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Bee Photo By Dick Schmidt

Cells at the Deuel institution are renovated to meet increased population needs.

## 'Double-Celling' Considered

# Prison Population Rising

By SIGRID BATHEN  
Bee Staff Writer

California's prison population has increased by more than 900 inmates in the past five months — reversing a year-long downward trend and prompting plans to reopen many prison buildings closed in 1975 and early 1976.

If the sharp upward spiral in prison populations continues, officials say they will be forced in many cases to house two inmates per cell — a practice called "double-celling" and often cited by authorities as a major cause of prison tensions.

Some of the worst prison violence in California history occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when prisons were bulging with inmates.

Latest Department of Corrections figures place the number of prisoners statewide at 20,617. That figure is in marked contrast to the population as

of March 1, when it was 19,700, and represents a radical departure from the declining 1975 prison population. In March of last year, the population was 25,000, dropping steadily to less than 20,000 by the beginning of this year.

Based on projections recently released by corrections, the inmate population is expected to reach 21,820 by June 30, 1977. By July 1, 1978, it should hit 23,055. At the end of the projection, in 1986, the population predicted is 30,890.

"The pendulum is swinging," says corrections director Jerry Enomoto. "I have a gut feeling that we're going to have more problems, more violence. . . ."

"We have been in a fairly tranquil period. I anticipate the tranquility is going to be replaced by increasing incidents of violence."

By the end of this month, officials will begin reopening prison buildings around the state with space for more than 2,000 prisoners and a need for 130 additional staff members. If the predictions are correct, the reopenings will just barely keep pace with rising populations, and then only temporarily.

The population projections were prepared by corrections statistician Vida Ryan. "They're hazardous," said public information officer Helen Atkinson of the predictions, "but she has been surprisingly accurate before."

The first unit to be reopened is an 80-bed medium security facility at the California Correctional Institution, a men's prison in Tehachapi. About two weeks after that, officials plan to reopen a 61-bed medium and minimum security unit at the same institution.

"Beyond that, we can't project  
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dates," says George Warner, a corrections administrator who monitors population fluctuations in prisons. "But, by the first six months of 1978, we will have reactivated all units with the possible exception of one."

The exception is a 185-bed onetime National Guard barracks used until last year to house prisoners at the California Men's Colony in Chino. Enomoto says fire officials consider the structure a firetrap, and Warner says it is the "least desirable" unit to reopen — although it may be if things get tight, which it looks like they will.

Neither does Enomoto want to reopen San Quentin's infamous "B Wing," an unwieldy five-tier structure that can house about 200 prisoners and was used for disciplinary lockup until it was closed last year.

Officials aren't sure when they will have to return to double-celling for some prisoners. Given the population projections, they don't think it will be long. Enomoto predicts mid-1977, but other prison officials say it will be much sooner than that at some institutions.

At Deuel Vocational Institution near Tracy, an official said double-celling was expected there in a few weeks.

Prison cells range in size from less than five by 12 feet at San Quentin and Folsom to six by 10 at some of the newer prisons. Officials don't like double-celling — they know it causes tensions, which can get out of hand — and prison reform lawyers say it might even be illegal.

"Double-celling is totally inappropriate and possibly illegal," says Ray Parnas, a law professor and State Senate consultant who helped draft recently passed legislation to abolish the indeterminate sentence in California.

"In terms of human relations and violence, double-celling is disastrous," says Evelyn SchAAF of the San Rafael-based Committee for Prisoner Humanity and Justice.

"Whenever you coop people up in close quarters — whether it be a prison or a submarine — you have more tension," says American Civil Liberties Union attorney Brent Barnhart. "Your 'house' is your space, your last remaining bit of dignity. Double-celling will increase violence."

Prison officials recognize the perils of double-celling, but they say they have no choice. Among the nation's prisons, they say California's alone experienced a significant recent population decline. Elsewhere in the country, the prisons are so crowded that inmates have been placed in trailers, vacant buildings, even tents. Now that the California prison population is rising, officials say more prisons must be built.

"We have no better answer," says Enomoto. "We have to have decent housing."

Prison reform advocates insist the department has failed to adequately explore alternatives to incarceration before building more prisons. They say the roots of crime are often social, economic, tied to racism and poverty. Enomoto and other administrators don't dispute those views, but they say people who run prisons don't determine social and legislative policy.

