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PRISONERS OF CAPITAL

In every class-divided society since history began, laws have been set up in order to protect the interests of the ruling class. That is the purpose of law and government. In a socialist world, where there are no classes, customs that support the interests of the whole human community will replace laws.

INSIDE:

capital's global stockade
a world without prisons
a day in the life
the security scam
the morality of amerika
the thirteenth amendment
leonard peltier & the primal needs of capital

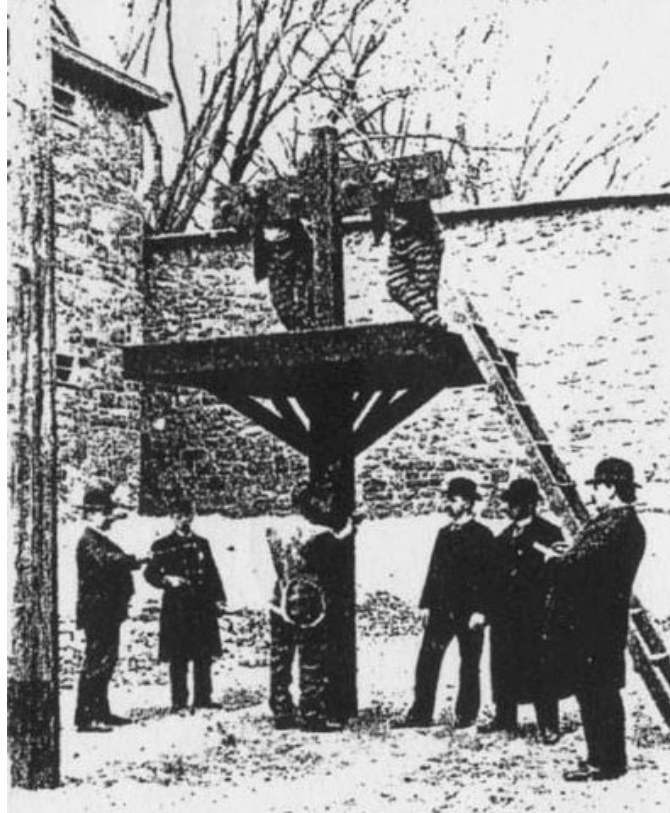
Prisoners of capital

Millions of human beings around the world are forcibly detained, their liberties removed by governmental authorities. Anyone who takes seriously the immediate potential for replacing capitalism with a world of real abundance and freedom knows already that the great majority of crimes are either crimes against property or involve the illegal trafficking of property — or are the likely direct result of living the restricted and stressful life of a wage-slave.

While there are those who justify the existence of laws on moral and ideological grounds, the defenders of the status quo must always argue their case referring to a swashbuckler's haven of spurious doctrines, some of them philosophical ("free will"), theological ("good and evil"), psychological ("mental illness") or political ("justice"). And yet the wasting away of countless millions of human lives remains a potent critique of a society of private property, as much as the maltreatment and exploitation of animals or children in our society. The sheer hypocrisy and failure of the law is inevitably the feature subject of this issue.

It is illegal to kill one's fellows in a fit of rage but perfectly legal to kill fellow workers from other countries to satisfy the ruling class's need to protect or assert its economic or political spheres of influence in another part of the world. One must not steal, say both the law and the Bible, and yet it is perfectly legal and morally acceptable to rob working people every day of the wealth they produce above their wages, distilling the high life for the greedy and lazy few out of the graduated deprivations visited on the majority, stymying people's efforts to provide enough for themselves and their children. The subject of prisons goes to the very heart of our so-called civil society, putting to shame the naïve suggestion that we live in a democratic society. The truth is that a society of privilege must be protected by the brute powers of the law. We are not allowed to enjoy more wealth than the crumbs we are permitted in our wages or welfare income, and anybody who attempts this in our society will be handcuffed and taken away.

Make no mistake about it, the lack of freedom inside the prison cells directly mirrors the lack of freedom for working people outside them. On the outside you will be forced to work, unless you want to live in a cardboard box and seek food in a garbage can; you will be forced to accept your wages or salary



for the work you do, forced to accept the nature of the job, forced to spend vast hours of your life even outside work just preparing for it and getting to and from it. You will be forced to put up with the other side effects of capitalism — its pollution, its stress, its shoddy goods, its wars, and the fact that billions must starve to death, including tens of millions of children each year. Your "free" time itself will be carved up into the various consumer "entertainments" and "pleasures" available for the right price. What is truly yours in capitalism is debatable.

Your fate and that of the prisoners who languish behind bars every day are in-

separably intertwined. Indeed, inside or outside prison, we will never be free until we establish a society in which humans come first and the production of wealth is oriented toward meeting our needs and those of our children — one in which we are no longer forced to work in order to be adequately fed, clothed and housed, and in which the economic priorities of the rich no longer send poor and uneducated youth to die abroad, or condemn the planet to a slow death by self-poisoning. When property is owned in common, we will find ways as a community to better meet our needs for wealth, creativity, decision-making, love, rest, productivity, and freedom.

We challenge the myth of the present era that some people are good and others evil, or that crime is an entirely moral issue. We maintain as scientific socialists that behavior must be understood in its social context: that of a society divided into two classes, one owning the vast proportion of wealth without working for it, and the other producing all the wealth while owning but a miniscule proportion of it.

Until the vast majority of us are liberated from the prison of being workers, we must denounce all the moralistic assumptions and shoddy social analyses of our public behaviors that lead so many of us to be locked away behind bars. We will on such a glorious day liberate our brothers and sisters in jail, and we urge them now to join us in the worldwide project of designing a system that promotes *for real* the enjoyment of the abundant wealth and freedom that are our birthright. Ø

...In capital's global stockade



Prisons are nothing if not about boundaries, and global capitalism has long utilized the boundaries of the nation state to its advantage. All nation states have their respective unique organizations of government, and each is filled with a type of head warden and plenty of guards to keep the inmates toeing the line. And, as wardens go, these heads of state are most often hubris-filled, authoritarian, power-intoxicated people who stab each other in the back vying for power, wealth, and prestige.

Warden Bush himself has risen in the last decade, astonishingly, from Head Honcho of the Lone Star State to Head Warden of the whole U.S. penal empire (proof positive no outstanding intellect is required to be a warden), and now seems to be vying for Global Executive Imperial Director of Capitalist Prisons. This is best exemplified by the recent drubbing given to Warden Hussein and his prisoners, while simultaneously sticking it to the domestic inmates of the U.S. Homeland Security Unit. And what about the prisoners of the U.S. national enclosure?

During my 14 years as a prisoner in Texas prisons, I've had ample time to reflect on the concept of prisons and imprisonment. I've come to the conclusion that it is not only those locked behind the concrete enclosures officially designated as "prisons" who are imprisoned, and that there are many types of prisons. I would define imprisonment as a state of existence in which the freedom to make choices and exercise options is extremely limited, controlled, or denied altogether by persons who have power over you, and in which misery, deprivation, dehumanization, violence, and coerced servitude are norms accompanied by the constant threat of negative sanctions.

Under this broadened rubric, I would venture to say that the world itself has become a type of prison, not literally of the walls and bars type, but one in which the inmates wear manacles forged by capitalism, and who find themselves, the world over, in various states of relative captivity and exploitation. It was noted once by the Situationists that existence under capitalism is not life at all, but mere survival. In any prison setting the name of the game is survival whether it be in San Quentin, the jungles of Colombia, or in Iraq.

