the public fear of crime, contributing to the further dehumanization of prisoners in order to further their own careers and ambitions. These people may have done wrong, but they cannot be held responsible for all of society's ills.

There is a serious choice facing the community now. If the state can attack such a large number of people and beat them; if some can be beaten brutally and subjected to other abuse; and if these acts can be denied by those in the highest positions of state authority and successfully covered up; then we are in serious trouble, for it will be easier to do again.

And next time the victims may not be "mere" prisoners — they could be anyone. On the other hand, perhaps we can still regain our balance and have the courage to say that such acts of violence will not be tolerated in Honolulu.

If so, we can still redeem something positive from the pain of this past Christmas season.

# Sitdown Strike at Prison Protests Tough Security

By Stirling Morita  
Star-Bulletin Writer

Inmates at the Oahu Community Correctional Center this morning staged a "peaceful" sitdown strike in apparent protest of new and tougher security procedures, a prison spokesman said.

The work strike occurred about 8:30 a.m. when some 270 inmates in the cellblock area refused to go out on their work and school assignments, prison spokesman Chapman Lam said.

The prisoners gave no reasons for their sitdown strike, but Lam said, "There are indications that

they are protesting the new security plan and its restrictions."

Lam said many of the inmates want to go to work or to school, but that there is some word out among them to participate in the strike.

The strike affects only the cellblock area of the prison, at Puuhale Road and Kamehameha Highway.

Inmates refused to go to their work stations, such as the boiler room, laundry and mess hall.

ASKED IF THE prison administration had any plans to resolve the strike, Lam said, "At this

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# Prisoners in Sitdown Strike Here

Continued from Page One

stage, we'll just have to wait and see what happens." The administration always is willing to talk the matter out with the inmates, he said.

Meanwhile, outside the prison, 18 persons picketed the prison, protesting what they said was ill treatment of prisoners. They were mostly relatives of inmates and members of community groups, such as the American Friends Service Committee.

Maile Reigh, a member of the Prison Reform Committee, said the pickets were present because they knew a work strike would be going on inside the prison. They appeared to support the inmates in fighting problems, "especially the wall of secrecy surrounding the treatment of inmates," Reigh said.

Nelson Foster, of the American Friends Service Committee, said he objected to implementation of the new security plan without feedback from the prisoners and community organizations.

LAM SAID. "We have always said that the security for this facility is entirely the responsibility of the prison administration.

"We have said over and over again why more effective security regulations were needed. The measures certainly are necessary and reasonable. We don't believe they are negotiable with the inmates."

"We want activities, we need activities, but we want controlled activities," Lam said.

In  
Hawaii...

Honolulu Star-Bulletin A-3

• Monday, June 28, 1982



**SYMPATHY FOR INMATES**—Pickets walk the sidewalk outside the Oahu Community Correctional Center today, attempting to draw attention to what they describe as ill treatment of prisoners. The picketing was in connection with a sitdown strike this morning by the inmates inside the Kalihi facility. —Star-Bulletin Photo by Terry Luke.

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## Governor Urged to Look into Conditions at Prison

Calling current conditions at Oahu Community Correctional Center "explosive," a group of religious leaders has asked the governor to tackle the issue.

