

## ***PRISONS POSTAL SERVICE***

In order to preserve the anonymity of members making contact by post with prisoners, it has been necessary to set up a system whereby the prisoner is able to communicate with a sponsor and vice versa without compromising the sponsor. This has required a co-ordinator to match sponsors to prisoners and oversee the postal operation.

The RPLOs would like to see this service available to all prisons. This service has to operate at one centre of co-ordination in England & Wales (GSO) and possibly Scotland for the following reasons:

- 1) The transfer of prisoners to different prisons with homes in other areas, perhaps with no AA contact.
- 2) The movement of AA members themselves.
- 3) The desirability of having a sponsor at point of release.
- 4) With so many identical first names some form of national identification is necessary (a prison postal number is given to the prison sponsor).

If regions were to try to operate this system, assuming they were all willing and able, linking up with other regions, we believe, would cause chaos. On the other hand if a central point were to offer and promote this service it would grow, as it has done in the United States.

### **The benefits of this service are as follows:**

- 1) Involves more members in Twelfth Step work and prisons.
- 2) Increases our ability to communicate with the suffering alcoholic, bearing in mind the variety of problems with meetings and contacts throughout the country.
- 3) Enables contact with prisoners in prisons where there is no meeting or contact.
- 4) Provides a sponsor which is rarely available in prisons.
- 5) Providing sponsors at release points will aid 'rehabilitation'.

**How it works:**

- 1) Co-ordinator informs AA prison service of postal service and how it works.
- 2) Liaises with Prison Liaison Officers to obtain names and addresses of volunteer sponsors in their areas.
- 3) Supplies stamped addressed envelopes with GSO address and identification details to those who attend prison meetings in order to avail those bona fide prisoners who wish to take up this service.
- 4) To keep a list of sponsors and a list of prisoners making certain that co-ordinator is able to identify each one, to match sponsors and prisoners usually as on the list rather than any special order other than home or release areas.
- 5) To monitor prisoner and sponsor transfers and movements and handle all through post.
- 6) To encourage members to participate and prisoners to take the first step by sending the first letter.

For obvious reasons we believe it would encourage the set-up of a national postal service. The cost of this service would be initially part of a person at GSO as co-ordinator (we believe it is essential that one person be responsible for the job, along with postage and envelopes.

If properly conducted at GSO with the assistance of Prison Liaison Officers this service could be expanded. We suggest that if Regional Prison Liaison Officers decide to go ahead with this service they consult GSO, York, on how the service operates. Guidelines are available from GSO.