One recent and extremely hot day, while slaving in the prison kitchen at the Huntsville Walls Unit, a Mexican fellow prisoner and I found ourselves in the refrigeration vault attempting to cool off. We were also discussing the novels of B. Traven. I explained to my friend that B. Traven had escaped the rising tide of reaction in post-World War I Germany, and probably a firing squad as well, and after much travel under numerous aliases, he settled in the jungles of Chiapas, Mexico. This was in the 1920s, and besides studying the languages and cultures of the indigenous peoples in that region, Traven wrote novels from a working-class and somewhat materialist philosophical perspective.

To attempt a rudimentary explanation of materialism to my friend, I queried him as to why he had risked death by heat or exhaustion and/or the bullets of border guards just to come to the U.S.A. His instant reply was, "To make more money!" "Exactly!" I said. "Human beings are social beings who, just by virtue of being human, have material wants and needs that must be met. Unfortunately, we live in an anti-social, class-divided economic system based on competition and callousness in which working people are forced to sell themselves as dearly as possible in order simply to survive. Material forces compelled you to strike out against all odds to claim a better price for your labor power. Just as the same material forces in Germany 90-odd years ago resulted in war, revolution and reaction, and compelled B.Traven to flee for his life." My Mexican amigo perceived survival in the U.S. Homeland Security enclosure as sweeter than within the Mexican national enclosure. Ironically, though, my friend, once imprisoned by national boundaries and poverty, now finds himself a chattel in a Texas prison ... working for free.

Open the doors ...

In our conversation we touched upon the economic motivations and contingencies between the recent war and the rise in Texas parole rates. Texas, along with many other states facing debt crises, has no federal funds to support its prison system, in part because of the imperialist "permanent war" on terrorism. In short, as the bomb bay doors swing open raining death and destruction over foreign lands, prison doors here swing open releasing prisoners to an already rended social fabric. It's a shame that the relative break Texas prisoners are experiencing is in part at the expense of workers' misery in the Middle East. I have no doubt that more than a few of the inmates of those national enclosures would swap their current digs for three hots and a cot here in a Texas prison.

Existence in prison, for those who give a damn, entails a constant vigilance toward maintaining hard-won rights and reforms in order just to be able to exercise a modicum of choice and improved conditions. Hard-won, because prisoners have put in painful hours of legal research, often under conditions of harassment, to litigate for these reforms. Very often, work-

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strikes, hunger-strikes, and other forms of resistance were initiated in the course of struggle, resulting in beatings and loss of life for prisoners. Failure to protect these reforms can mean the difference between showering once a day as opposed to once every three days, or the right not to be strip-searched in 20-degree weather or shackled to a post in 100-degree weather. These reforms constantly face the threat of retraction or modification by the prisoncrats and their legal teams, and it is much the same for wage-slaves in the U.S. and abroad. Here, the eight-hour day seems to have fallen by the wayside, and time-and-a-half after 40 hours meets the slippery slope *à la Bush*.

For the domestic inmates of the U.S. Homeland Security Enclosure, such social safety net reforms as food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid and unemployment benefits, have been cut back at a time when workers are suffering high unemployment rates and the insecurities of recession. Yet these reforms, important as they are to making survival more tolerable, are never the ultimate answer, and can never provide lasting security. They are only defensive measures.

Political servitude

Servitude is an almost universal attribute of imprisonment. The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution precludes involuntary servitude, except as punishment for criminal acts. Texas prisoners are required to slave for forty hours a week, often out in the gruelling heat, for no financial remuneration. This is all legitimized by the Constitution. The line in the Constitution would seem to imply that there is something voluntary about the practice of wage slavery, or having to choose between it and starvation.

Wage slaves the world over cannot find work, and when they do, often have to perform it under horrendous conditions for a paltry sum. Indeed, for many wage slaves in capital's global prison, working to provide food and shelter for self and family amounts to a Hobson's choice of killing one's self simply to survive. Here in the relative comfort of the so-called First World, many wage-slaves are overworked and underpaid, and the economic insecur-

ity of high unemployment compels many workers to seek employment in the armed forces or to take jobs as prison guards. None of these conditions would be freely chosen or volunteered for, or even tolerated, were the workers aware of the highly practical alternative of Socialism.

Short-term myopia

Prisons are notorious polluters, subjecting both inmates and nearby residents to senseless toxic pollution. This has as much to do with cutting budgetary corners as it does with crass disrespect for the environment. Our global capitalist stockade is much the same, being polluted from economic corner-cutting and a myopic short-term gain outlook held by our warders. Our collective conditions of confinement have become perilously worse. No longer are we merely enslaved and oppressed. We now find ourselves subjected to cancer-causing pollutants at every level and the very real threat of extinguishing life on this planet.

From that perspective, the drag effect of millions of minds being conditioned to believe that survival under capitalism is the best we humans can achieve is probably the single greatest threat to a livable future. No prison conditions were ever improved without a significant number of prisoners becoming politically conscious and solid in a struggle. Yet simple reforms will not suffice and in the end will only bring about our ultimate demise. Capital's stockade is global, so escape is not an option. That leaves the choice between acquiescing to death in prison or collectively bringing about a socialist future with life for all humanity.

It is one of a prisoner's worst fears that he or she may die within prison walls. All prisoners long to walk the earth once more. Yet when I finally emerge from the walls of this Texas prison in a couple of years, I will still be within the confines of capitalism, manacled by economic hardship, insecurity, war, pollution, and governmental repression. I thirst with all my being to one day live in a world without prisons of any kind, and that's why I'm a socialist.

Let's get solid, Fellow Prisoners, and create a truly Free World!

— Kevin Glover

HARMO (Harry Morrison) 1912 – 2004

Died of a heart attack May 13, 2004. It would be hard to overestimate his contribution to the World Socialist Movement. His death reaches beyond personal loss. Harry Morrison became convinced of the case for socialism as a young man, influenced by an older brother who had first heard it in Toronto. Like many others, Harry did his share of traveling in boxcars; he turned up in Boston c. 1937 but soon was off to California. Returning in 1939, he met and married a comrade, Sally Kligman, at one of Boston Local's socials. They moved back to Los Angeles in 1941 and contacted comrades there. Then finally back to Boston again in 1947 with their five-year-old daughter, Anita, where Harry and Sally became active Local members. He loved to play the guitar at party gatherings. Harmo served on the NAC for many years and kept party headquarters afloat as the Local went into decline in the 70s, but heart problems eventually forced his withdrawal from active party work. He used this idle time, as a political prisoner might, to do research and write more extensively on socialist topics. Then in 1987, Sally died. Two years later, McFarland & Co. published *The Socialism of Bernard Shaw*, which we still distribute, and Harry was busily sending round to publishers two other draft manuscripts, one on Jack London and the other on the Soviet Union. But though he lived alone, he did not just keep to himself. He now also had two grandchildren to enjoy. He would never turn down an invitation to a social gathering, and liked to visit and be visited by comrades in the area, including from the SPGB (Cdes. Vic Vanni and Tony McNeil the most recent).

