

Sex-change woman 8 June 1988 faced male prison

By James O'Brien

A MAN who became a woman in a sex-change operation last year and was said by her counsel to be a social worker, was told by Judge Thomas Dillon, QC, at Birmingham Crown Court yesterday that she would go to a male prison if he gave her a custodial sentence.

Amanda West, 29, now living with a soldier, was sentenced to 225 hours of community service after pleading guilty to obtaining £2,500 by deception from the Woolwich building society, two offences of attempting to obtain similar sums and one of giving false information.

The judge said she had committed similar offences while on probation for theft and forgery and should go to prison.

He told her: "In view of the unusual nature of your present position, and that you found yourself under considerable strain, it is just possible to deal with you in another way."

West, of Milcote Road, Weoley Castle, Birmingham, had applied for a cash loan from a Woolwich branch at Northfield, saying she wanted to buy a car.

Mr Simon Brand, prosecuting, said she gave a false address and claimed she was employed as a secretary earning more than £10,000 a year, when she had been unemployed for three years. The monthly repayments were more than £96 — more than she was receiving in benefit.

A month later she made a similar application to another Woolwich branch, but was refused. She tried another branch, but staff were suspicious and called the police.

West told officers she wanted the money to pay off a £2,050 compensation order from a previous conviction last September for obtaining a loan from the Trustee Savings Bank by providing false details.

West was already on probation and was ordered to pay the compensation last September.

Mr Timothy Raggatt, defending, said her sex-change operation would not affect her legal status. The consequences of imprisonment were hard to imagine, and would be disastrous for her.

She had undergone a "massive change of personality" after medical treatment involving hormones. She had been short of money and was robbing Peter to pay Paul. She was now employed as a social worker with Age Concern, he said.

● A spokesman for Age Concern said last night that West had been a volunteer visitor with the charity for four weeks, and was not a social worker. An investigation into the case had begun.

Dividing the sexes

SIR — On Feb. 3, 1970, you reported the High Court case of *Corbett v Corbett* in which an English court was called upon for the first time to decide the sex of an individual. Mr Justice Ormrod ruled that an operation cannot change one's sex and that "the only cases where the term 'change of sex' is appropriate are those in which a mistake as to sex is made at birth and subsequently revealed by further medical investigation".

Your report under the heading "Sex-change woman faced male prison" (June 8) spoke of a *sex-change operation*. In view of the recent poll which indicates that some 70 per cent of us feel moral standards are falling, will you help reverse this trend by noting that such a person has neither changed sex nor is a woman? These terms, if used, should be in inverted commas as should the term "sex-change operation" which even then should be qualified as "so-called".

GEORGINA SOMERSET
Hove, East Sussex

J.T.
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