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Correctional Service
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Service correctionnel
Canada

RESEARCH BRIEF

ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF THE
1989 WP STRIKE

December 1989

no. B-03



HV
9308
A52
1989

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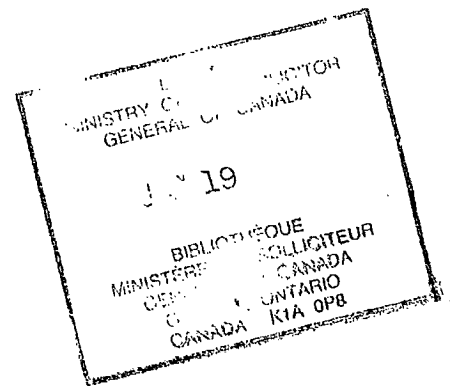
RESEARCH BRIEF

COMMUNICATIONS AND CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT

ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF THE 1989 WP STRIKE

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Prepared by:

**Research Branch
Communications and Corporate
Development**

December 1989

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1989, no. B-03

ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF THE 1989 WP STRIKE

Preamble

With the assistance of the Correctional Programs and Operations Sector, the Research Branch set out to conduct the following brief analysis of some statistical information related to the impact of the recent WP strike.

The interpretation of our findings must be prefaced with a caveat concerning the limitations associated with the available data on which our analyses were based. The 17-day strike was of such limited duration that it is difficult to make confident statements about changes in rates of incidents that may have occurred during that period.

More extensive statistical examination of the ramifications of the strike would be possible, but it is not likely that anything definitive would be learned unless we proceeded to gather specific information relating to particular issues. Of greater interest might be to gather softer "attitudinal" data from staff and we suggest that this might be worth considering after several months of readjustment have elapsed.

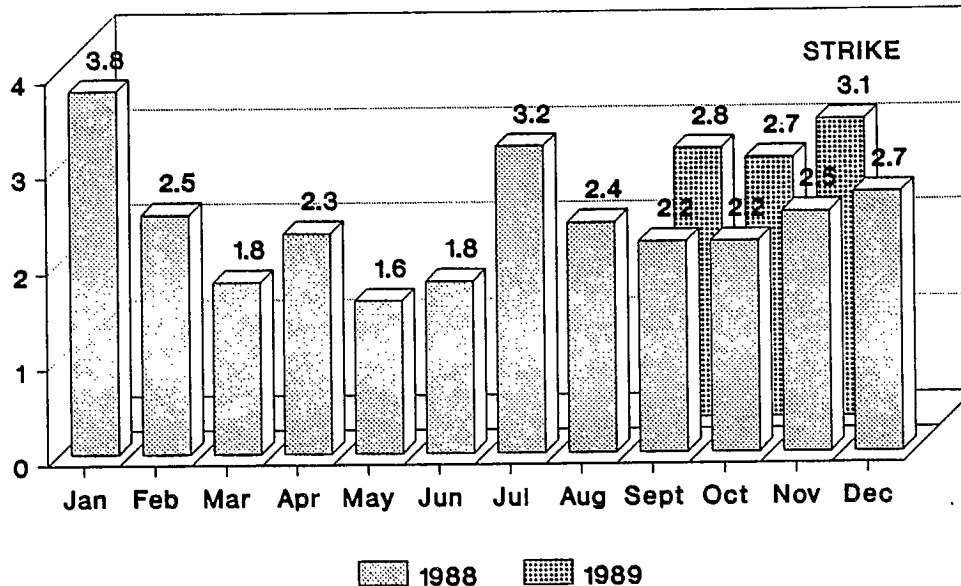
For the present fairly straight-forward analysis we chose to examine the potential impact of the strike from the following perspectives:

- Involvement of offenders in incidents while on conditional release and the rate of issuing of suspension warrants
- Differences in the character of incidents that occurred before and during the strike and the frequency of incidents by status on conditional release
- Involvement of offenders in incidents in the institutions