After a second heart attack in December 2002, Harry moved into a Brookline nursing home. A socialist to the end, he would give talks on Marxism to his fellow residents, with one or two comrades and family members helping out. Harmo served on the Editorial Committee and wrote energetically and voluminously (sometimes anonymously) for the party journal, *The Western Socialist (WS)*; he later also became the party's chief contact person and correspondent, firing off letters with as much flair as his articles. He had a real gift for articulating the socialist analysis and was a fine outdoor speaker who enjoyed beating the pants off opponents in local debates. During the 40s and 50s, he spoke from the party's platform on Boston Common; and even after television, thugs, traffic and the underground parking garage pretty much destroyed Speaker's Corner down by Charles Street in the 60s, he kept the socialist presence there alive throughout the 70s, staging impromptu talks along the Tremont Street side. For a decade or so in the 60s and 70s, the WSP meanwhile kept a weekly radio spot on WCRB Boston, and Harry was among those comrades who wrote five-minute scripts for the show; he was even one of the on-air readers. When the WSP decided in 1974 to publish a pamphlet commemorating the WS's 300th issue — *The Perspective for World Socialism*, which we still distribute — 30 or so of his radio essays found their way into it. During the same period, he very ably and adroitly put across the socialist viewpoint to the late Haywood Vincent's listeners on AM radio and to Adam Burak's on FM as well. ☺

A world without prisons



Few institutions illustrate the oppression of people in capitalism better than prisons. Millions of people, almost completely members of the working class, in the United States and around the world, are presently wasting away for violations of the laws of private property or for crimes that stem from residing in a society based on want for some and privilege for others.

There is no question that the vast majority of crimes today for which individuals are incarcerated are crimes of property. The Crime Index for 2001 makes it clear that somewhere in the region of 84 to 90 percent of crimes are entirely property-related. Surveying the statistics from several states, we find that 173,000 out of 192,000 crimes were property-related in Alabama (90 percent). In California, 1.13 million people were arrested for property crimes out of a total of 1.34 million arrests (84 percent). In Florida, there were 782,000 property crimes out of 913,000 crimes (85 percent). In Kentucky, there were 109,000 property crimes out of 119,000 crimes (91 percent). All states fell roughly in this range, with 84 percent being the lowest. Violent crimes represented the next largest group, standing at about 10-18 percent of all crimes. Murders fell into the smallest group, representing roughly 0.1 to 0.2 percent of all crimes.

Capitalism is a society of haves and have-nots. The market economy generates such poverty and artificial scarcities that it is the prime cause of thefts. Even

average wage and salary earners must seriously budget their incomes to obtain the necessities and luxuries of life. The very system is rooted in an individualistic dog-eat-dog ethic that wastes resources on a vast scale, thus pre-empting any possibility for making rational use of our technological and productive capacity. Workers are denied access to the wealth they have collectively produced as a class, and so must make do with the crumbs called wages and salaries with which to obtain what they need or want. By contrast, they produce surplus value for their employers, which entitles a small class of owners to live off a vast store of accumulated wealth.

Another way to work the system?

To make matters worse, wealth is only produced in capitalism if it may generate a profit. Thus, there are never sufficient items of wealth to meet the needs of the human population, not even sufficient jobs in which workers may sell themselves to the employing class to receive wages. It is therefore no surprise to find that the vast majority of crimes occur in the poorest neighborhoods, where most people make ends meet for themselves or their families only with the utmost difficulty, if at all, and where even the prospect of finding a job is bleak.

Such social relations of inequality as we find in capitalism are essential to explain-

ing why so many African-Americans in the U.S. are incarcerated for crimes of property, and for crimes of selling drugs. In 1997, 33 percent of all arrests in the entire country were of blacks,¹ and in 1999, 49 percent of all prison inmates were black, even though African-Americans represented only about 13 percent of the overall population. Most of the arrests of this population were for low-level drug offenses. Interestingly, while over 90 percent of those tried for drug offenses in the state of California in 1995 were minorities, the drug-using population in that same state was more than 60 percent white. The 60 percent of drug users probably did not reside in the same extremely impoverished communities as the non-white 90 percent of drug offenders. One must, after all, have a considerable amount of money (at least, more than can be obtained from welfare checks) to spend on expensive drugs, money available to almost no one in the poorest, often minority, neighborhoods of the United States.²

Racism likely also plays a part in the disproportionately high number of arrests and incarcerations of black youth — they are more likely to be stopped, frisked, arrested, prosecuted, sentenced and executed than whites committing the same crimes. The effects of this high rate of incarceration upon black working-class communities have been devastating. What happens when 30 percent of Afri-

¹ U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1997.

² Paul Street, "Race, Prison and Poverty," *Zmag*, www.zmag.org.

Continued on next page

can-American males ages 20-29 are snared in the “3 P’s” of prison, probation, or parole? It means, for starters, that the black community has been effectively denied participation in the electoral system, after winning it in the successful civil rights marches and protests of the 1950s and 1960s. Ten states deny voting rights for life to ex-felons, 32 deny them to felons on parole, and 29 states disenfranchise felony probationers. Thus, at any given time, a vast proportion of blacks are not able to exercise any political rights at all. Furthermore, parolees are often denied employment opportunities. There are counties in California in which a mere 21 percent of that state’s parolees are working full time. This official cold shoulder further fuels the cycle of poverty in black communities. Thomas K. Lowenstein, director of the Electronic Policy Network, estimates that 80 percent of prison inmates are parents. Children of prisoners are five times more likely to experience incarceration than those children who never had to suffer the misery of having their parents locked away, according to other researchers.³

After being released from prison, ex-cons are poorly equipped to sell themselves in the job market. This is because the jobs available in prison are of the types that are no longer as prevalent in the United States, but of the kind that employers pay for dirt cheap in the Third World. Unless U.S. prisoners are expected to emigrate to the sewing sweat shops of Central America where they would be lucky to make \$200 a year, the job skills they obtain in prison will be next to useless, thus encouraging them to return to the far more lucrative illegal activities they engaged in before. Besides, most black and poor communities have so few jobs available that job training alone will be irrelevant in removing the economic

conditions that led to the high crime rates in the first place.⁴

Poverty is simply a fact of capitalism. Capitalism is an economic system based on commodity production. It is incapable of producing wealth outside of its narrow profit motive, and incapable of hiring workers that it may not generate a profit from. Therefore, inevitably capitalism generates poverty. For as long as it has existed, millions of workers have been pressured into making money illegally, selling drugs, selling their bodies, robbing banks, breaking into homes and so on — and millions more will continue to follow them.

Slavery was not completely abolished after the Civil War but maintained for the prison population. Indeed, after the Civil War, state prisons frequently rented out prison labor to private contractors.

Prisons are among the most thriving slave communities in the United States or even the rest of the world (to be listed along with the still rampant enslavement of women and children, especially in Asia). The 13th Amendment to the Constitution that abolished slavery on December 18, 1865, clearly states: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as punishment for crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted*, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction” (author’s emphasis). Slavery therefore was not completely abolished after the Civil War but maintained for the prison population. Indeed, after the Civil War, state prisons frequently rented out prison labor to private contractors. This is what led the Virginia Supreme Court to remark in an 1871 case known as “Ruffin v. Commonwealth” that prisoners were “slaves of the state.” For 70 years following the Civil War most state and federal prisons were completely self-sufficient slave economies, producing their own goods and

food, and also some industrial products, without the producers being paid. Such blatantly slave or capitalist relations, where inmates were paid pitiful wages, were mostly abolished from the 1930s until the 1980s, when states began to reinstate that practice once more. In 1986, Supreme Court Justice Warren Burger urged the transformation of prisons again into “factories with fences.” Prisons were to return to being self-sufficient, profit-generating enterprises.

