

*Conveyed to  
Special Agent*

REPORT TO THE  
STATE BOARD OF CONTROL AND COMMISSIONER SANFORD BATES  
COVERING CAUSES OF THE DISTURBANCE IN FIVE WING, WHICH  
BEGAN ON THE EVENING OF SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 1952, AND  
ENDED EARLY ON THE MORNING OF TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 1952.

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Pursuant to instructions from the President of the State Board of Control transmitted by letter to the Deputy Commissioner in Charge of Correction and Parole by Commissioner Bates on April 1, 1952, the following report of the insurrection involving 50 of the 1350 men in the State Prison is submitted jointly by the Deputy Commissioner and the Principal Keeper of the State Prison who cooperated in the inquiry.

The events which took place in Five Wing following the outbreak early in the morning of March 30, 1952, have been fully chronicled elsewhere and it does not appear necessary to recapitulate them here. This report deals with the preceding events which occurred on the evening of March 29, 1952, and with the causes of the disturbance.

In arriving at a joint opinion as to the causes of the riot, the undersigned have interviewed all official personnel involved in the initial phases and a representative sample of the inmates who were in the Wing at the time, including all of those who were identified by Officers and other inmates as leaders of the revolt.

As is usually the case in affairs of this sort, the causes must be considered under three headings:

1. Immediate Causes
2. Basic Causes
3. Contributing Causes

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IMMEDIATE CAUSES:

All stories agree as to immediate causes which touched off the disturbance. At about 11:30 on the night of March 29, 1952, an inmate named A----- complained of being ill and requested the Wing Officer to call the Doctor. As is customary in cases of this sort, the Wing Officer called on the telephone to the Center, and the Center sent to the Hospital for the inmate orderly on duty to come to the Wing and check the man's condition. There appears to have been no unusual or unwarranted delay in getting the inmate orderly to the Wing. Following the usual practice, he took the inmate's temperature, pulse and respiration, and noted his complaint, which were a headache and a running nose, and telephoned that to the Resident Physician. Since the temperature, pulse and respiration were within normal limits, and the subjective symptoms did not indicate anything more than a head cold, the Resident Physician prescribed medication to be taken in the cell, and refused to order the inmate hospitalized in the middle of the night.

During the time that the Doctor was being contacted by telephone, A----- began to moan and groan and throw himself from his bunk to the floor and made considerable noise and disturbance. This stimulated several of his friends, notably B-----, C-----, D-----, E-----, and F-----, to begin to chant in rhythm "take that boy to the hospital, take that boy to the hospital".

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When the medication was finally brought to the cell, A----- refused to take it and continued to howl and groan and give signs of great suffering. The noise in the Wing increased, with others joining in and rattling their cups against the bars, demanded that the Wing Officer take A----- to the Hospital. The noise was so great the Wing Officer could not use the telephone, but he succeeded in persuading the men to be quiet and allow him to talk, and he called the Center. The Acting Head Correction Officer on duty told him that he could not take the boy to the hospital since the Doctor declined to order it. When the inmates heard that they began to threaten that if he was not taken to the Hospital they would "take the joint apart".

Someone, apparently B-----, called out "If I start smashing things, will you go along with me?". Obtaining an encouraging chorus of support he smashed his wash basin with a leg of his bed, and with that, wash basins began to break all over the Wing, and pieces were thrown out of the cell, down to the flats and out of the windows and at the lights. The Officer again got in touch with the Center, and this time an officer was sent down to remove A----- and at the same time remove another inmate who suffered from chronic asthma, and was being affected by the pieces of paper and other material that were being set on fire and thrown out of the cells.

The removal of A----- did not quiet the disturbance but seemed to give it greater impetus and the noise and disturbance grew considerably until about thirty minutes after A----- was removed, all of the lights were out and fragments of porcelain and bed legs and improvised missiles were being rained down on the cell floors, corridor and officer's desk. The officer again contacted Center and the key was sent down and he was ordered out of the Wing for his own protection, since he could do nothing in the dark against 52 rioting men.