Community Incidents

Although community incident data were readily available for the 1988 calendar year from the automated system used to record these incidents, the system had to be updated to include occurrences during the strike period. In order to provide a meaningful reference period, incidents that occurred during the two previous months in 1989 were also entered in the base. Incidents recorded in the automated base include criminal offences committed by an offender while on conditional release and any other serious incidents which either came to the attention of the media or were likely to attract attention. Incidents involving suicide or death of an offender while under community supervision, crimes in which an offender was a victim, or the late return of an offender from a UTA are included in the base but not in the

Figure 1
Prevalence Rates for Community Incidents
Rates Per 1,000 Offenders on Conditional Release



October, 1989 adjusted to reflect monthly rate with exclusion of incidents occurring on October 30 and 31.

Strike period adjusted to reflect monthly rate i.e., 14 incidents over 17 strike days equals 25 incidents for 30 day month of November.

statistics we report below. Examining only incidents related to a specific criminal act perpetrated by the offenders was considered a more direct method of examining the impact of the strike. All statistics are reported in monthly prevalence rates per 1,000 offenders under community supervision.

Figure 1 shows that there was an increase over the previous two months in 1989 for the number of incidents occurring in the community during the strike period. The number of incidents per 1,000 inmates increased slightly from 2.7 in October to 3.1 during the strike period -- a fairly modest increase of 15%. However, as the monthly rates for 1988 reveal, increases of similar magnitude were recorded for that year and appear to have occurred in a random fashion. Therefore, it would be difficult to attribute the observed increase specifically to the strike.

Figure 2
Suspension Warrants Issued
Rates Per 1,000 Offenders

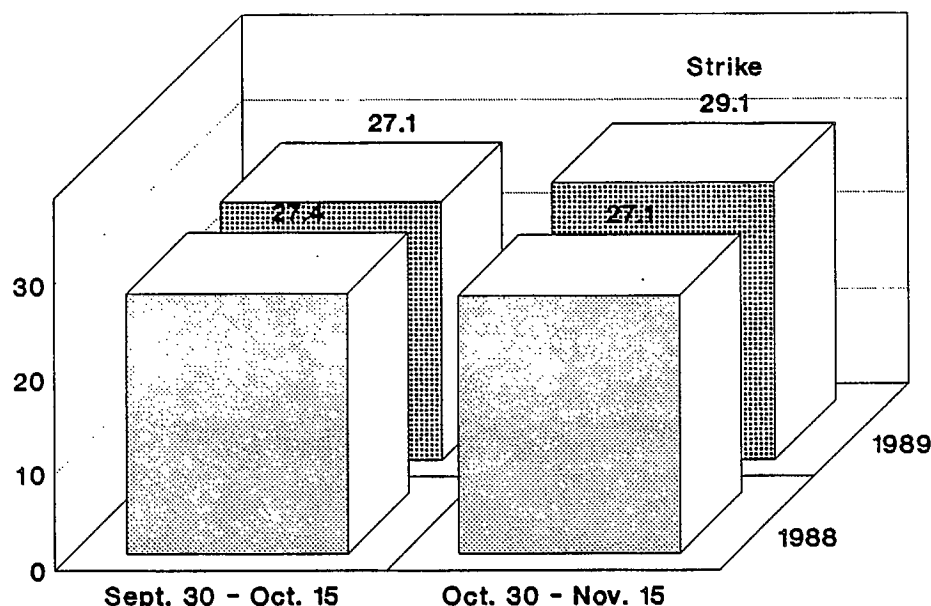


Figure 2 indicates that there was also an increase in the number of suspension warrants issued during the strike period. The strike period rate of 29.1 warrants issued per 1,000 offenders is somewhat higher than the rates recorded for the previous month and for the same periods in 1988. Although the increase is very slight, it suggests that managers who performed the duties of parole officers may have been more cautious in their suspension decisions during the strike in an effort to avoid the occurrence of sensational incidents. Moreover, managers who were acting as parole officers were less familiar with the cases, and consequently they may have issued a greater proportion of warrants for minor infractions.