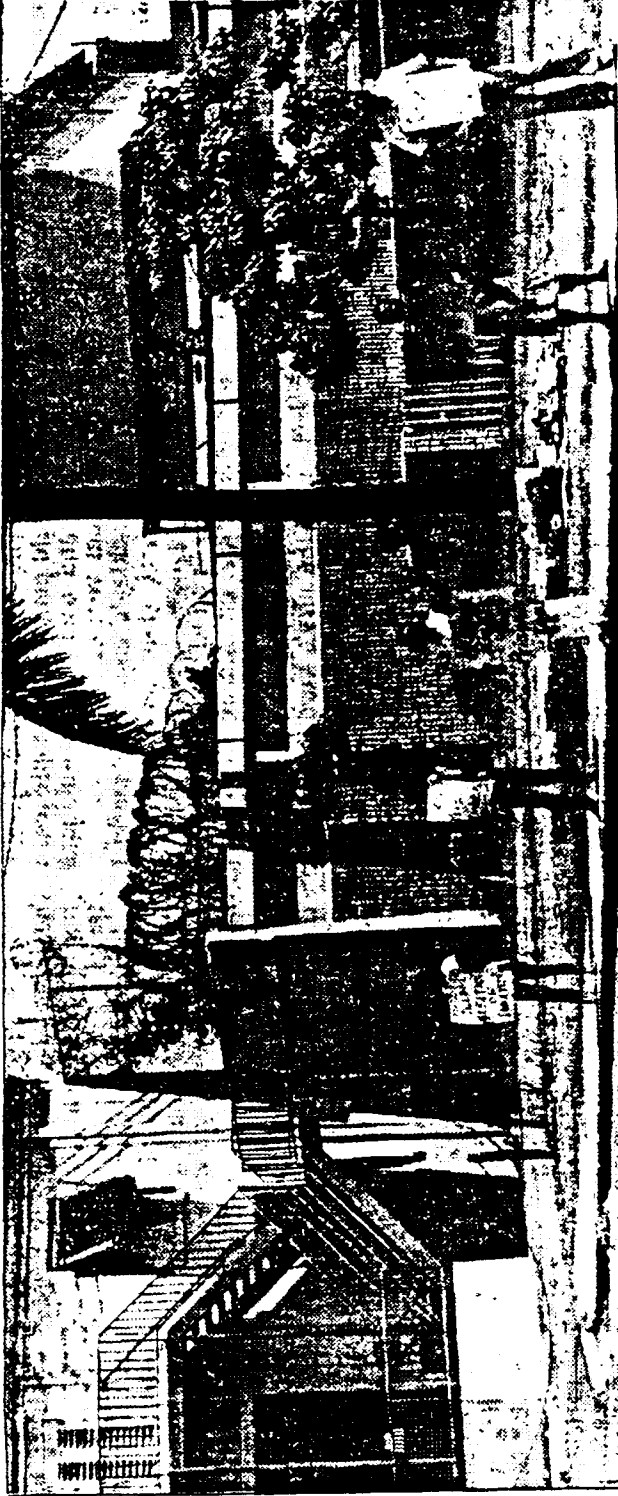
At a meeting Friday, the "Religious Community Concerned about Prison Conditions" heard relatives and friends of inmates and former inmates "offer shocking and distressing testimony of abuses being perpetrated against the prisoners by the current prison administration," a statement from the group said.

The group will meet again July 8.

Members issued a statement saying they are available "for ongoing dialogue with the administration and the prison community."

Those who signed the statement were: Episcopal Bishop Ed-

mond L. Browning; Ronald T.Y. Choo; the Rev. Brian Grieves; the Rev. Jim Jackson, Sacred Hearts Church; the Rev. Teruo Kawata, United Church of Christ; Father Robert Mackay; Sister Anna McAnany; the Rev. Eric Potter; the Rev. Renate Rose, Central Union Church; and the Rev. Donald White.



Sign-holding protesters stage a sympathy demonstration outside the state prison, where inmates were holding a peaceful strike.

Advertiser photo  
by Ron Jett

# Prison lockdown follows protest strike

By Janice Wolf  
Advertiser Staff Writer

The cellblock at the state prison in Kalihi was again under lockdown yesterday after inmates staged a "peaceful" sitdown strike and refused to leave their living units for morning work, school and program assignments.

The sitdown strike, which began about 8:30 a.m., apparently was in protest of tough new security measures that went into effect recently, according to state corrections spokesman Chapman Lam.

Those measures place substantial restrictions on outdoor activities, telephone privileges, visiting areas and movement through the facility. Lam said they were put into effect to prevent the flow of drugs and weapons into

and through the prison.

"The inmates gave themselves a self-imposed lockdown," Lam said. "They refused to go to work or go to class."

