

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

RETENTION PERIOD

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Hold Until _____

To: Mr. F. R. Dickson
Warden

Date: 11 September 1961

File No.

Subject: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

From: California State Prison at San Quentin

As Representative of the Inmate Council, and as such, the men of San Quentin, I wish to call your attention to the Tuesday Edition, September 5, 1961 of the San Francisco Examiner, page 11, column four, under the heading "Flames Still Roar in N. Calif. Counties," wherein appears the quoted statement of State Fire Dispatcher Sterling Dangaard, which is as follows:

"We even had to go to the State prisons for help," he said. "We really scraped the bottom of the barrel."

The men of San Quentin take exception to being the scraping of the bottom of the barrel, especially in view of the past records of the Inmate Firefighters over the years.

The men also feel that the aforementioned newspaper used very poor tact in even printing such a statement.

It is the wish of the Inmate Council that both the State Fire Dispatcher and the San Francisco Examiner be advised of the many millions of dollars our firefighters have helped save, as well as the many instances of heroism these men have placed in the record.

Have they forgotten that a man is now in the San Quentin Hospital, where he will remain, perhaps for the rest of his life, for an injury sustained while fighting fires? Have they forgotten that prisoners in San Diego County died while fighting fires?

The records of all the States Institutions surely calls for more discretion on all sides than that displayed in a seemingly insignificant statement. Such an article, with the interest value it contains, no doubt has been read by millions of people.

The men who fight fires and are serving sentences in prisons, are paying fully for their wrongs. When they try to function in a manner that will benefit society, and get kicked in the pants for their efforts, it is, to say the least, demoralizing.

Surely somewhere within the Department of Corrections, there is public relations people who can try to keep such statements from the press, or gain the cooperation of the press in not printing such uncalled for statements.

The men do not seek publicity making them heroes. Only that they be allowed to be given just credit when due, and be allowed to live down the failings that sent them to prison.

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As Chairman of the Inmate Council, I was hit by an avalanche of protests, as were many of the Members, who were vigorous in their protests of the statement printed.

We are aware that neither the Institution nor the Department were responsible for the statement, but feel some steps are in order for a better attitude on the part of the press.

David Vorce
David Vorce, A-43179
Chairman, Inmate Council

