

Prison Governors Association

Representing: The Prison Governors of England, Wales and Northern Ireland



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Chair:	Mr F B O'Friel
Vice Chair:	Ms L Bowles Mr D Simons
Finance Officer:	Miss P G Scriven
General Secretary:	Mr D Roddan
Assistant Secretary	Mrs C Ellis

BULLETIN 84

17th January 1995

Dear Colleagues

- 1 The purpose of this Bulletin is to update members on the events in the Service in England and Wales at the beginning of 1995 and the action taken by the National Executive Committee to protect our members.
- 2 Serious incidents occurred in the first few days of 1995 at Everthorpe, Birmingham and Parkhurst. Following so soon after the publication of the Woodcock Report on the Whitemoor escapes there was a surge of media interest. The NEC responded by pointing out the underlying pressures on the Service and by trying to put these incidents into some sort of perspective.
- 3 After consultations among the NEC and with a range of members we decided to ask the Director General for an urgent meeting to discuss our proposals to help the Service move out of the current crisis. I approached the Director General on 9 January and agreed a meeting on the 11 January.
- 4 On 10 January the Home Secretary made a statement about the Parkhurst escape and other matters in the House of Commons. It included the following:
"The present Governor is today being removed from his duties at Parkhurst. Pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation and any subsequent proceedings he will not be running any other Prison in the Prison Service. When he has completed any assistance which he needs to give to the various inquiries now in hand he will be taking up non-operational duties elsewhere."
- 5 The PGA reacted extremely critically to this statement and the officers of the NEC made strong public statements in support of John Marriott.
- 6 On 11 January when we met the Director General we were told that the inquiry into the Parkhurst escape by Richard Tilt did not recommend the transfer of John Marriott or any other staff. The Director General told us that he had taken the decision to move John Marriott for operational reasons. The NEC's view is that while the Director General may have formally taken the decision the real responsibility lies at a higher level. We made it very clear to the Director General that not only did we object to the decision but we were appalled at the manner in which it was announced.
- 7 The Director General informed us that he was sending a general message to Governors which included the following:
"I also wish to clarify the decisions which were taken within the Prison Service for operational reasons about staffing at Parkhurst. We concluded that the very serious events at Parkhurst and the pending

enquiries made it necessary for there to be a change in Governor at the prison. John Marriott is rightly noted and appreciated for his dedication, humanity, courage and innovation. I am, therefore, appalled by the misleading and inaccurate reporting there has subsequently been in the media. John Marriott has not been 'sacked' or 'suspended'. There is no prejudgement of any disciplinary proceedings which may follow the disciplinary investigation and there is no ban on John governing prisons subsequently. All his colleagues will, I know, be thinking of John and his family at this time and providing him with whatever support they can. His courage has been much in evidence as he has handled himself with great dignity over the past week. John will be taking on other duties in Headquarters as soon as he has completed his work in helping the Learmont and the disciplinary investigations.

What has happened with the other six staff has also been seriously misrepresented in the media. Six staff have been moved on detached duty from Parkhurst because of the impending disciplinary investigation. Here again, this is entirely without prejudice to the outcome of that enquiry and is a sensible precaution in the interests of the individuals concerned and the Service.

The disciplinary investigation for Parkhurst will start as soon as possible."

This message has gone some way to redressing the imbalance caused by the Home Secretary's earlier statement.

- 8 The meeting with the Director General then moved to the NEC's proposals designed to help to stabilise the Service. These proposals included the postponing or discontinuing of a number of current initiatives. We also proposed a small number of other matters that should be given a greater priority.
- 9 The Director General undertook to consider very carefully all the proposals we had put to him. A further meeting has been arranged for Monday 23 January at which he has promised us a considered response.
- 10 The NEC of the PGA met on 12 January. The NEC unanimously approved the action taken so far in dealing with the crisis. The NEC decided to refer the issue of the treatment of John Marriott to our lawyers for advice on what further action we might take.
- 11 Following these events I am writing to all members with two important pieces of advice. Because it appears that the Home Secretary is seeking scapegoats for anything that goes wrong in Prison establishments, it is vital that all our members fully understand the dangers for individuals in the present situation. While this applies particularly to governing Governors we need to note that another of our members, a Governor 5 at Parkhurst, has also been affected by a compulsory but temporary transfer. Members are, therefore, advised to take the following action:
 - a) If it is not possible to carry out any important instructions, particularly security instructions, this fact should be reported in writing to your line manager. You should keep a copy of any correspondence for future reference.
 - b) In the event of an inquiry into an incident taking place, you should not be prepared to be interviewed by any inquiry without first seeking the advice of a member of the PGA's NEC. If necessary interviews should be delayed until a colleague can accompany you. This advice is particularly important in the light of the action that was taken following Richard Tilt's inquiry at Parkhurst, which was not of course a disciplinary inquiry.
- 12 It would be wrong to end this communication without some reference to the enormous support the NEC have had from members, including retired members. We are very grateful for all the messages that we have received. Thank you very much.

Brendan O'Friel
Chairman

David Roddan
General Secretary

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RETIRED GOVERNORS' WINTER HOUSEPARTY FEBRUARY 3rd, 4th & 5th 1995 AT THE PALACE HOTEL, BUXTON

The Palace Hotel still have some rooms available for anyone who would like to attend the Retired Governors' Winter Houseparty.

The price for the weekend is £82.00 per head. Accommodation is in single, twin or double en-suite rooms and the price includes all meals. Guests should arrive after lunch on Friday. There are a number of options for the weekend or you may just do as you wish.

Couples and single members have signed up to attend so don't think you will feel left out.

The Palace is an excellent hotel; Buxton is small, beautiful and historic and the weather is mild so those who may have had worries about transport need not have.

If you would like to take advantage of last minute booking, phone:

Mrs G Dean
1 Kestrel View
Cefn Hengoed
Mid Glamorgan

on: 0443 814745

Payment can be made to her in advance or at the hotel (cheques payable to the Prison Governors' Association).

If you have been undecided this is your chance. Phone now and have a weekend of luxury among good friends. If transport is a problem we may be able to arrange a lift. Please phone and see, or if you have any other queries.