He said the administration then responded by getting tougher, removing such privileges as going outdoors for recreation. "So we're back in lockdown," Lam said.

The new security plan was drawn up after a three-day shakedown early this month — a shakedown that uncovered a cache of knives and daggers in a dormitory inside the old cellblock area.

Prison officials then clamped an extensive lockdown on the facility, suspending worklines, school and various other activities until details of the new security plan were completed.

This latest lockdown applies only to the 270

inmates living in the old cellblock. Lam said many of the inmates had wanted to go to school and work but were told by other inmates to participate in the strike.

Meanwhile, about 15 protesters — friends and relatives of inmates, members of the American Friends Service Committee and other community groups — gathered outside the facility to voice their support for the prisoners and to carry signs calling for an end to "prison beatings."

Allegations of inmate beatings first surfaced publicly in December after a massive shake-down brought police officers, the Hawaii National Guard and correctional officers from the Halawa High Security Facility to the prison.

Several committees and organizations are separately investigating the allegations.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, June 29, 1982

PRISON ADMINISTRATION IGNORES GRIEVANCES,  
INMATES BEGIN HUNGER STRIKE

The sit-down strike at the Oahu Community Correctional Center expanded into a hunger strike today following apparent disciplinary action taken against some inmates. This information was contained in a hand-written note received this morning by the American Friends Service Committee. It is not known how many inmates are refusing food.

According to AFSC representative Ian Lind, "The situation at the prison is getting worse because the grievances of inmates have been ignored or misrepresented by the prison administration. Contrary to administration claims, the inmates have stated that they are not opposed to the new security plan as a whole, but they do have a few specific concerns about non-security aspects of the plan as well as some long-standing problems which need to be resolved."

"Unfortunately, the prison administration has refused to meet with the inmate's Huki Like Council since the last lockdown began in early June," Lind said. "On at least five occasions, the administration turned down inmate requests to discuss grievances."

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Add 1

Lind added that "it appears that the inmate leaders are being given no opportunity to resolve their grievances through established channels. This is what the current sit-down and hunger strike is all about."

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Attachments:

1. List of grievances
2. Note from cellblock inmates received 6/29/82
3. Note from Huki Like Council received 6/28/82
4. Statement of Huki Like Council received 6/21/82

ATTACHMENT #1: Inmate Grievances

Based on written statements from the inmate council and prior conversations with members of the Huki Like, the American Friends Service Committee believes that the following comprise the most important grievances which have prompted the current inmate strike.

1] Continued reports of inmates being assaulted in the prison's Holding Unit. These are part of a broad pattern of abuse in this part of the prison. Some of the most well-known incidents are described below:

An investigation was initiated by former prison administrator Masaro Oshiro inot charges of violence against inmates in Phase 1 of the Holding Unit. The state Attorney General's office was involved in this investigation prior to the "shakedown" of December 1981. In the aftermath of that shakedown, there were numerous reports of beatings in the Unit.

On april 2, 1982, four guards were arrested and charged with beating an inmate in the Holding Unit.

That same day, the president of the Huki Like Council was apparently taken from his dormitory and beaten by guards in the Holding Unit. Following this incident, the inmate was confined to the Unit for more than a month.

2] Concerns about specific provisions of the new "security" plan. Although the Huki Like Council has stated that it does not object to the new plan as a whole, questions are raised about a few provisions.

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a) Access to telephones. Under the new rules, inmates cannot use the telephone until after 4:30 p.m. Inmates report being told that this is to prevent them from "causing trouble" by contacting their attorneys or community groups concerned with prison conditions whose offices typically close at 4:30.

b) Limited recreation. The new rules restrict access to the small recreation area of the cellblock, thus increasing the amount of time inmates must spend idle in their living areas. This is especially difficult for the large number of inmates who do not have prison jobs or access to other programs, and are thus confined to their cells most of the day.

c) Restrictions on family visits. The new security plan eliminates the use of the small grassy area within the cellblock for family visits. This makes it more difficult for prisoners to see their children.

