

'With the advent of the feminist movement in the 1970s, judges, prosecutors and other professionals became interested in female imprisonment and appeared to discover 'a social problem in the making.'

Women's gains include prison count

Five times as many women were committed to prison in Michigan in 1978 as in 1968, giving the state the fourth highest female lockup rate in the country, according to a University of Michigan study.

Minimum sentences and length of stay in correctional facilities also increased. However, two-thirds of the increase in female commitments was for nonviolent crime, and the percentage of prisoners convicted for serious crimes declined over the 11-year period.

These are among the findings of "Women in Prison: Michigan, 1968-1978," recently published by the U-M School of Social Work and the Institute for Social Research (ISR). The study was paid for by the U.S. Department of Corrections' Bureau of Prisons.

The authors are professor Rosemary Sarri and professor Alfreda Iglehart of the U-M School of Social Work, professor Josefina Figueira-McDonough of the Michigan State University School of Social Work and U-M doctoral students Terry Williams, Anna Celeste Burke and Victor Burke.

"WOMEN COMMITTED to prison in Michigan during this period came overwhelmingly from the most deprived sector of the population in terms of

education, occupation and social class," the authors stated.

"Their mean age was 27 — about three years older than the average male offender — and nearly half were single parents. The majority were convicted of less serious crimes such as larceny, shoplifting and drug offenses."

"The single most striking increase was in the proportion of minority women committed. From 1968 to 1978, the number of white inmates rose by 120 percent while the number of nonwhite rose by 268 percent."

"Commitments of minority women increased from 57 percent to 74 percent over the decade. Commitments of minority men decreased from 58 percent to 54 percent over the same period."

The incidence of drug or psychiatric history also rose dramatically, the U-M study shows. In 1978, two-thirds of all women committed to Michigan prisons had a drug addiction problem. In 1978, one-third of the women committed to prison had some psychiatric history, compared to only 7 percent in 1968.

LESS THAN one-fourth of the committed women were married, about the same proportion as in 1968. The majority came from single parent, poor families themselves. Their own income and occupa-

tional level declined, particularly in more recent years.

School adjustment also declined, but more in terms of truancy, marginal grades and dropping out than disciplinary problems, the authors noted.

Until the 1970s, female crime received little attention from policy makers or human service professionals, the researchers said.

"Women have historically comprised only a very small proportion of the total numbers of prison inmates, and their offenses were less violent and threatening than those of their male counterparts," the report went on.

"With the advent of the feminist movement in the 1970s, however, judges, prosecutors and other professionals became interested in female imprisonment and appeared to discover 'a social problem in the making.'"

"Coincidentally, the cases of imprisonment rose sharply. Michigan showed one of the highest increases of new commitment from 69 in 1967 to 414 in 1978."

"In 1979, there were approximately 300,000 adults in state and federal prisons, according to the U.S. Justice Department. Of these, 18,000, or 6 percent, were women. Women in Michigan prisons in 1979 totaled 472."

State Fair seeks paraders, beauty pageant entrants

The 133rd Michigan State Fair is seeking bands, floats, baton corps and mounted, mobile and marching units for the Grand Opening Parade downtown on Aug. 27.

Also, the fair's annual Queen of Queens pageant, being staged Sept. 1-2, is open for contestants.

In addition to receiving the traditional queen's crown and bouquet of roses, the 1981 Miss Michigan State Fair will win a round-trip ticket for two to Florida's Disney World and an array of gifts ranging from cash to a basket of Michigan farm products.

Contestants be winners of county and local beauty contests held in Michigan in 1980 and 1981, 16-22 years old and single.

Preliminaries will take place on

Sept. 1, with 10 finalists competing for the queen's title on Sept. 2 at the fairgrounds music shell.

Information on the pageant is available by calling the fair office, 864-2009.

Parade entries for this year are expected to exceed last year's record 135. Some 20 agriculture-oriented units are being added to the parade.

Parade entry forms are available by writing Harold Arnoldi, Michigan State Fair, Detroit 48203. Deadline for entries is Aug. 20.

The fair is Aug. 28 to Sept. 7. Adult fair admission this year is \$4. Children 11 and under accompanied by an adult are free. The fairgrounds are at Eight Mile and Woodward.

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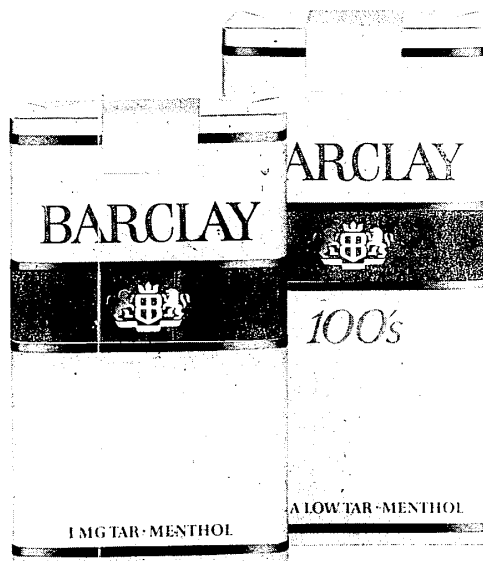
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