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# **Seattle Labor Forces Removal of Warden Who Tortured Wells: Halligan to be Ousted from McNeil Island as Result of Physician's Report of Terrible Brutalities Practiced on Political Prisoners — Wilson Hears Details**

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SEATTLE, Sept. 24 [1919].— Telegraph advices from Walla Walla say that Henry D. Drumm has resigned as warden of the state penitentiary there, and will come here to succeed O.P. Halligan as warden of the Federal penitentiary on McNeil Island.

Halligan's removal is believed to be directly due to the report of Dr. Joseph K. Lane, who examined Hulet M. Wells, political prisoner on the island, the torture of whom has aroused indignation far across the country. Dr. Lane's visit was made at the request of the Seattle Labor Council. Details of this report were made known to President Wilson here a few days ago by the council.

After Halligan had refused to permit Dr. Lane to see Wells in the absence of the prison physician, Secretary James A. Duncan of the Labor Council forced action by laying the matter before Judge Jeremiah Neterer of the United States District Court.

The judge was so impressed by Dr. Lane's report of the frightful treatment imposed on Wells that he took it upon himself to send a copy of the report to the Superintendent of Prisons at Washington [DC].

Wells, it will be remembered, was formerly president of the Labor Council here. He opposed conscription in the early days of the war, was indicted before the draft law was passed, and later sentenced to two years in prison. For two months he has been imprisoned on

McNeil Island and, according to Dr. Lane's report, has been assigned to tasks beyond his endurance.

### **Frail Man in Brutalized.**

He is a clerical man and rather frail physically, and so when, through the spite and brutality of a reactionary and stupid warden of the old school, the prisoner's daily task was increased and he was ordered to cut one cord of wood a day, this task was beyond physical possibility for Wells and he refused to do it.

So he was put into the "black hole," an underground dungeon, damp, slimy, and smelling of filth. Day after day he has been chained by the wrists to the iron bars for hours, a veritable crucifixion, and his food allotment is 14 ounces of bread for each 24 hours. He gets nothing but bread and water.

Nesta Wells, wife of this victim of 20th Century inquisition methods, has been working night and day trying to bring pressure to bear which would compel Warden Halligan to treat Wells as a human being. She has sent letters broadcast to friends and sympathizers asking that protests be sent to President Wilson and to members of Congress.

"It all seems like a terrible nightmare to me," she says, writing to a friend. "I have just returned from McNeil's. Yesterday was my regular visiting day, but I could not get the attorney he wanted until today. We had banked on Vandever, but he had to be away and we could not let it go until next week without knowing how Hulet is.

"Of course, I was not allowed to see him, but our attorney was permitted to do so. I had prepared a lunch of nourishing food, but the warden refused to let the attorney give it to Hulet.... He has been 12 days in that terrible place (this was written on September 3 [1919]), with very little light, only a tap in the cell, no towel nor soap.

"He is allowed two slices of bread three times a day with water only. He had only a mattress to sleep on at first, but after he caught a cold he was given a blanket.

"He is still manacled 8 hours a day, in 4-hour stretches. If they will do all this to Hulet, to what lengths will they not go in punishing men who have no friends on the outside!

"If the warden had been a human being he would not have ignored Hulet's request for an interview in regard to change of work.

According to Halligan, Hulet's incarceration in the black hole will last till e is willing to go back to cutting wood. Nine men are supposed to fell, cut, and saw 9 cords per day."

The facts in the Wells case were forced upon the attention of President Wilson during his visit here. He was asked various pertinent questions including these:

"Why do you allow the prison authorities under your control to torture Hulet M. Wells and other prisoners convicted of political offenses, in violation of the conditions under which they were committed to prison?"

"Why is it that under the espionage law working men and women mainly were convicted and not one German spy was prosecuted?"

"Why do you not release political prisoners in this country when they are being rapidly released in other countries?"

"Why do you not ask the immediate repeal of the espionage law and urge a thorough discussion of the problems confronting America so that we can democratically arrive at proper conclusions?"

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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