3] Reprisals or threats of reprisals against inmates for voicing grievances, even if through legal and legitimate channels. Inmates have been beaten or threatened with beatings for offering evidence or presenting testimony to official investigations of the prison now underway. Another inmate who recently spoke to a TV news team was sent to the Holding Unit and "slapped around" as a result.

4] Failure of the administration to work with the Huki Like Council to resolve problems. Inmates complain that the administration has failed to live up to agreements and commitments, thereby eroding the Huki Like's credibility. "Do this for a length of time and any thinking person knows the results", says a Council statement.

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TO ALL CONCERNED PERSONS:

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

WE ARE LOCKING OURSELVES DOWN IN PEACEFUL PROTEST AT THE GROSS MIS-MANAGEMENT OF THIS ~~PRISON~~ PRISON. WE ARE ASKING TO EAT IN THE DORMS JUST LIKE THEY OFTEN DO WHEN THEY LOCK US DOWN. THE MODULES ARE PARTICIPATING TOO AND WE ASK THE ANNEX AND THE HALAWA FACILITY TO JOIN US. EVERYONE IS IN CONTROL OF THEMSELVES AND DETERMINED TO RIGHT THIS WRONG. IF THEY DO NOT FEED US - WE WILL NOT EAT.

THE FACTUAL DISPUTE IS AMONG THE STAFF. ALL IN THE POSITION OF AUTHORITY, MIS-MANAGEMENT ON THE ONE HAND, AND INCOMPETENCE ON THE OTHER, AND THE MIS-USE OF POWER ON BOTH HANDS, AND WE ARE THE BALL.

WE ASK FOR ALL RIGHT THINKING PERSONS TO AID US IN THE REALIZATION OF OUR AIMS. NONSENSE CANNOT EXIST IN THE PRESENCE OF SENSE.

RESPECTFULLY

THE IWAHATE HUKI-LIKE

6/29/82

THEY (ADMINISTRATION) LOCKED UP  
SOME INMATES THIS MORNING.  
WE ARE NOW ON HUNGER STRIKE.  
WE MUST REMEMBER THAT HUNGRY PEOPLE  
WHO CANNOT BE HEARD ARE HARD TO CONTROL.  
SOME PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT DYING.

June 1982

To: Concerned People

The inmate Huki Like council has always adhered to its name and purpose; that is, "Huki Like--pull together."

The administration, in its recent statement in the media, among other ambiguous statements said "that the inmate Huki Like has been a big help in keeping sense and peace to prevail."

The truth of that matter is that for a long while the inmate Huki Like's credibility has by degrees become eroded by the administration's attitude or thoughtlessness thereby eroding their own credibility. For instance, something is to be allowed or done and we go and report it to the population. Then, something else or nothing happens. Do this for a length of time and any thinking person knows the results.

It has been a while that we have been waiting for some kind of results from investigations that have produced no positive or discernible results. Many inmates are in despair. We have controlled ourselves--as advised by outside agencies, because we want to do things in the right way so that brutality, be it physical or mental, would not happen again.

The recent "governor's investigation panel"--now five--though made up of responsible persons, is all "flash" to us. They do no investigative work of their own--they have no choice. Instead, theirs is an investigative agency whose existence depends upon the "goodwill" of the state when it has already been established that a "cover-up" might be in progress. The investigative men have already stated to us that "we would not touch this if we're not persuaded."

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The Senate committee on Judiciary working on "heptachlor" seems to have forgotten us and they are our "hope".

To "engineer" things so that we could be "got back at" for having the temerity to complain about "conditions"; "we'll show you how bad it can get"; or "ignorant criminals, liars and thieves, we'll straighten your asses out," are attitudes, normal, counter-productive at best and which seems to us a prevalent attitude.

The "offensiveness or defensiveness" of the weapons found in a "particular dorm", while important, is not as important as why they were there. The weapons were in places of "not easy access." That means that they were there for or as an "eventuality". What eventuality? Were inmates threatening inmates? A whole dorm? Will anyone ask for the truth of the matter? Does anyone care? The investigations we asked for are all in progress because there must have been some truth to our allegations. What we are saying is that, while we are not truthful all the time, we do not lie all the time and that goes for all--even in high places.

