A new book by two USC School of Law professors possibly will affect prison reform in this country. Titled "The Emerging Rights of the Confined," the book is largely written and researched by associate professors William S. McAninch and Eldon D. Wedlock. It was commissioned by the S.C. Department of Corrections and paid for by a grant from the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.

The book is aimed primarily at correctional administrators across the country and is an effort to explain to them what is happening in the field of prisoners' rights, and what the administrators can do to adapt to change.

Says Wedlock, "Our hope is that it will generate some understand-

ing of what their obligations are under the new interpretations of the law, and that administrators will implement reforms on their own initiative--reforms which the courts will demand of them. They may have to rethink their regulations and prove why these regulations are necessary. This would save the taxpayer the expense of lawsuits (on the part of prisoners) in which the taxpayer often has to pay the cost of both sides. The book may also be used as a tool to get legisla-
tures to re-examine the need for a higher level of funding."

Wedlock explains that the attitude of the courts toward the rights of prisoners has evolved over the last few years from a totally "hands off!" policy to one which places the burden upon the prison administrator of proving that the prisoners' rights are not being viol-
ated.

An 1870 case describes the court's early attitude when it said that the "convict is a slave of the state"--that is, he had no rights. Under new court decisions and regulations, it is presumed the prisoners have rights, and the prison administrator has the burden of showing that the restriction of a right is justified by some statewide interest.

For example, formerly the censorship of prisoners mail was routine--such as the turning back of letters to newspapers complaining of conditions. Officials could also turn back certain publications mailed to the prisoner.