It is not quite clear whether men started coming out of their cells before the Officer was taken out, or immediately thereafter; but at any rate, shortly after he left the wing, and took his station outside the door in Six Wing hall, men were seen at large in the cell block from No. 11 Tower, by the officer who was playing his light through the broken windows of the Wing, and they were also seen by the Wing Officer through the door to the Wing itself. The Center sent for additional help. Two shells of tear gas were thrown into the Wing in an attempt to quiet the men down, and the officer in No. 11 Tower, by that time had a second man with him, covered the end of Five Wing with search lights and riot guns to forestall an attempt which was being made to escape through the end of the Wing.

The course of the disturbance from this point on has been reported elsewhere and does not need elaboration here.

It is clear that A-----'s demonstration touched off the trouble. It seems equally clear that A----- was not seriously ill, in a physical sense. The nurse found no symptoms of serious illness, and when the Doctor saw A----- in the hospital after he was finally taken there, he found him to be quietly asleep, and neither showing nor claiming any symptoms of sickness. It is not so clear as to whether A-----'s demonstration was an hysterical manifestation - in other words, "blew his top" - or whether he was primed to put on the show by the ones who first took up his cause. The latter seems quite plausible,

especially since there had been a similar demonstration touched off in a similar situation in Seven Wing a few months ago, when the segregation group were held in that block. It was D-----, one of the demonstrators in this disturbance, who initiated the affair in Seven Wing.

BASIC CAUSE:

The basic cause of the riot is unquestionably to be found in the type of inmate confined in the Segregation Wing. They were for the most part extremely hostile, aggressive, psychopathic persons to whom assault, violence and destruction were no new manifestation. Some of the men who, through the identification of their voices during the riot, by their prominence in all negotiations and by the statements of other inmates, can be accepted as the ring-leaders, are: B-----, G-----, E-----, C-----, F-----, H-----, I-----, and J-----.

B-----, aged 35, is currently serving a sentence of 5 to 8 years, for Assault with Intent to Rob. His crime was distinctly a brutal one, since he struck his victim over the head three times with a mason's brick which he brought into the liquor store with him, with no other purpose in mind than to assault the owner and escape with a gallon jug of wine. His previous record includes a commitment to Annandale Reformatory in 1936 on a charge of Robbery. In the course of serving this commitment he had to be transferred to Rahway for persistent bad conduct and disorderliness at Annandale. His Rahway record was characterized by the same kind of behavior. In 1943 he was court-martialled and sent to the Rehabilitation Center, Turlock, California, for assaulting a non-commissioned officer. He received a year at hard labor and then was dishonorably discharged from the Army, and returned to Newark, New Jersey. In 1945, he was sentenced to the N. J. State Prison for a term of 2 to 3 years, for Robbery. His prison career has been marked by innumerable reports, and punishments for such offenses as: possession of a knife, refusal to obey orders, creating disturbances, destroying State property, fights, contraband, etc. He has lost almost two years' good conduct time. It is interesting to note there is a history of epileptic-like seizures, although the psychiatric diagnosis at the Prison is "Constitutional Defective". It is also interesting to note that an investigation conducted by the Parole Department, in connection with his mandatory appearance before the Parole Board on eligibility states: "B----- has been more or less of a Third Ward wild man, and is a chronic alcoholic. He has been a product of the streets, and is very dangerous when intoxicated. He has very few inhibitions and appears to think only on the pleasure-pain level of a child".

G-----, aged 35, is serving 27 consecutive sentences; (1 yr. sentence), for Breaking and Entering, from Union County, and a 20 to 28 year sentence for Breaking, Entering and Stealing by Night, from Somerset County. His previous record includes a sentence to Rahway in 1936 for Larceny, with two parole violations on that sentence, with earlier periods spent at Jamesburg and Annandale Reformatories. He has had a number of disciplinary reports while in this institution, which



include: creating a disturbance, damaging State property, and refusing to work. He recently was caught trying to exhibit obscene signs and pictures to female employees in the administrative section of the Prison, and these were of such a bizarre character that he was sent to the Diagnostic Center for examination. They found him to be hostile, non-cooperative, and even threatening during the psychiatric and psychological examinations, and the final summations of the Diagnostic Center's findings state in part: "There is a fair chance that his chronic paranoid personality will break under stress into a paranoid schizophrenic reaction". The basis for this has been suspicion of others, as well as outbursts of aggressiveness.