Ms. Atkinson says legislative approval to build more prisons is unlikely in the near future, although \$92,000 was allocated last session to study plans for new prisons.

"Even if the legislature jumped up and gave us money for a new joint, which is unlikely, it's five years down the pike," she said.

People involved in prison work — administrators and prisoner rights activists — offer several, sometimes conflicting, reasons for the sudden upsurge in California's prison population. Often, they cite the mood in America — a "get-tough" philosophy against crime which is reflected in tougher sentencing and parole policies.

Many administrators and law enforcement officials add that there is simply more crime, and the crimes are more violent.

"A lot of it is simply that more crimes are being committed," says Enomoto, "but it's really a combination of circumstances."

He and other officials cite passage of new legislation requiring mandatory prison terms for persons using guns in robberies or selling more than five ounces of heroin. Warner estimates about 850 persons who might not otherwise go to prison would be sent to prison under those laws in the approximately two years following the Jan. 1, 1976, effective date of the legislation.

And, administrators cite a "leveling off" of policies begun by the Adult Authority, the men's parole board, under former chairman Raymond Procunier, who also directed the state prison system through some of its roughest years.

Procunier, they say, reduced the prison population by setting parole dates for men who had been kept in prison under the "get-tough" policies  
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Continued from Page A12 of former Gov. Ronald Reagan in the early 1970s.

Under Procunier's administrative reforms of California's indeterminate sentencing law, the Adult Authority released more than 10,000 prisoners on parole in 1975 and early 1976. Although Procunier's reforms were ruled illegal at the time by the courts, they are now part of the recently passed law abolishing the indeterminate sentence.

With the exception of San Quentin,

most of the units to be reopened by the Department of Corrections are designed for medium- or minimum-security prisoners. However, Enomoto says they may in some cases have to be made more secure to accommodate prisoners requiring closer custody.

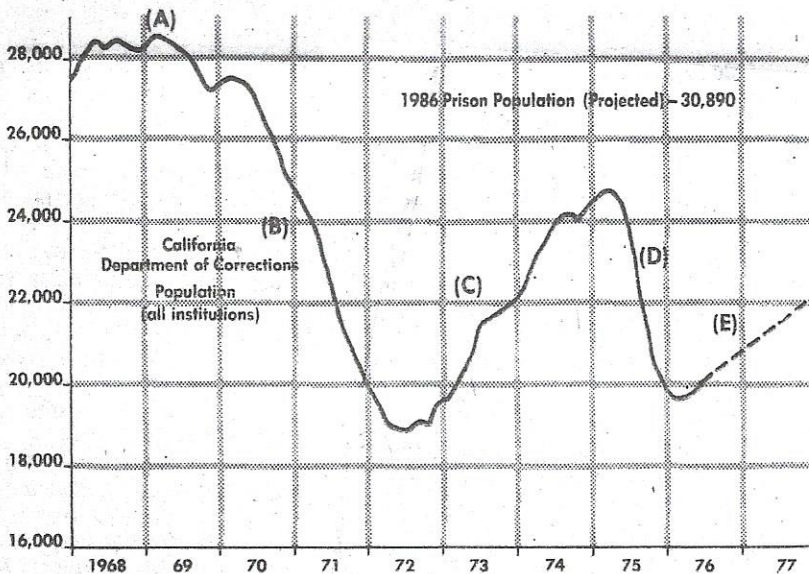
"We need closer security beds," he said, "more than minimum security beds."

Prisoners in the various forms of special lockup — "management control," "protective custody" and "adjustment center" are some terms used by officials — will not be double-celled as the prisons fill up, authorities say. And, they note, prisoners deemed by officials to require special lockup have increased from 400 to 500 throughout the system in recent months, putting lockup units statewide at 87 per cent capacity.

Since more cells are needed for the 60-plus death row inmates at San Quentin, authorities are also proposing that 34 special security cells be converted for death row inmates.

That would bring the special prison lockup units to 92 per cent of capacity. The total general population of male felons (prisoners on the "mainline," as it is called) in California prisons is currently at more than 95 per cent of capacity.

"Anytime we get to 95 per cent capacity," says one administrator, "we get worried."



