

# Vegan Prisoners Support Group

## REPORT 2005

**This report covers our outstanding concerns regarding the minority group we represent detained within the Prison System.**

### Background

#### **1994**

Our organisation was established to highlight and make recommendations in connection to problems encountered by vegan prisoners detained in police custody or within the prison system.

#### **1996**

Our advice was sought on the wording of the Prison Service Guidelines on the care of vegans installed in all prisons later that year.

#### **1996-2002**

Although the Prison Service Guidelines were in place, our help continued to be sought by prisoners experiencing problems and our research confirmed that these guidelines worked to different degrees at different establishments.

Finally, after numerous research was compiled from the information obtained from our test cases, our concerns were finally drawn to the attention of Mr. Martin Narey in February 2002. We received his assurances that by the end of 2002 this minority group would be offered equal opportunities.

### Progress

#### **2002**

Mr. Alan Tuckwood assisted in the compilation of our Catering Information Pack which was distributed to all prisons in December 2002. P/O Stuart Head, now at HMP Whitemoor, also assisted with this work and received The Butler Trust Award in 2004 for the efforts he contributed in the production of the pack.

#### **2004**

Garry Pyne - HMPS Corby sourced a new range of basic vegan hygiene products for prison issue. These items consisted of a Shave Gel, Hair and Body Wash, Toothpaste and Deodorant.

### Outstanding Issues

#### **2005**

The Prison Shop issue remains unresolved [*see Attachment A*]

## PRISON SHOP ISSUE

### **1996**

It continues to be a concern to us that resolution of prison shops under the Aramark Contract has still not been reached as we first approached this company in 1996 with our concerns.

After numerous communications, finally in 1999, they issued the following statement:

*“Any vegan who makes him/herself known to us via the correct prison procedure i.e. Governor’s application or Request and Complaint Form will have their request dealt with as quickly as possible. It is our intention to hold standard stocks of vegan lines within our canteen system. Any non standard lines will be sourced and charged accordingly upon request.”*

However, this commitment was not put into place and prisoners still contacted us for help/advice on this issue. We continued to research prison shops around the country and during this time Caseworkers assisted prisoners on a one-to-one basis through the Governors Offices at the relevant prisons. Aramark appeared uncooperative and unresponsive to our recommendations to include proper provisions for vegans.

### **2002**

We contacted the Prison Shops Team - Corby and informed them that prison shops under the Aramark Contract were still unable to offer equal opportunities to vegans, whereas independent prison shops did have facilities for this minority group i.e. using our recommended Special Order Scheme [see Attachment A2].

After we received Mr. Narey’s commitment and as we were unable to resolve this issue via correspondence, we requested a meeting with Central Purchasing Unit [CPU] in Corby.

### **2003**

After our meeting with CPU - Corby early in 2003, which was organised by Ms. Patsy Northern Head of CPU, we were promised resolution later that year. This deadline failed to be met.

### **2004**

The Prison Shop Issue was then transferred briefly to Mr. Robert Lawman and then on to Mr. Glynn Jones in the latter part of that year. Since August 2004 we have been in regular contact regarding resolution of this issue with Mr. Jones, but to date, even after numerous research/recommendations provided there is still no finalised list ready for distribution to prison shops under the Aramark Contract.

At the time of this report we are awaiting more information on this list from Mr. Jones in order to be able to confirm whether some of the items listed are suitable for vegans so this matter can move forward.

## CONCERNS

### **The Current Pricing System**

The pricing system has failed on at least two occasions on the previous listing when two items were charged at double the Recommended Retail Price [RRP]. e.g. Suma Soap RRP 69p actual price on Canteen sheet £1.06p  
[see Recommendations Attachment A1]

### **Not a Supermarket**

At our meeting with CPU in 2003 we were advised that prison shops are not meant to be supermarkets, but more like a corner shop. However it should be considered that if this is the main source of a prisoner being able to obtain basic vegan products that proper facilities need to be in place to ensure this is the case.

[see Recommendations Attachment A1]

### **Brand Names**

Brand names appear to be an issue although some are already used on the listing.

[see Recommendations Attachment A1]

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommended Retail Prices

In order to ensure that vegans are catered for fairly we feel, as they will have nowhere near the variety of choices that non-vegan prisoners are offered, that at least their one choice is realistically priced and recommend these products should be as near the RRP of the supplier as possible.

It is appreciated that prison shops need to make a working profit, but feel it is unfair that minority group prisoners are penalised and exorbitant prices attached to their limited selection of vegan items possibly putting the product out of their reach.

We understand that for the pricing of products that trades indices are used through a company called Catering Price Index and that vegan items are priced in a similar way to other non-vegan items. However, using this method on such specialist items, overpricing has been discovered on at least two basic essential items [soap and toothpaste which were priced at double the RRP]. We feel the overpricing of these items may have been due to this company being provided with insufficient information on vegan items in order to recommend a fair price.