D----- is now 26 years of age, was committed to the N.J. State Prison at the age of 18, for murder, and robbery, with a 48 to 52 years sentence, to be followed up by a consecutive Life sentence, from Atlantic County. A Bench Warrant is on file from Mercer County for aggravated assault and battery. His history shows persistent use of morphine, cocaine and marahuana. He is a confirmed homosexual and was diagnosed on admission as a psychopathic personality, drug addict, antagonistic and anti-social type. He has had 15 appearances before the Prison disciplinary court for charges of serious misconduct, including such offenses as fighting, sodomy, creating disturbances in cell block, profanity, numerous offenses of inciting to riot, setting fire to his mattress in cell, stabbing another inmate with home-made dagger, destroying State property, and possession of unlawful medicines.

E-----, now 25 years old, was originally committed to Annandale at the age of 19 with an indeterminate sentence carrying a maximum expiring in September 1953. He had previously been in Jamesburg, following which he became nomadic and roamed the country with a record of arrests in Chicago; Washington, D.C.; St. Louis, Missouri; and Los Angeles, California. The commitment to Annandale was based on four charges of Entering and one of Grand Larceny. Upon admission to Annandale he was diagnosed as psychopathic personality (homosexual), and that diagnosis has been continued throughout his subsequent transfers to Rahway, and to the State Prison for persistent rebellious conduct at Annandale and Rahway. At the Prison, he has had 15 charges for serious offenses, including threat and attempted assault, destroying State property, sodomy, flooding his cell and setting fire to his mattress, stabbing another inmate, breaking up his cell, and extreme insolence to officers. Throughout his stay, the principal problem has been one of persistent homosexual practices and aggressive assaultive behavior.

C----- was committed to the State Prison at the age of 19 with a death sentence for Murder in the 1st Degree. His sentence was commuted to Life by the Court of Pardons and he is now 32 years of age. The murder was a brutal one, committed in the course of a robbery which netted him \$17. He has been a persistent institutional problem, and his punishment record shows 14 serious charges, including creating disturbance in his cell, possession of a knife,

throwing glass container, attempting to start a riot by applauding and cheering for the Japanese during the showing of a newsreel, fighting, sodomy, attempting to stir up rioting in the cell blocks and in the hospital.

F-----, now 37 years of age, came into the Prison in 1945 to serve a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 year sentence for Assault and Battery. He was paroled by the Court of Pardons and later returned to Rahway for violating his parole from that institution on an indeterminate sentence for Robbery. He had been at Jamesburg and has had several terms in the Mercer County Workhouse and the Mercer County Jail. He has a relatively low intelligence. He has been diagnosed as a constitutional defective. His record at Rahway was very bad, including Assault and Battery with a knife against an inmate, refusal to obey orders, and assault on an officer which resulted in his being taken to Middlesex County Court and sentenced to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 years in the State Prison. His record at the latter institution continues to be characteristically bad, showing great hostility and assaultiveness, particularly toward officers. He is noisy, insolent and rebellious.

