

Home Office.

17th October

1918

331994/21.

SUBJECT.

Prison Commission forwards letter from Miss Hetti Wheelhouse drawing attention to the health of her sister Mrs Winnie Mason and asks that enquiry may be made and that she may be released.

REFERENCES.

Date received.

Sub. No.

MINUTES.

N.O. file returned marked 'seen'

INDEXED N.V.

2 12 1918

(1) B.Y.

20/11

Copy .

Home Office

Sub Number 21

31 Oct. 1918

Registration

331997 / 21

E

Date 17 Oct.
1918

Winnie Mason

Prison Commission forwards letter from Miss Hettie Wheeldon and enclosures drawing attention to health of her sister and asks that enquiry may be made and that she may be released.

Minutes.

See ' /15 and ' /16

See also ' /22.

See Prison Commrs. proposed reply.

Approved proposed reply.

A.J.E.

7.11.

To Commrs. to see

E.B.

7.11.18.

C.E.T.

8.11.18.

Oct. 17th, 1918.

Dear Sirs,

I desire to draw your immediate attention to the state of my sister's (Winnie Mason R. 10. H.M. Prison Liverpool) health. She is still suffering from rheumatism, neuralgia, neuritis, or some complaint which apparently the medical officer at Aylesbury is or was unable to diagnose, as you will remember I made my previous complaint in March of this year. Since that date she has been in Hospital for twelve weeks or thereabouts as far as I am able to ascertain under the very restricted means at my disposal, and was discharged from hospital I understand on the grounds that she had been there "such a long time", which treatment suggests to one's mind either that the authorities wish to dismiss this case as one of malingering or that they are unable to deal with it satisfactorily and are willing to let it take its course, regardless of the suffering and physical and mental well-being of the patient, who I suppose being a prisoner in an English prison, automatically ceases to be treated as a human being.

Fortunately I am in a position to prove that the case is not one of malingering as the disease is one of long standing, so that the only other interpretation of the action of the Prison authorities at Aylesbury must be the one that I have suggested. I should have complained to you on my visit in June last, but that my sister was then in hospital with a nervous breakdown, occasioned by the inhumane treatment she had received relative to the health of her mother, and I thought that at last someone had awakened to a sense of his or her responsibilities and that at least an attempt at reparation was being made. The disease appears to be rapidly becoming chronic and has now spread to the throat and the back of the head which I think you will admit is a serious state of affairs.

I think that I have a right to demand that as the ordinary medical officers have failed in this case, that the services of a specialist be obtained. It is pretty evident that prison conditions are aggravating the disease and that sooner or later - in my opinion very soon - the time will arrive when a choice will have to be made by my sister and by you as her responsible guardians, whether she is to become a mental and physical wreck or whether she is to be liberated at your suggestion through your medical officer, or by her own determined action.

I am well aware that you as Directors are not concerned with the justice or injustice of her imprisonment, yet I suggest that you are concerned in seeing to it that a sentence of death by degrees is not extracted as it has been in the case of my mother.

In November of last year I put before you the facts of my mother's health which you denied. Subsequent events bore out my statements as you know that my mother was not released owing to her hunger strike.

I ask you to make an enquiry into the facts that I have here stated and to recommend to the Home Secretary that my sister be released on health grounds before the situation develops further.

I thank you for the extension of time you allowed me on this last visit.

I remain, dear Sirs,
Yours faithfully,

Wattie Wheeler

C O P Y.

MEMORIAL on behalf of Alfred Mason and Winnie Mason, of Southampton, sentenced March 10th 1917, to seven years and five years penal servitude respectively for conspiracy to murder Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Arthur Henderson and others.

To Sir George Cave, Home Secretary.

We desire to bring before you the following reasons why you should exercise your clemency in this case:-

- (1) The only evidence on which the prisoners were condemned was the dispatch of a box of poisons from Southampton to Derby and the written instructions for its use. Both prisoners admitted the dispatch of the box and Alfred Mason admitted writing the instructions. They altogether deny that the poisons were dispatched for the purpose alleged.
- (2) In support of the contention of the prosecution no evidence of cognisance was produced.
- (3) The evidence of the conspiracy rested on the word of a Government agent, Herbert J. Walsh Booth, who had been called into the case by another Government agent, 'Alec. Gorden'. Alec. Gorden had secured the dispatch of the poison and was the only witness besides the accused who could have given first-hand evidence as to its object. Alec. Gorden was never produced by the prosecution. As the Government some months later stated that they had ceased to employ him after this date, the reason for his non-production appears to have been his unsatisfactory character.
- (4) With regard to the written instructions, the prosecution urged that the amount of poison specified was sufficient to kill a human being. To use an excessive quantity of material to accomplish a purpose is not itself proof that such was not the intended purpose. On the other hand the instructions definitely allude to a dog.
- (5) Of the sentences passed on such slight evidence the prisoners have now served 19 months. Both are young (aged 24 and 23 at the time of arrest) and hold excellent references as to character. The strain of prison life is particularly affecting the health of Winnie Mason who has never been robust and is now suffering from nervous breakdown.

We trust that you will give these considerations the weight they deserve, and that you will see your way to petition the King for the release of these prisoners.