Such alterations in prison policy furnish an interesting parallel with the historic struggle between slavery and capitalism as modes of production. Slavery was finally abolished in this country in 1865 not only because it was an unarguably oppressive institution that understandably aroused the abolitionist sentiments of decent and just-minded men and women, but also because it was less efficient than wage slavery. Slaves and their families had to be clothed, fed and housed even when they did not or could not work. The ties of obligation that the chattel slave owner had for his human property often led slaves to attempt to destroy the owner’s machinery, burn his fields, even kill him. With the worldwide development of industrial capitalism’s far more efficient system of human exploitation, the bond of obligation between worker and employer was broken. Workers were now “free” — free to starve, free to be homeless, free to be let off the job, free to manage on meagre wages, free to pay a doctor to attend to them in their illness.

You work, therefore I am ... rich

This freedom was truly a remarkable contribution to society, allowing the new rulers, the capitalists, the freedom to more or less pay their wages without any added responsibilities. (Although the working class over the past 150 years did insist on several further responsibilities that would be paid for out of their employers’ surplus value, it never contemplated abolishing the essential relations of employer and worker [owner and non-owner] — the modern version of master and slave.) But prisons have managed to preserve a great

³ See Clyde E. DeBerry, *Blacks in corrections*, 1994.

⁴ See Robert C. Witt, *An Inside Job*, 1997, for a moving personal and sociological account written by an ex-con.

deal of the social and economic relations of chattel slavery, while similarly insisting upon a capitalist revolution in favor of transforming the previous slave prisoners into far more efficient wage workers, even though their wages are rarely more than the minimum.

Hard life, hard feelings

It is often claimed that socialism is impossible because people are spontaneously lazy and avoid working whenever they can. But perversely enough, one of the most powerful arguments against this claim is based on observing how humans behave in prison. These are behaviors that exist far less commonly outside the prison walls, and so serve to illustrate how diverse are human behaviors and how much they reflect the material conditions of life. For inside the prison walls, denied freedom and dignity, humans degenerate into fearful, revengeful, murderous, and exploitative monsters in order to survive the terrible ordeals of incarceration. Every year, there are over 300,000 instances of (reported) rapes in prisons, almost all of men raping other men: 40,000 of which are of male children in juvenile detention centers and 123,000 of men in county jails, with roughly 5,000 rape victims being women. Most rapes are not reported, so it is likely the figures are actually many times greater than these available statistics. It has been estimated that unwanted sexual advances among inmates occur on the order of 80,000 a day.

The most likely victims of rape in American prisons are smaller young whites from that section of the working class frequently and incorrectly termed “middle class” for its greater propensity to secure employment; they are besides either not street-smart, or they have no gang affiliations. Sixty-nine percent of rape victims in prisons are white, while 85 percent of rapists in prison are black. The reason for such an ethnically disproportionate statistic is that the white prisoners are less likely to have established solidarity networks while in prison, since they are a minority in the prison but a majority on the outside, while the blacks are a minority outside but a majority inside.

Prisoners typically fall into three classes while in prison. There is a group of *predators*, also known as *jockers*, *studs*, *wolves* and *pitchers*. This group will seek out new victims and will always attack in groups. This group views itself as virile “men.” These men have never been penetrated or raped (or they would immediately lose their predator status). The second group is known as the *jailhouse queens*. This group actively carries on a female-like existence and is cherished by the predators.

Finally, the third group is known as the *punks* or *fuck boys*. These are the younger, weaker inmates who have been “turned out” by the stronger inmates. They are normally assaulted days after they arrive, and these attacks will continue until they either get protection, are locked up in protective custody, or turn queen themselves. AIDS/HIV is six times the national average in prisons, since rapists do not wear condoms. The 2001 Human Rights Watch report “No Escape: Male Rape in U.S. Prisons” describes a nauseating catalogue of beatings, rapes, and murders inflicted on new prisoners by other inmates. This same report describes understandably extremely high rates of clinical depression, anxiety disorders (for example, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), suicidal and homicidal tendencies found among prisoners who may not have been thus afflicted when they were first incarcerated.⁵

Prisons clearly fail to keep the population safe from itself. They play a considerable role in causing people who were sane before to develop antisocial personalities, and in adding to the population’s mental illness. They deprive children of their parents and communities of their members’ economic and other personal contributions, while sadistically punishing individuals on the surreal assumption that the prisoners “freely” chose their crime in a morally equal and objective universe, rather than acted within a seriously circumscribed universe of poverty, trauma, violence and alienation — one

rife in antisocial and manipulative models of behavior.

In *The Psychopathic Mind: Origins, Dynamics, and Treatment* (1995), Dr. J. Reid Meloy wrote of several of the most common environmental variables common to sociopaths (who account for some of the violent crimes and almost all of the murders). These individuals, who have lost or have never developed a sense of empathy or concern for the rights or feelings of others, often identify with an aggressive role model in their own lives, such as an abusive parent. They attack the weaker, more vulnerable self by projecting it onto others. As multiple murderer Dennis Nilsen put it, “I was killing myself only, but it was always the bystander who died.”

According to Dr. Meloy, such antisocial personalities can be explained in various ways: frequently they have lost a parent (about 60 percent), have been deprived of love or nurturing (detached, absent parents), received inconsistent discipline (where the father for example might have been stern and the mother overly permissive, causing the child to grow up manipulating the mother and hating authority); or they may have had hypocritical parents who privately belittled the child while publicly presenting an image of the “happy family.”

Leadership, sociopathy, success

It has often been observed that psychopaths make successful businessmen or world leaders. What else are capitalists or leaders but individuals who must excel in the ability of requiring the submission and exploitation of other human beings? Of course, not all psychopaths are motivated to kill. But when it is easy to devalue others, and you have had a lifetime of perceived injustices and rejection, murder might seem like a natural choice. Psychiatry and prisons are in any case not designed to attack the real cause of the antisocial development of such individuals: a world that is itself antisocial, cruel, heartless, violent, stressful, controlling and competitive, and that stifles and thwarts the nature of parenting and the

⁵ Scott L. Anderson, “Rape in Prison,” www.loompanics.com.

Continued on next page

optimal conditions for the development of prosocial children. Prisons reflect the class nature of society like few other institutions. Far from addressing the *nature* of class society, they exist only to segregate the worst offenders against its norms into a sort of industrial apartheid.

Capitalism fails miserably to meet our emotional needs, let alone our physical ones. How to humanize an intrinsically exploitative society in which five percent exist to exploit the other 95 percent? How to make people feel safe when millions around the world die every year of starvation and wars, when the majority is powerless and propertyless and must sell itself to the class that owns the means of producing wealth? Is it so surprising that when people live without the means to secure the comforts of life for themselves and their families, they will violate the interpersonal boundaries of others without caring?

