

Prison Will Close  
by 1974 -- First  
Step Set This Year

# Governor's Address to Legislature

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Governor Ronald Reagan announced to the Legislature yesterday that his administration is exploring two innovations—insurance for working people against catastrophic medical expenses and no-fault automobile insurance.

In his annual "State-of-the-State" message, the Governor also told the joint session in the Assembly that he intends to close San Quentin Prison and develop new maximum security facilities.

The governor spoke for 30 minutes to a packed chamber and visitors gallery where his wife sat in the front balcony row. His remarks were carried to a wider audience by 21 California television stations.

### APPLAUSE

Legislators and visitors applauded when Reagan announced that his administration is exploring the problem working people have in paying medical expenses after a catastrophic illness.

"I am unalterably opposed to so-called nationalized health insurance because it is in fact socialized medicine," he said. "But I believe it is possible to develop a

system of health insurance to protect every Californian against the economic catastrophe that often accompanies extended illness."

"We are going forward with our research on this subject and will report our findings to you shortly."

For the first time the governor discussed at length the controversial no-fault automobile insurance which elim-

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when he heard the announcement on his car radio.

When he arrived at his job as a stock broker he immediately dictated a letter congratulating Reagan.

"I'm delighted," Arrigoni said. "It's the best news I've heard."

Marin county Assistant District Attorney Gary Thomas, who was paralyzed by shots fired in an escape attempt by San Quentin inmates at the Marin Civic Center in 1970, said he was equally pleased.

### 'ENOUGH'

"One hundred-twenty years in one county is long enough," Thomas said. "I think its time we shared our wealth with some of the remaining counties."

If San Quentin is closed, the State Penal Code will have to be amended to provide for a new execution site — unless the death penalty is abolished by the Legislature or ruled unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court.

Department of Corrections officials said no decision has been made on whether to dispose of the fortress-like prison, its 200 acres of land on Point San Quentin and its 146 acres of tidelands.

Supervisor Arrigoni expressed immediate hope that the property could be turned into an extension of the University of California at Berkeley or some similar educational institution.

### ZONING

Marin county has control over zoning of the property. It is currently zoned for single family dwellings. Unofficially, Marin county spokesmen said under that zoning the land is worth about \$2 million. If it were rezoned for multiple family dwellings, however, that could increase to around \$5 million.

The last felon to pay the death penalty inside San Quentin was Aaron Mitchell, a black laundry worker from Sacramento. He died April 12, 1967, for the murder of Sacramento police officer Arnold Z. Gamble during a nightclub holdup.

Aides to Reagan made clear the San Quentin closure in no way signifies any change from the governor's advocacy of capital punishment. In fact, in the same speech, Reagan advocated making the killing of on-duty policemen an automatic capital crime.

Reduced prison population was a major factor in the

closure plans. The prison system population has dropped by 9000 since 1969.

Ironically, the death of black militant Jackson, shot during an alleged escape attempt last August 21, played a decisive role in dooming San Quentin.

Jackson, one of the so-called "Soledad Brothers," two other inmates and three guards died in that incident, which brought a study of prison security by the administration.

A separate study by criminologist Robert Keldgord concluded that San Quentin is obsolete and, along with the state's second-oldest prison, Folsom, should be scrapped.

San Quentin began as a prison ship anchored along the north bay in 1852. It later became a land facility, rising fortress-like beside the bay. Along with the federal prison

on Alcatraz, San Quentin was one of America's most storied penal institutions.

A total of 215 felons were hanged within its walls prior to the legalization of lethal gas in 1937. Beginning in 1938 the gas chamber was utilized to enforce society's severest penalty.

The chamber since then has taken the lives of 194 criminals, including rapist Chessman, child-murderer Burton Abbott and murderess Barbara Graham.

In his speech, Reagan said that the potential for violence in the prisons has increased because as the number of inmates declines "the percentage of so-called 'hard core' offenders has increased."

The governor said he is adding 405 more security and other prison staff positions on a full-term basis and also proposing in his 1972-73 state budget "funds for planning new maximum security facilities."

Officials within the State Department of Corrections said Reagan has in mind two relative small, 400-inmate maximum security facilities, probably to be built at existing penal institutions.

The governor's prison system budget will be up by \$7 million over the current one, officials said, totaling about \$112 million.