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Cover: When ultrahigh-energy protons strike stationary ones, large numbers of secondary particles are produced. This is only one of the strange new phenomena that physicists have to learn to talk about. See p. 285. (Photo: National Accelerator Laboratory)

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October 28, 1972

to the editor

Make frank discussion difficult

The article by Everly Driscoll concerning the first open meeting of the NASA Physical Sciences Committee (SN: 10/7/72, p. 236) is an astute appraisal of the difficulties with which such a committee is faced. Ms. Driscoll caught the spirit of the meeting and put the basic problem very well: What happens when various industrial and university interests are there to find out how and whether their interests are being pushed. It will make a frank and effective preliminary discussion among the committee very difficult indeed.

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The inside view

Editor's note: Shortly after the appearance of our recent article on experimental prisons (SN: 8/19/72, p. 122), we received a letter from a prisoner in the Fort Worth Federal Correctional Institution, one of the two new prisons described. He had heard about the article and asked us to send him copies. We did, and invited him to share with our readers any comment he might have. This is his response:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion and the opinion of other intelligent inmates on this new concept in penology.

In the article "Stout walls and bars do not a prison make," written by Robert J. Trotter, the basic appearances of the institution were described. It was a well written and enlightening article to those who do not have to live within the confines of this new co-ed prison.

Unfortunately, I have to live here, and I cannot agree with all the statements in the article. True, there are many opportunities offered here but they are offered to only a select few. It is also true that to some we may appear to live in a "country club setting." But I personally have never seen a country club surrounded by a 10-foot chain-link fence, mercury vapor lights, with uniformed guards strolling amid the rattle of keys.

It is fully understood that this is a

new penitentiary, operating under a totally new concept of penology and it will take time to establish all the policies and/or rules because of the newness and uniqueness of this institution. The original concept of the co-ed prison is a beautiful dream that I sincerely hope with all my heart will become a reality someday. But unfortunately, for now, the total confusion, bureaucracy, unawareness, and don't-care attitude are keeping the dream in the uncertain and distant future.

John H. Hopkins 26862
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Two views from the outside

It is certainly encouraging to see that experimental rehabilitation programs such as those described in Trotter's article are meeting with success. It seems to demonstrate that the movement toward "community corrections" is no longer a mere fad but a real correctional revolution.

I think the National Council on Crime and Delinquency deserves recognition for their attempts to improve methods of correction. Let's hope for greater incorporation of their recommendations for criminal justice.

Lila Steiner
La Jolla, Calif.

Though I rejoice at the renewed concern about our medieval prisons, I find it difficult to justify pressing for payment of the minimum wage to prisoners while overlooking the fact that hundreds of thousands of workers out in the "free world" receive considerably less.

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