Crime is not a moral concept

But instead of confining our thoughts and energies to dealing with the problems of capitalism, socialists attempt to see the whole picture. We refuse to reduce much of what passes as “crime” merely to the moral stature of those arrested — we insist rather upon examining the social context those human beings inhabit and eliminating the source of the inequalities inherent in the capitalist economy. As revolutionaries we are tired of “politics as usual,” which does nothing to address society’s collective misery. We are sick of hearing about futile remedies such as prison reform, when it is the society based on exploitation that must be replaced by one in which we who are now merely the working majority own and control the means of producing wealth as the whole community.

Create a more socially responsible and caring society in which people feel involved, and they will behave more socially. Allow humans free access to their collectively produced wealth, eliminate the buying and selling factor, and not only will they cease to have a market to sell dangerous drugs in — the disappearance

of price tags will cease to make earning a living necessary to begin with. Provide conditions for parenting that emphasize collective support and nurturance, that put children first, and children will not grow up so twisted, defiant, angry, depressed, alienated or dangerous.

A world without prisons does not mean overlooking disturbances caused by violent acting out among its citizens: it does mean finding more humane ways to manage it. Some people, at times, may indeed need to be restrained, children protected or threats averted. A democratic society will be able to find ways to meet this need for safety without exploiting or degrading the perpetrators. The entire research of clinical, social and developmental psychologists into the variables that underpin antisocial acts and into ways of helping people overcome their hostile propensities is at present ignored, when so many of the crimes are systemically caused and are so prevalent. Since most crimes are crimes of property, and class society sets its rules and norms to benefit the ruling minority, it is impossible to be sure at present what a society of common ownership might deem to be affronts to people or to the whole community. The existence of class society provides not just the greatest confounding variable for psychologists studying human behavior today, but one that is at present completely intractable. How can they test their hypotheses about human behavior or measure the efficacy of their recommendations for treatment, as long as the relations of owner and non-owner persist outside (and within) laboratory conditions?

The irresponsibility of profit

Prisoners, like workers everywhere, have a vested interest in establishing a society in which human needs come first. In a society of unfettered democratic participation, marked by the ability to freely produce and access wealth, humans can once

again feel more a part of the social fabric, and less opponents of it. The “loner against society” paradigm of the criminal will likely be a thing of the past. The very idea of locking up offenders is a powerful metaphor for the antisocial community’s lack of accountability for its own problems, its myopia, its own sociopathy, so to speak. Workers both inside and outside

prison must work to bring the administration of society into the democratic hands of the whole human community.

Only in such a socialist world will power reside with the entire community, which will think twice about how it

treats its sons and daughters, its brothers and sisters, its fathers and mothers. Socialism will be a society without locks and keys, marked by its openness and its ability to find solutions rather than brush problems under the carpet. Without a ruling class and its economic and political interests to protect, there will no longer be a need for its state, its armies, or its prisons.

Freedom will ring in the air for all human beings, and a feeling of truly being a part of a large human family will rise from the ashes of this presently divisive and competitive society. In such an emotional climate, we believe, humans will rush to participate voluntarily in increasing the pool of wealth and the freedom to enjoy it, and the ensuing social ethic will likely be one of people working together rather than being pitted against each other. Trust will replace suspicion. Freedom will replace oppression. And “penitentiaries” will remain only as potent symbols of the larger prisons in which each day we used to lock away not only our children, but our future, our ability to care and our imaginations.

— Dr. Who

A note to our readers

“The Thirteenth Amendment” and “A day in the life” are printed with the author’s permission.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

What are my days like?

It is now 4:30 AM. I have had breakfast: two tiny biscuits, one fried egg and something they call “grits” but that more closely resemble india rubber. I ate the biscuits and the egg, and drank another cup of coffee. When I finish this writing, I intend to stamp this letter and finagle a way to stick it through the narrow crack in my “bean chute,” which is the colloquial name for the “food slot,” a rectangular slot about 14 inches wide and five inches tall with a locking door that stays shut. This door is opened three times a day to give me my tray, then three more times to remove my plate. Before I may receive my food, I must sit on my bunk as far away as possible from the slot. They will then open the slot, place the tray on it, and scoot back. Then I may rise and claim my food. I move away from the door, and the slot is closed. Rather like you might imagine a lion being fed. This is why it takes an awfully long time to feed chow. Since I’m inevitably the last to eat, being in the very back corner of the wing, meals are always cold. If they are greasy, as is often the case, the grease will have condensed to a waxy film over everything, which isn’t especially palatable unless you’re fond of cold hog lard, and I confess I am not. That covers chow and answers the question of whether or not I am allowed to eat in a “common room.” No!

At about two o’clock in the afternoon, they come by to pass out “necessities,” at which time I strip naked, hand in my old undershorts and receive a new pair, sans elastic; ditto socks. Often the officer is a female; no matter. I receive one towel. Immediately after the showers, they retrieve that towel lest I use it to hang myself. Sheets are changed weekly if they have any (which is a 50/50 chance), and if not, then the next week. These are the rituals of “necessities.”

Three days a week — Monday, Wednesday, and Friday — we have “recreation.” The procedure works this way: at about 5:30 AM someone will sneak through and take what is called the “VR list.” VR stands for “verbal refusal,” although it’s not quite verbal in practice. The more of us the guards can “VR” the fewer they actually have to take out (which is the closest thing they do to work). Assuming, then, that you are awake, with your light on, freshly shaven, and standing in your door when they sneak through, you will be eligible for “rec” that day. In this sense, my cell is an advantage, as someone will sing out, “VR List!” “VR List!” when they spot the guard with the list. Then you go back to whatever you were doing, and sometime in the next few hours, perhaps in minutes or not until afternoon, depending on where they start, “rec” will be run.

When that time comes, the slot will be opened. To be eligible to go, you must be standing naked at the door with your clothes and shoes in your hand. You hand each article of clothing to the guard, who inspects it for weapons or contraband. He hands it back and you don your shorts and shoes. Then you kneel backwards to the door, placing your arms (behind your back) through the slot. This is tricky and takes some getting used to. Your hands are manacled. Once the handcuffs are secured, you can pull your arms in and the guard will give the signal to open the door. They escort you out to a yard that is a large concrete pad with individual barred and fenced cages with locking doors. Each cage has a pull-up bar, a basketball hoop and one basketball that may have air in it if you’re lucky. You may not touch the fence for any reason.

Once you are placed in your own individual “rec yard,” you stick your arms out through the slot (just a rectangular opening in the fence here, no locking door) and they remove the handcuffs. Your hour started when you left the cell. In about 45 minutes they are back to get you, and in front of all the other yards, you again strip naked, holding your shoes and clothes in hand. But no one else notices because they are doing the same thing, too. Again the guard inspects each article and allows you to put on shorts and shoes. You are cuffed, the door is opened, you are taken to your cell. The door is closed. The cuffs are removed, the slot is closed, and that is it. You have been recreated.

This is your only out-of-cell activity. It occupies three of the 168 hours in the week, and the rest of the time you are confined to the cell.

Of course, there is the occasional excitement when someone climbs into another’s yard and kills or injures them, or the guards slam someone and beat him up, or gas someone for slights real or imagined. It can get much worse, but this is the best case scenario.

Then there is the glory of cell searches. Every 72 hours without fail, each cell on the unit must be thoroughly searched for weapons and contraband. This entails the usual stripping and cuffing. You are then held outside while one or two guards enter your cell and throw things around willy nilly, stick their fingers in your food, shake out your sheets, clothes, etc. and generally make a mess for you to put back in order. This takes place every day sometimes if things are “tense.”