All is based on "resentment" and "fear" and though we fill the place with "one guard per square inch" or take inmates "one by one" to chow, work, programs or recreation, the results will be the same. We "belabour" the "results" and do nothing about the "cause".

The "big" majority of us do not condone weapons or violence--to solve things--as it will not produce "good" or "lasting" results. We have no objections to the "new plan" as a whole.

In fact we welcome it, but we strongly feel that our "free time"--recreation and phone time--should not be curtailed as punishment or in fear or as an excuse for implementing "long standing" plans of a "few" maybe for their own aggrandizement all of which is undeserved by the majority of inmates. The attitude with which the changes are being made can never produce "good" or "lasting" results. Expedience hurts everything it touches. We want to be heard.

Thank You,

Inmate Huki Like

# State Irritated at Prison Probe

By Gregg K. Kakesako  
Star-Bulletin Writer

The state administration has rejected a U.S. Justice Department's request for a preliminary meeting next week on alleged civil rights violations at the Oahu Community Correctional Center and the Halawa High Security Facility.

Deputy Attorney General James Dannenberg, supervisor of the state's civil rights division, said the federal investigation will be a waste of taxpayer's dollars until Justice Department officials tell prison officials what prompted the probe.

"I think they (Justice Department officials) are being heavy handed," Dannenberg said. "They haven't given us any specifics and I am inclined not to give them complete access until they tell us what we did wrong."

In a letter dated July 1, William Bradford Reynolds, assistant attorney general in the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, "listed everything that could go wrong with a prison," Dannenberg said.

Dannenberg said he is "annoyed" by the Justice Department's attitude. "I don't know why he (Reynolds) is in such a rush to come out here for a few weeks just to look around our prison to see if he can find any violations...we want some specifics."

"It appears that he (Reynolds) is in a rush just to get here for a vacation in Hawaii."

IN THE JULY 1 letter, Reynolds said Justice Department officials want to meet here for "a preliminary meeting" Tuesday.

That request was made by both Reynolds and Steven Berlin, U.S. Justice Department attorney, in the letter to Dannenberg.

But Dannenberg wrote back to Berlin yesterday saying "there is simply no way" that such a meeting can take place before he leaves for the Mainland July 15 for private and business reasons.

Dannenberg, who has been handling civil rights cases for 13 years, said he would not permit any state officials nor any tours of the prisons without his presence.

But Dannenberg said he would be willing to meet with Berlin on Aug. 11 while he is in Washington, D.C. "It seems that would be the most reasonable thing to do and save the federal government several thousands of dollars for this initial preliminary meeting."

"Given the administration's concerns about curtailing wasted government expenditures, I expect that you (Berlin) would welcome the fortuity of my presence on the East Coast within the next few weeks," Dannenberg said.

Dannenberg also explained the attorney general's office and corrections officials are now busy preparing for a special state Senate investigation into charges of alleged brutality which reportedly took place during the December prison shakedown.

That probe, undertaken by Big Island Democrat Dante Carpenter and the Senate Judiciary Committee, is supposed to begin next week. However, as yet no subpoena has been issued by the committee.

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# State Balks at Federal Prison Probe

Continued from Page One

— "Physical plant (sanitation, environmental conditions, fire safety).

— "Medical and psychiatric care; provision for adequate exercise; sex discrimination; food items and clothing."

But Dannenberg said that Reynolds' second letter is still too vague. "There wasn't a prison problem that wasn't listed in the country that hasn't had problems in the areas he listed."

BECAUSE the Justice Department did not explain what prompted the investigation as required by federal law, Gov. George Ariyoshi on June 28 wrote to Reynolds telling him the whole visit "smacks of a general fishing expedition for possible violations."

In addition, the federal government is required to inform state officials and to outline the violations before undertaking any investigation, he said.