H-----, now 27 years of age, started his career with a Burglary in 1940, for which he received probation. Later he was sent to the Ridgewood Parental Home and escaped. When picked up, he was sent to Jamesburg where he had one unsuccessful parole, one escape, and finally paroled to join the Navy. In the Navy he was confined to the brig on a charge of Carrying Concealed Weapons and Escape. When apprehended he was sent to the Naval Disciplinary Barracks at Shoemaker, California, where he served one year, then was sent overseas where, at Pearl Harbor in 1946, he misappropriated Government property and was sentenced to 8 months at Mairi Island Naval Prison. Between 1947 and 1948 he was arrested several times in Ogden, Utah; Ridgewood, New Jersey; San Diego, California; San Francisco, California; San Jose, California; and finally, in 1949, was committed to Annandale for Entering and Larceny. He was paroled, arrested in Westchester County, New York, for Disorderly Conduct, served 15 days and was returned to Annandale as a violator. His conduct at Annandale was such as to lead to his transfer to Bordentown; and while there he, with others, attacked an officer in an attempt to escape and he was transferred to the State Prison. He was taken to Burlington County on a warrant for Escape and one for Robbery and Assault and Battery and received a 1 to 3 year sentence to be consecutive to the indeterminate reformatory sentence which expires in 1956. A succession of psychiatric examinations have designated him to be a psychopathic personality, and his antisocial record, both in and out of the institutions, seems to justify this finding. He has been locked in Five Wing continuously since being received from Bordentown on July 26, 1951; but at the first opportunity, namely, during rioting on March 30, 1952, he attacked officers in the Center while being taken from Five Wing to Solitary and later attacked officers when they tried to enter his solitary cell.

J-----, who was reported by several inmates as the first man out of his cell on Saturday night, is now 32 years of age and serving

a sentence of 8 to 15 years for Robbery. Again it was a brutal affair inasmuch as he seriously beat a woman about the head in order to get money. He has been twice before in Jamesburg, and in 1933 was committed to Annandale on an indeterminate sentence for Attempted Robbery with Dangerous Weapons. He has been diagnosed as a constitutional defective with reactive depression, and his Prison record has continued to show the same violent behavior that characterized his record in the community. He has tried to incite riots in the dining room; he has been in a number of fights with other inmates; he has had several proved charges of sodomy against him; he has been repeatedly insolent and profane toward officers; he has been found in possession of knives; and his file contains a number of notes threatening death to one of his sexual partners named

I-----, who has been diagnosed as a psychopathic personality and who recently attempted to kill the Warden and succeeded in breaking his jaw in five places, is serving a term of 10 to 15 years for Larceny From Person, and previously served a long sentence in an Army disciplinary barracks for assaulting a commissioned officer in the European theatre. In addition to his attack on Warden Carty he attacked another inmate and seriously injured him in 1949. He threatened the kitchen force while employed in that department; and in 1950 he tried to break away from restraint to attack an officer in the Center. In 1950 again he engaged in a fight with another inmate and attacked the officer who attempted to break it up; and in the course of this attack he seriously bit the officer. All in all, he has had not less than a dozen serious fights with officers and inmates, and in several of them he has attempted to bite and claw the eyes from the victim of his assault. In 1951 he attempted to bite out the eye of inmate K-----, and in 1951 he bit an officer who was holding a headlock on him after he had attempted to assault the officer. Following his attack on Warden Carty, he stated that "there would be no next time in the Hole for him because the next time he wouldn't just hit somebody, he would kill them and go to the Death House rather than the Hole."

Such then are the records and personality traits of the men in Five Wing who led the demonstration and were in control throughout. They are by no means the only ones who participated. Others in the wing participated, at least for a time, voluntarily; and still others participated under the duress imposed by this most active group. Several inmates who were in Five Wing as confirmed passive homosexuals stated that they did not want to get into the thing at all but that they were threatened with beatings and even with death if they did not break their bowls and add to the general disturbance. We know, not only from inmates' stories but at first hand from what was seen and heard through the broken windows, that there were many in the wing who wanted to go out when the opportunity was offered but were told by the leaders that they would be showered with lethal objects--pipes, bed rails, toilet bowls, steel plates, etc.--if they tried to approach the exit into Six Wing hall.

It is evident that various sorts of tensions had been built up to a high pitch in the Wing. Overcrowding and idleness contributed their share. Sexual rivalries of long standing were concentrated within a relatively small group in a relatively small space. Paranoid personalities with strong hostilities and persecution feelings against authority interacted and reinforced each other. All of these things combined to create an explosive situation which was touched off by A-----'s performance at 11:30.