What are my days like? They “drift to dust, like dried leaves dropped from dead limbs.” An image that is very fitting to the wasted time here.

— Ken Lynch

Pass this copy on to a friend!

The security scam

The following article is the supporting argument moved by an SPGB speaker, Dr. Stephen Coleman, in a 1986 debate over whether "society would be more secure without police, prisons or armies." Though now slightly dated, it remains a rousing summary of the socialist position on crime and punishment.

For most of human history people lived in a condition of what historians in our age have described, with all of the arrogance and condescension of civilized snobbery, as "primitive backwardness."

For something like 40,000 years of the earliest evolution of human society our ancestors were "primitives." And what did it mean to suffer this terrible primitive fate of not being born into civilized times such as ours? It meant that they lived cooperatively; what they had they used in common; what they gathered from nature they shared on the basis of free access; what rules for living they governed themselves by were not alien "laws" made by superior beings called legislators and enforced by feared bodies of bullies devoted to the organized judgment and repression of others.

Primitive rules and customs reflected the consciousness of the community. Where people made such rules for themselves there was no call for primitive judges to dress in bizarre costumes and pontificate in pompous tones about laws by the few in order to regulate the conduct of the many. As for violence, the only weapons

known to the earliest humans were those required for the conquest of the natural environment in the perpetual struggle for survival and comfort.

Now we are no longer primitive. With the help of large supplies of gunpowder and sustained intakes of religious opiates the mass of humanity has "been civilized." Reagan and Gorbachev, with their fingers upon buttons that could annihilate the planet at a push, are civilized. The one in five scientists throughout the modern world whose wisdom has been bought by the military establishments are civilized.

The Police Chief of Manchester, Mr. Anderton, who a few years ago instructed his officers to enter the clubs of Greater Manchester with a view to arresting people committing the crime of "licentious dancing," is civilized.

The prison officers who beat up inmates in their cells and those who have murdered prisoners while in police or prison custody are civilized. The men who stand guard, like well-trained Nazis, on the untried inmates of the British-controlled concentration camp at Long Kesh are all being very civilized. The police who have employed the most brutal force against

striking workers — not only in Poland and South Africa, but in Britain also — they will always tell you how civilized they are. We are all civilized now.

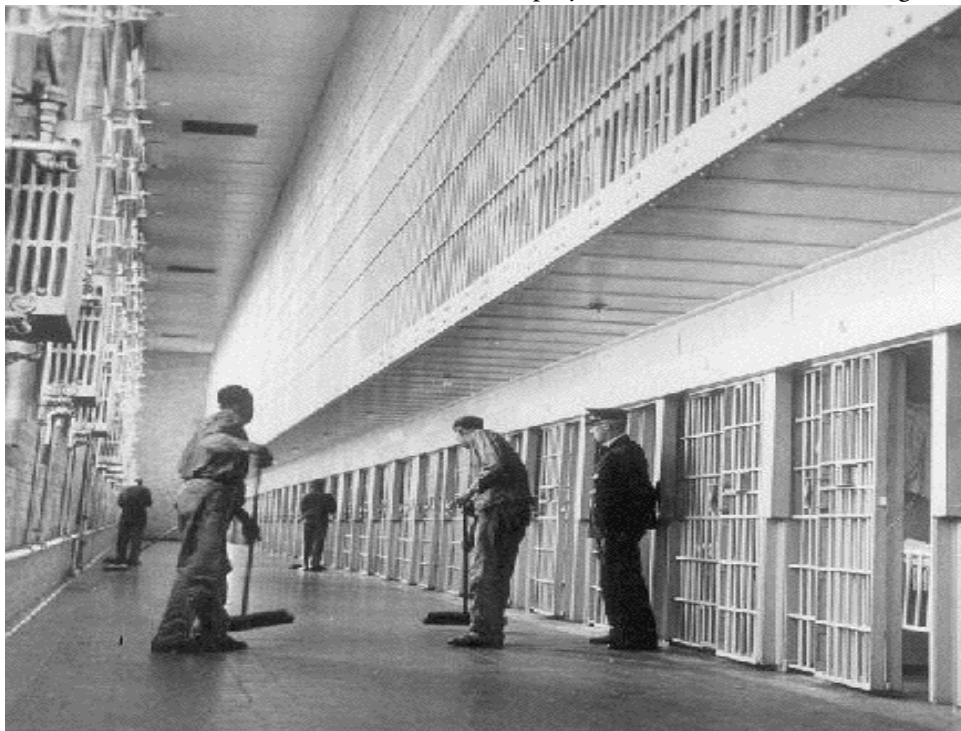
It is part of the myopic complacency of those who imagine that the way we live now is the only way we could live to assert that we must have police and prisons and armies. It is natural that they should exist. And if you question what is natural you are a utopian. And if you are utopian then you are indulging in a futile battle against immutable reality. I hope that my opponent will not commit the crass error of thinking that history is immutable and that institutions which some think are neutral will in fact last forever.

The tyranny of property

I am an opponent of civilization. I favor an uncivilized alternative to the detestable "law and order" of the present social system. When they asked Gandhi what he thought of Western Civilization he replied that it would be a good idea if they ever tried it. Civilization is that period of history in which the tyranny of property has prevailed. To be civilized is to submit oneself to a structure of power based upon the ownership and control of property by a minority. Civilized morality is an ethic of reverence for those who possess. Civilized law and order prevail as long as property is safe.

What are property relationships? They are essentially relationships of exclusion. The pen is mine — therefore it is not yours. You take this pen and I will call the police. It is no use pleading with them that the words of a brilliant new poem have just come into your head and you feel inspired to write them down at once. You may be a second Shelley — I may be illiterate; but if I possess twenty pens and you own none the police will not decide whom to arrest on the basis of a poetry competition.

This factory is mine; therefore I own all that is produced in it. It does not matter that I may never visit my factory and



would not be able to operate the machines if I did — I take what they producers in the factory make and if they take any they are criminals who must be reported to the police and dealt with.

The same applies to dwellings; if I own a house you can only enter by paying me money or else you are a trespasser. The conflict between property and need was well illustrated in 1971 when some squatters occupied some empty houses owned by the London Borough of Southwark and the Council (which was Labour Party controlled) took the homeless people to court. Now, in addition to their misfortune of being homeless they also had the bad luck to have their case judged by Lord Denning — a man who always strikes one as the unintelligent man's idea of what it is to be wise — and in his summing up on the case Denning said,

If [being] homeless were once admitted as a defense to trespass, no one's house could be safe. Necessity would open a door that no man could shut ... The plea would be an excuse for all sorts of wrong-doing. So the courts must, for the sake of law and order, take a firm stand. They must refuse to admit the plea of necessity to the hungry and the homeless; and trust that their distress will be relieved by the charitable and the good.

So it is that, whilst according to UNESCO there are 40,000 children dying of starvation each day, armed police in India stand in defense of grain warehouses that are "private property."

Armies perform the same function. (The speaker then quoted from two military sources in order to demonstrate that militarism is but an extension of commerce). Naïve people say that armies exist to make us secure.