This Bee chart is based on figures supplied by prison officials and is designed to show general trends. In February 1969 (A), prison population hit an all-time high with 28,600 inmates in institutions designed for about 24,000. Then, to mid-1972 (B), population declined because of efforts to find alternatives to prison. The Reagan administration's "get tough" policies of 1972 started a sharp rise again (C). In 1975, the Adult Authority under Raymond Procunier gave paroles to many inmates held in custody in the get-tough era, and the numbers dropped again (D). Now, it is climbing again (E) and broken line shows projection to future.

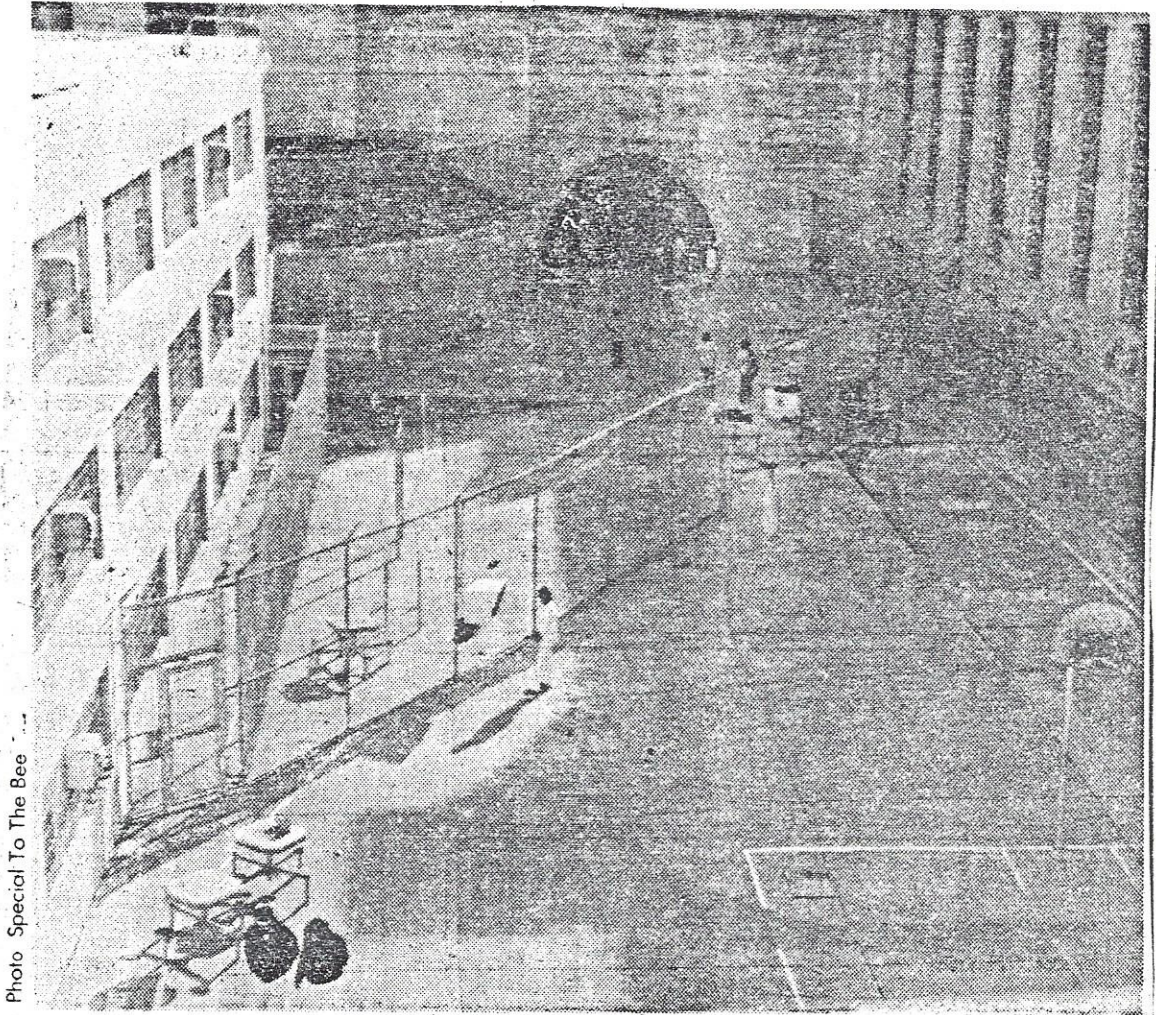


Photo Special To The Bee

Folsom Prison's exercise yard for the first floor housing unit