### Small Wholefood Shops and Convenience Stores Make Realistic Profits

Many healthfood shops are run by independent owners which could be compared to the size of one prison shop and our research has shown that the suppliers RRP is adhered to and still produce a good profit margin with which to run their business. Aramark are quite a sizeable company and therefore their profit margin would be greater overall even using RRP's.

### Brand Names

Vegans are generally aware that companies often change ownership and for various reasons such companies change the ingredients in their products, often making them no longer suitable for vegans. Therefore, a keen eye is needed to keep up-to-date with any item purchased from a non wholefood/health supplier to ensure that products are still vegan friendly and why this information is so important.

e.g. Until recently both Bourneville chocolate and Pot Noodles had amongst their products vegan friendly items. Changes have made these items no longer suitable for consumption by vegans.

We have therefore, constantly stressed the importance of stating brand names and the use of wholefood/health suppliers to all the departments involved in this project and more recently to PAG. This recommendation would ensure there was no human error, if for example a company had changed its ingredients, or perhaps a typographical mistake was made in connection with a specific item which may not be vegan. It would also ensure that items marked vegan at the time of listing and no longer vegan would then not be purchased. Furthermore, either ourselves or The Vegan Society would be happy to keep product information up-to-date, free of charge.

Our understanding is when the bagging system comes into operation, that if the chosen item is not in their depots, a similar item will be provided in the place of the chosen product. This could cause offence if a non-vegan item were substituted. Therefore, we recommend that any vegan item which is out of stock is only replaced with another vegan item.

### Special Order Scheme/Independent Prison Shops

Our research confirms that vegan prisoners at prison shops run under independent management fare better than prison shops under the Aramark Contract. For example, a proportion of prisons at the moment use suppliers such as A.C.Ward and use our Special Order Scheme Recommendation to provide minority group requirements, thus ensuring access to similar opportunities that non-vegan prisoners have access to on their Canteen Sheets.

The only requirement is such an order requires a minimum £10 order per prisoner. These items are obtained from a Wholefood Supplier with a 2 week delivery period from receipt of order.

Honesty Mail Order

We notice that there are several pages of cosmetic/hair/body/baby care products on the proposed Aramark listing, but not one option for vegans. In view of this we have constantly recommended that the following company be added to Canteen Sheets.

Honesty Cosmetics Ltd., Lumford Mill, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1GS

T: 01629 814888

Fax: 01629 814111

[www.honesty.cosmetics.co.uk](http://www.honesty.cosmetics.co.uk)

Note: Many prisons have been using this company for over ten years successfully in order to ensure vegans are not disadvantaged. Their products not only include cosmetics, but body and hair care product and also list a large number of products for men. Vegan washing powder, washing-up liquid and similar items are amongst their products.

## ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

### One vegan - One establishment

Our understanding is that once the final completed list is available it will be distributed to Governors for them to decide which items on the list are included in their general list and that each list is reviewed every three months. At this time, if an item or items are not popular then they would be de-listed in order to make space for more popular items.

This would then mean that minority group items might be deleted, due to the sale of such items not being able to compare to the sale of items for non-vegan prisoners.

### New vegan arriving at an establishment where previously there were no vegans

If a new vegan arrives under these circumstances and the Canteen Sheet had just been reviewed, it would take three months for minority group items to start appearing. During this time there would be no vegan items available.

Due to the fact that prisoners move around the system it could mean by the time that vegan items are available the prisoner could be moved to another prison where there are no vegans and the whole process would start again, possibly meaning that it could be six months or more before vegan items were available for such a prisoner.

It has to be considered that it might not be cost effective for a prison shop under the Aramark Contract to make recommendations, if required to do so, for minority group items, as it may not be cost effective.

### Vegan Products

However, on a more positive note we feel that many of the items recommended may be popular with non-vegan prisoners i.e. soya milk products as often non-vegan prisoners require such products for good health or body building purposes. They would also be popular with prisoners with a dairy allergy and those who require part of their meal to be parve.

## CONCLUSION

We recommend the following to ensure equal opportunities for this minority group:

- That Aramark should provide the same service for vegans as that provided by prison shops under independent management
- That where there are several choices for non vegans there should be at least one vegan choice available
- That there should be realistic and affordable prices on vegan items and the RRP used
- That any vegan item which is out of stock should only be replaced with another vegan item
- That provisions should be made for a Special Order Scheme in the event of any prison choosing not to include sufficient vegan items on their Canteen Sheet
- That the facility of Mail Orders via Honesty should be added to Canteen Sheets [catalogues available upon request direct from Honesty Cosmetics on 01629 814 888]