Do any of you present wake up each morning and think of the Cruise Missiles at Greenham Common military base? The Exocet missiles that tore the skins off young men in the South Atlantic? The plastic bullets now being used by the state terrorists in Belfast, Ireland, and soon to be used by the police here and the deranged officers being trained in the psychopathic arts at Sandhurst? And then think to yourselves, "My word, I do feel safe! What a dangerous world this would be without the skilled killers and sophisticated murder weaponry in order to make us secure!" That is what the opponent of

The Morality of Amerika is Business: A Review of U.S. Prison Statistics¹

Almost 10 percent of all prisoners in the United States are now serving life-terms, according to a report released by the Sentencing Project, a prison research and advocacy group. This represents an 83 percent increase since 1992. Almost 20 percent of prisoners in New York and California are serving life-sentences; 23,523 inmates in U.S. prisons who are mentally ill are doing life. Prisons are in themselves breeders of crime. The recidivism rate for released lifers is 20 percent, with 67 percent re-arrested within three years. The report indicated that inmates who were once serving 25 years to life sentences now serve longer portions of all sentences, many until they die in prison. A life sentence in Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Pennsylvania and South Dakota now means life without parole.

These figures did not result from higher crime rates but from the "get tough on crime" philosophy rampant in the 90s — this, in spite of the fact that "crime" rates actually fell 35 percent from 1992 to 2002.

One of the difficulties facing released prisoners (which helps to explain their recidivism) is that many have nowhere to go upon being released, no money and no skills to help them find employment. Many prisons provide no education or opportunities for learning practical skills and no guidance for re-entering society. Compounding this, many jobs and professions are closed to them

because of their prison backgrounds. Delaware deliberately excludes ex-prisoners from almost every occupation that requires a state license, such as dentistry, engineering, real estate and a number of others. Indeed, former inmates are barred from more than 35 jobs and professions, leaving them little opportunity to make a living and so stay out of prison.

A study by the Urban Institute has determined that some counties in the U.S. now have more than 30 percent of their residents incarcerated; almost a third of all counties have at least one prison. The county with the largest number of prisoner-residents was Concho County in Texas, with a population of 4,000, of whom 33 percent were behind bars.

A strong reason for the growth of the prison industry is the economic boom it has produced. In 1923 there were 61 prisons in this country. The Institute study, entitled "The New Landscape of Imprisonment: Mapping America's Prison Expansion," reveals that prisons grew from 592 in 1974 to 1,023 in 2000. During that time, the number of inmates rose from 315,974 to 1.3 million. Texas built 120 prisons during the period — about six a year. Florida came in second with 84, California third with 83 and New York fourth with 65. Fueling this accumulation is the support furnished by construction workers and guards hungry for the jobs thus provided.

— MC

¹ Culled from a *New York Times* article by Fox Butterfield, 12 May 2004.

this motion must argue: that without armies we would be less secure.

The case I am putting rests upon the contention that police forces and prisons and armies are essentially in existence to secure the tyranny of property. The only serious alternative to that tyranny is socialism, by which I mean a social system based upon the common ownership, as opposed to private or state ownership, of

social resources. The only way we will obtain a genuinely secure society to live in will be by transforming social relationships from those based on property and exclusion to those based upon common ownership and free access to the goods and services of the earth.

In a society of common ownership there

Continued on next page

will, by definition, be no owners and non-owners, no bosses and bossed. There will be no hereditary entitlement to parasitical idleness and affluence. There will be no babies born to suffer the miserable inheritance of deprivation.

People cannot steal what they own in common. That disposes of 90 per cent of “crimes” committed today. Home Office statistics confirm the fact that if you emptied the prisons of those convicted for crimes against property you would virtually empty the prisons.

And what would armies, dedicated to the cause of mass destruction, have to do in a community of common ownership? There will be no more murderous trade

The Thirteenth Amendment

A coffle of state slaves shuffles
Slowly into the radiant rays
Of dawn's early light,
Spartacus nowhere in sight.
Fight scarred all, and bone
Wearied from strife and stress,
Destined to toil under the sun till
Twilight's last gleaming brings rest.
The tools are issued;
One hoe per man, each
Each dull of blade, each
Splinter hafted, each
Four pounds of sweat-stained purpose.
Each, in proper hands,
Four pounds of peril.
Let there be no peril today, we pray;
No quick and vicious fights — sweat stinging,
Fists flying, we cull living from dying;
No riots fought for fast forgot reasons —
Swinging steel scintillating in sunlight,
Blood gouting from the too-slow heads,
Brown, black, white —
Our blood ruby red and thick with life, no
Respecter of race, creed or origin.
Let there be no peril today, we pray;
No dry crackling reports of leaden soldiers
Speaking the old tongue of Authority,
Chasing whisks of smoke from forge fashioned barrels;
The guns, like totems, guardgripped fast by
Bossfists in confederate grey cloths —
Their fire fells friends, frees foes.
Let there be no peril today, we pray;
Today only — hard work, for no pay.

— Ken Lynch

wars for them to perform in. No empires. No anachronistic nationalist disputes about which gang of thieves controls which territory. How could such a system of society ever consider wasting its energies and resources upon the perverse venture of an organized institution for killing people: an army? The insane violence which civilized fools call “healthy competition” which would have no reason to occur in a society of common ownership.

Needed: An iron fist

It will be conceded by many people that it would be very pleasant if we could all share the planet as sisters and brothers and that, indeed, most crimes and wars are property-related. But there is “something there” — something in “human nature,” that vague term which no scientist has yet seriously defined or located — and this “something” leads us to require all of these forces of coercion to protect us from ourselves.

I reject emphatically the suggestion that there is “something natural” in human beings which needs to be repressed and restrained; I reject it because I regard it as being but a watered down version of the stale old religious dogma that we're all evil sinners at heart.

To those who speak of motiveless, inexplicable anti-social behavior I respond that if we look hard enough at what society does to brutalize and desensitize and degrade human personalities you will find the motives. If you want to comprehend soccer violence, then talk to those who glorify nationalism in the classroom and urge children to take pride in imperial violence and plunder. If you want to comprehend the mind of the rapist, then talk to the editor of *The Sun* [a British tabloid with nudity]. If you want to comprehend senseless, gratuitous violence against defenseless victims, then study the bombing of Dresden when men were commanded to fly above their defenseless victims and to assault, molest and murder not just one innocent old lady or powerless little child but many thousands of them.

Before arriving at unhistorical conclusions about “human nature” one should remember that for most of human history there were no wars or muggings or banks

to be broken into by armed men because there was no cause for these things.

I predict that my opponent will tell me that even if he accepts all that I have said it is politically pragmatic for us to work to reform the system we have now.

After all, people feel that they need police and prisons and armies — they may not be justified in doing so, but that is how they have been conditioned to feel. I do not dispute that this is how most people feel.

But it is also the case that most people would feel safer if hanging was re-introduced. Most people feel that not only do they need the protection of an army, but they favor some kind of what is laughably called nuclear defense.