Incidentally, although A----- himself was not present during the disturbance, it may be well to incorporate in this report some information regarding this neurotic ineffectual homosexual who is serving a 2 to 3 year sentence for Breaking, Entering and Larceny by Night. He had previously been in Annandale for the same offense and was transferred to Rahway. His homosexual activities continued; and at the Prison he has been repeatedly punished for similar behavior.

#### CONTRIBUTING CAUSES:

Other factors unquestionably contributed to the violence and 'success' of the revolt.

There is no doubt but what it was necessary to segregate the men who were segregated in Five Wing. Their presence in the general population has always resulted in spreading strife, dissention, and disorder throughout the total population. Unfortunately, the institution is not provided with suitable segregation facilities. In 1947 the sum of \$10,000 was placed in the budget to make possible certain structural modifications to One Wing, but on further study the sum proved to be too little to accomplish anything like real segregation and the project was abandoned. In 1949 \$4,500,000 was included in the bond issue for new Prison facilities but the project did not have high enough priority to be included in the \$25,000,000 authorized by the voters.

The segregated group was formerly kept in a part of Seven Wing, but the situation there recently became untenable because the noise and disturbance not only stirred up and annoyed the other men housed in that block but also aroused and annoyed our neighbors on Federal Street who were on the point of petitioning the Governor when the change to Five Wing was made.

The move to Five Wing was made after conference between the undersigned and with the ranking subordinate officers of the institution. Although it was realized that the Wing was by no means an Alcatraz in strength, it had great advantages from the point of view of location since it was not adjacent to or connected with any other cell block, because it was away from any houses located near the Prison except those occupied by employees and because it had a yard surrounded by a high wall and controlled by No. 11 Tower.



However, the fact that the Wing was so completely demolished and that the men were able to effect their escape from the cells into the block indicates that we were trying to hold lions in cages designed for rabbits even though they were not able to get out of the block and the damage was confined to Five Wing. Certainly, the whole affair indicates that we need to have an adequate segregation facility, probably for 100 men; and it would appear to the undersigned that the only suitable location is at Rahway where there is enough space inside the wall to construct such a facility and provide it with its own internal and peripheral security.

A second important contributing factor was the oft-mentioned proportion of inexperienced officers who do not have the interest, knowledge or skill to handle the more difficult problems of inmate control. The Officer in charge of the Center, a temporary Officer serving as Acting Head Correction Officer, should have taken A----- out of the Wing immediately that he began to make the disturbance, whether he was taken to the hospital or not; and it may be that the tensions engendered in Five Wing were heightened by inept handling of the extremely difficult personalities confined there. Inmates such as these frequently complain that they have been harrassed and hazed but there is no evidence that they were treated in a cruel fashion, that their essential wants were neglected, or that their rights were in any wise impaired.

Another possible contributing element may be the fact that all ratings below that of Principal Keeper are, and have been for some time, on an acting basis. No one now holding a responsible position as Principal or Head Correction Officer, Assistant Deputy or Deputy Keeper, is sure how long he will hold that position and whether he may not change places with the person immediately above or below him once the Civil Service examinations have been given. It seems most urgent that the examinations for these supervisory positions be held promptly and the men be given permanent appointments without further delay.

This statement should not, however, be taken in any wise as critical of the performance of the acting supervisory officers at the time of the crisis. All of them worked faithfully, skillfully, and cheerfully to bring order out of chaos; and they deserve the highest praise for having so carried out the policies of the administration as to terminate this very serious riot without injury to any Correction Officer or inmate.

Finally, if the Prison is going to deal with the kind of men who have been portrayed as the leaders in Five Wing, and there are many others like them in the population who have not yet come to light, it would seem that there must be a professionally trained staff with the necessary facilities and equipment to deal with them



on a scientific basis. A large proportion of the Prison population today is psychotic or quasi-psychotic, and yet we have only a cursory diagnostic examining service.

Respectfully submitted,

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