Table 1 contrasts the kinds of incidents that occurred in the community during the strike, during the same period in the previous month, and during the same period in 1988. The Table provides some summary information on the types of incidents that occurred and the release status of the offenders who were involved in these incidents. We note that half of the incidents recorded during the strike were robberies - a larger number for this type of offence than observed during previous periods. However, given the small number of incidents being reported, it

would be difficult to attribute this finding to the strike situation. It should be noted that sensational violent incidents such as murder and sexual assault were not more frequent during the strike than during the previous month.

Statistics on the release status of offenders who were involved in community incidents indicate that offenders on mandatory supervision were responsible for the majority of the incidents

TABLE 1

Type of Offences and Nature of Involvements
by Status on Conditional Release

	Strike Period Oct. 30 - Nov. 15	Previous Month Sept. 30 - Oct. 15	Previous Year Oct. 30. - Nov. 15
OFFENCES:			
Murder	1	2	0
Att. Murder	1	1	0
Robbery	7 ←--	1	4
Sex Offence	2	3	2
Forcible Con.	0	1	1
Assault	2	0	0
B&E/Fraud	1	1	1
Escape	0	0	1
TOTAL	14	9	9
STATUS:			
Day Parole	1	3	2
Full Parole	4	3	1
M. S.	9 ←--	3	6

that occurred during the strike (64.2%). While this trend is not evident for the same period during the previous month, mandatory supervision cases accounted for most of the incidents during the comparison period in the previous year. Therefore, we cannot conclude from the available data that the strike had any greater impact on mandatory supervision cases. At the same time it is possible that police were more vigilant in their surveillance of mandatory supervision cases during the strike period because of the higher risk such cases represent.

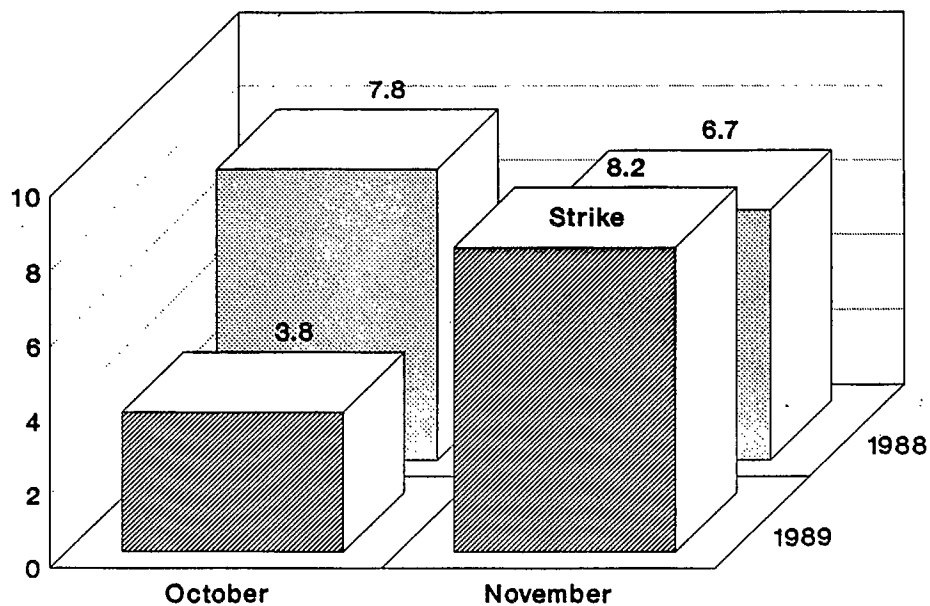
Institutional Incidents

We would anticipate less impact of the strike on incidents that occur in the institutions because of the small number of WP staff employed in institutions and the fact that responsibility for the management and control of offenders is dispersed across a variety of staff. However, we examined the rate of major and minor security incidents that occurred in the institutions during the strike period, during the previous month, and for reference periods during 1988. The data for this analysis was extracted from the automated security incident database which is maintained by the Custody and Control Division.

