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| mutiny |  |
| short story |
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**July 2019**

**The porridge mutiny**

Hominy is a porridge made from crushed, soaked corn and at St Helena Penal Establishment it was the only food a prisoner ate for breakfast. In 1889, 105 prisoners expressed their dissatisfaction with their monotonous meal, refusing to fall into work after breakfast.

Superintendent Pennefather immediately ordered the warders to load rifles and began selecting individual prisoners thought to be the ringleaders. All prisoners resisted this action and refused to let any men be removed. As a consequence, many were placed in irons and all were locked up.

Why was hominy so important?

Within the prisoner’s rations, it formed a major component of their daily intake.

*‘Scale A’ prisoners* – working outside the prison stockade had 16 oz bread, 16 oz meat, 8oz vegetables and 8 oz hominy.

*‘Scale B’ prisoners* – working inside the prison stockade received less, issued with 12 oz bread, 6 oz meat and 8oz vegetables, but 12 oz of hominy.

*Source: Brisbane Courier (Qld. : 1864 - 1933), Saturday 19 October 1889, page 4*

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Telegraph, Monday 21 October 1889

**Consider:**

* What does this story tell us about what is important to the prisoners in their daily lives?
* Is this a funny story? Or is there a serious side to the prisoner’s actions that day?
* What forms of expression and actions are available to prisoners to express their discontent in Colonial times?
* The protest finished peacefully on the same day. Do you think a group of prisoners banding together to share their discontent would have worked? Why?