

6/30/83 *lx press*

... & Women in Jail

An uneasy compromise solution to the months-old controversy of unequal treatment for women prisoners was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors on Monday.

Under the new plan, the women's work furlough facility in Ben Lomond will be closed beginning this September and a minimum security facility for women will be opened in a County-owned house on Blaine Street.

Although the new scheme will eliminate the work furlough counselors who have staffed the Ben Lomond-based program, it will offer women prisoners the chance to do softer time than the County Jail. The proposal is expected to save \$25,000 a year.

Last year County Administrative Officer George Newell suggested closing the work furlough facility and replacing it with a program of extensively supervised probation.

But that plan was attacked by a combination of women's rights advocates, people throughout the criminal justice system and most of the media. Although it would have saved the County more than \$100,000 a year, it would have made even worse the trend for more women prisoners to do hard time in the County Jail because the system offers fewer alternatives for women.

In the face of the protest against closing the work furlough facility, the Board postponed the question repeatedly and finally sent the CAO back to the drawing board.

The compromise approved Monday will save only a small amount of money and it will still leave the County

with fewer programs for women than men convicted of crimes. But Eleanor Eisenberg from the Legal Aid Society, which has been active in the recent controversies over women in jail, said opening a minimum security facility is at least a step in the direction of equal treatment.