Figures 3 and 4 show the rates of occurrence for major and minor institutional incidents for the strike period and previous comparison periods. All incidents are reported in terms of the number of incidents occurring per 10,000 inmate population and are adjusted to facilitate comparisons based on one month periods. Figure 3 shows that the rate of major incidents during the strike increased more than twofold over the rate for the previous month. It is possible that the increase may have been caused by inmate frustration with delays in preparation work for parole hearings which would have occurred because of the absence of case management officers during the strike. However, it must be noted that the rate of 8.2 major incidents recorded during the strike is very similar to the rate recorded for similar periods in the months of October and November 1988.

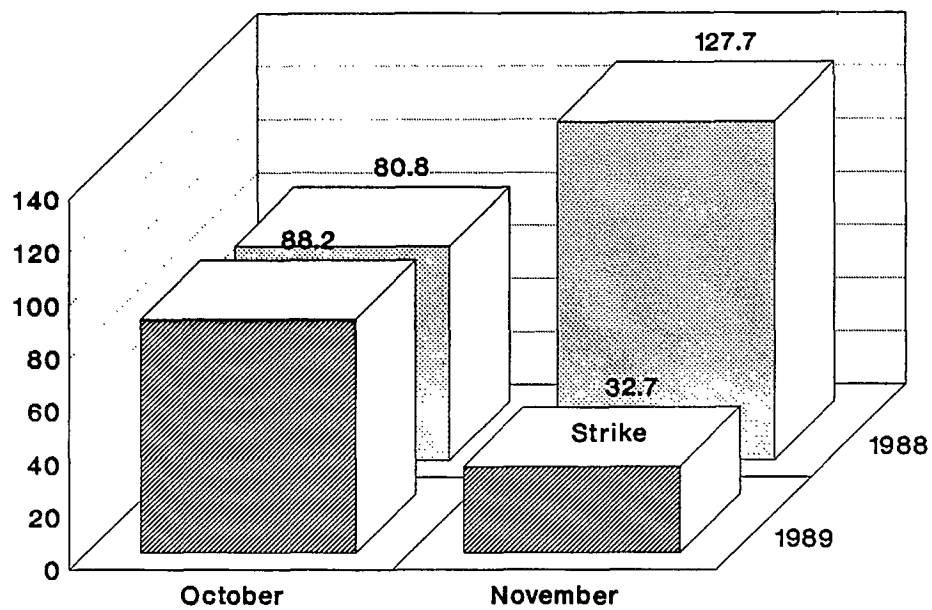
Figure 4 reveals a dramatic decline in the number of minor incidents reported during the strike. The rate of 32.7 minor incidents observed for this period is at least half the rate recorded for the three comparison periods. One explanation we can advance is that institutional staff gave less attention to the occurrence of less serious incidents during the strike. In addition, the fact that inmates spent more time in their cells during the days of the strike may have caused a reduction in the number of incidents.

Figure 3
Major Institutional Incidents
Rates Per 10,000 Inmates



Major incidents include murders of inmates or staff, assaults on staff or inmates resulting in injury, inmate suicides, hostage takings, and riots.

Figure 4
Minor Institutional Incidents
Rates Per 10,000 Inmates



Minor incidents include violent events not resulting in injury, attempted suicides, self-inflicted injuries, and minor disturbances.

Summary

To summarize the results of our analyses, we are unable to offer definitive statements about the impact of the strike given the methodological limitations that were imposed by the available data. While it may appear that there was an increase in the number of community incidents during the strike period, we have not been able to rule out the possibility that such increases were simply a function of random fluctuations that would have occurred in the absence of a WP strike. Our comparison data show that monthly fluctuations in community incident rates are not uncommon. We have also demonstrated that the rate of major institutional incidents observed during the strike period, although representing an immediate increase over the previous month, was comparable to the rates observed for a similar period in 1988.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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