"All the federal law does is to give the government the right to sue for any outstanding civil rights violations if the state has continually resisted any attempts to correct them," Dannenberg said.

But Dannenberg said the June 10 letter received by his office said the investigation, which will be carried out by Justice Department attorneys, consultants and perhaps agents of the FBI, did not contain any specifics.

In response, Reynolds on July 1 told Dannenberg "the issues around which most allegations cluster are:

— "Staffing (numbers of staff, training, alleged brutality, ability to protect inmates).

— "Protection of inmates from harm (classification, weapon detection, surveillance, etc.).

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Dannenberg said state officials aren't against the Justice Department's investigation, but just want to know what prompted it and what violations are being pursued.

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# UH cancels prison classes because of liability question

By Vickie Ong  
Advertiser Staff Writer

The University of Hawaii has suspended college-level classes at the state prison this fall because of questions about liability should an instructor be injured while teaching there.

Honolulu Community College faculty teach the courses at Oahu Community Correctional Center's Hoomana School. Last week, HCC Provost Clyde Yoshioka announced that classes have been canceled at Hoomana because the state attorney general's office raised the issue of financial liability.

The HCC faculty who teach at Hoomana support Yoshioka's decision — and say they won't return to the school until the liability question is resolved and, more importantly, the prison administration addresses the larger issues regarding the future of educational programs.

Courses in humanities, basic English, history, psychology and human development were to have been offered at Hoomana School this fall. Instructors say 70 to 100 prison inmates participate in the college-level classes each semester.

David Cleveland, an HCC sociologist who has taught at Hoomana for six years, said faculty have not been threatened by inmates — but “with the conditions at the prison, we're a little more worried about that.”

A memo from nine Hoomana instructors to the HCC Faculty Council says: “Many of us have been teaching inside the prison for years with minimal concern for our own safety; however, we perceive some rather dramatic and disturbing changes which have affected our feelings of personal security at OCCC.”

“Specifically, we feel conditions have deteriorated” as a result of overcrowding, the lack of educational programs, the lack of prisoner work assignments “and persistent rumors of inmate abuse by members of the correctional staff,” the memo said.

Cleveland said the liability question can be resolved “quite quickly” through expanded insurance for those teaching in the prison, “but we're more concerned that the questions concerning the future of the (educational) program be resolved before we re-enter.”

Chapman Lam, prison spokesman,

said the administration couldn't respond to the instructors' complaints because it hasn't seen the memo.

“However, we are aware of limitations in the educational program at the OCCC facility,” Lam said. “In general, many of these limitations have to do with the terribly expanded use of the facility, carrying double what it is designed to carry, and it definitely creates space problems (for the programs the prison tries to offer).”

In its memo the faculty cited these problems with the prison's educational program:

- There is no established path for a Hoomana student to follow to obtain a degree from Honolulu Community College.

One inmate writes of his frustration and disappointment because he has taken college-level courses at Hoomana since 1976 and accumulated 50 credits, but “I have absolutely nothing to show for it in terms of a two-year degree.”

- Although there is great demand for the college courses — Cleveland said more than 100 apply for a class that can take only 25 or so students — the HCC teachers have only one class-

room and a partitioned part of the hallway for classes.

“Adequate classrooms are an absolute necessity if we expect the college program to thrive,” the teachers' memo says.

- There needs to be more flexibility in the scheduling of classes because classroom space is limited.

Cleveland said students are available to attend school only from 7:30 to 10 a.m. and from 1 to 3 p.m. In between, the inmates must return to their dormitories or modules for headcount and lunch.

Sometimes prisoners must choose between prison work and school.

- The library at Hoomana, completed three years ago, remains closed to students.

- While modules are set aside for prisoners who have earned privileges to work in the community, no such provisions are available to those who might want to study at a campus.

In addition to the college-level courses taught by HCC faculty, Hoomana School has its own instructors in welding, auto mechanics, English, math and general education.



David Cleveland  
“A little more worried”

The Honolulu Advertiser  
★★, Wednesday, August 23, 1982 A-3