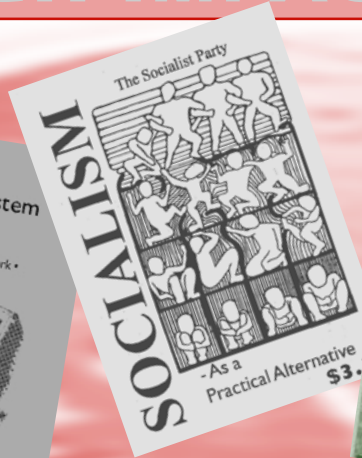
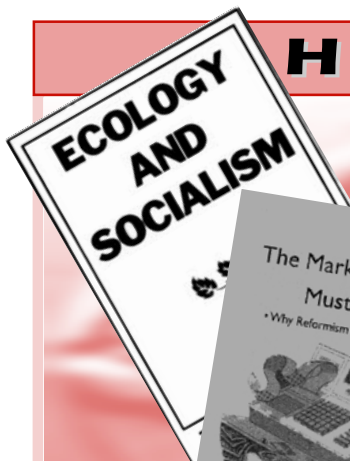
But if those feelings are false — if my opponent cannot with sincerity and logic support those feelings — then he has an obligation to say to people, “Well, that may be what you feel, but you are wrong. And this is why you are wrong.” If one does not challenge such feelings, they what is to stop other pragmatists from riding to power on all kinds of other irrational feelings and prejudices?

The motion in this debate concerns a fundamental matter of our political culture: What is power to be? Is it something above us, threatening us, bullying us — the Harvey Proctor conception of authority that humiliates the powerless and gives a deranged illusion of strength to the dominator? Or is power something that we shall enjoy as of right because we are conscious and creative human beings with immense capacities for development? When you perceive power in the latter sense (the socialist sense) you do not require uniformed thugs to protect humanity from its own potential.

Society will be more secure when we establish a system which does not require police, prisons, and armies — it will be more secure because once we have removed the power over us there is almost no limit to what we can do with power between us. Ø

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THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

object

The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

declaration of principles

The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:

- Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
- This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
- As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
- This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
- As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

THE COMPANION PARTIES OF SOCIALISM, THEREFORE, enter the field of political action determined to stand against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



journal of the world socialist movement in the united states

the world socialist movement

THE FOLLOWING COMPANION PARTIES ADHERE TO THE SAME OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:

WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA, Box 1266, N Richmond, 3121 Victoria

SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA/PARTI SOCIALISTE DU CANADA, Box 4280, Station A, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8 • SPC@iname.com; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spc>. JOURNAL: Imagine (\$1)

SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. JOURNAL: Socialist Standard (\$1.50). [TEL. 020 7622 3811; FAX 020 7622 3665] • spgb@worldsocialism.org; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb>

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We are committed to one overriding goal: the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a truly democratic, socialist form of society. Accordingly, membership in the World Socialist Party requires a general understanding of the basic principles of scientific socialism and agreement with the Declaration of Principles. It is our view that a worldwide system of production for the satisfaction of human needs, individual and social, rather than for private profit requires a majority that is socialist in attitude and commitment. Events since the beginning of the World Socialist Movement have demonstrated the validity of this judgment.



Since our fundamental goal is quite firmly defined as the attainment of socialism it is important that members understand and accept our principles. To dilute the principles with reformist tendencies or advocacy of the undemocratic idea of "leadership," for example, would be to subvert the Party's reason for being.

That said, we recognize there is room for differences of opinion in a socialist party. In contrast to principles, relatively few in number, there are a multiplicity of matters upon which socialists may have all kinds of conflicting views. If you agree with the following statements, you are a socialist and you belong with us.

To establish socialism, the working class throughout the must gain control of the powers of government through their political organizations. It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. State power means control of the main avenues of "education" and propaganda, either directly or indirectly. It also means control of the armed forces that frequently and efficiently crush working-class attempts at violent opposition to the effects of capitalism. Moreover, the police and the armed forces are often used to combat workers during strikes and industrial disputes with employers. In a modern, highly developed capitalist society the only way to oust the capitalist class from ownership and control of the means of production is to first strip it of its control over the state. Once this has been accomplished, the state will be converted from a coercive government over people to an administration over things and community affairs. The World Socialist Party, therefore, advocates the ballot as the means of abolishing capitalism and establishing socialism. Socialism can only be established democratically; means cannot be separated from ends.

The present, capitalist, society, even with "repair" and reform, cannot function in the interests of the working class, who make up the majority of the population in most of the world today. Indeed, by its very nature, capitalism requires continual reform. But reforms cannot alter the basic exploitative relationship of wage-labor and capital, or production for profit. Whatever the reformers' intentions, reforms function only to make capitalism run more smoothly and to make present-day society more palatable to the work-

ing class by holding out false hopes of a fundamental change or radical improvement. In the long run, reforms benefit the owning, capitalist, class rather than the class that produces the wealth. The World Socialist Party does not advocate reforms of capitalism — only socialism.

The World Socialist Party does not support, directly or indirectly, any political party other than our companion parties in the World Socialist Movement. We can only oppose those parties that one way or another support the present system. Our main purpose is to make socialists, not to advocate the use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

The form of society once in effect in the Soviet Union, and still more or less in effect in China and Cuba now, was not and is not socialism or communism. It was a dictatorial, bureaucratic form of state capitalism. In those countries, as in the United States, goods and services were and are produced primarily for profit and not primarily for use. Nationalization and government "ownership" of industry in no way alters the basic relationship of wage labor and capital. The bureaucratic class that controls this form of the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value-eating class.

Trade unionism is the institution by which wage and salary workers attempt by various means to sell their working abilities, their mental and physical energies, at the best possible price and to improve their working conditions. Workers without such organizations have no reliable economic weapons with which to resist the attempts of employers to beat down their standards. But

unions necessarily work within the framework of capitalism and are useful, therefore, only to a limited extent. They cannot alter the fundamental relationship between wage-labor and capital. They can only react to capital's fiat, particularly in the case of long-term issues like automation or unemployment. Every wage or salary increase, in fact, only spurs employers and investors to accelerate the replacement of humans by machines in the workplace. If anything, instead of foolishly selling themselves short by demanding "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work," workers would do far better to follow Marx's advice and simply abolish employment altogether.

The World Socialist Party rejects the theory of leadership. Neither "great" individuals nor self-appointed "vanguards" can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administration to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or "vanguards," never!

The socialist point of view rests solidly on the materialist conception of history, a way of looking at things that focuses on how human communities meet their actual survival needs by producing what they need to live (their economic systems, in other words). Out of this process the human brain weaves its ideas, which eventually exert their own influence on the cycle, causing it to become more and more complex as society evolves.

This approach, known as historical materialism, is a scientific method for helping us understand how and why capitalism does what it does. Armed with this understanding, socialists realize that capitalism can never deliver the goods for the vast majority of people. Other approaches, lacking this focus and overlooking the basis of capitalist society, can easily miss this point, so that their advocates get bogged down in vain efforts to make capitalism work for the majority.

Socialists hold that materialist explanations of human society and the rest of nature supersede supernatural ones. A religious perspective won't necessarily prevent anyone from striving to abolish capitalism and its evils, and the ethical elements of religious teachings may even be what first make many people aware of the injustices of a class-divided society. But they don't in themselves lead to an understanding of the causes of such injustices. (More often than not, religious institutions themselves justify and commit them.) The world socialist perspective is in any case essentially post-religious, because the case for socialism hinges on the scientific use of evidence. Socialists therefore look on supernatural explanations as obsolete. ☐

Leonard Peltier and the primal needs of Capital*

In a remote section of South Dakota just north of Nebraska lies an Indian reservation known as Pine Ridge. At one time largely agricultural, it became hugely attractive to the U.S. government when it was discovered that beneath the Indian lands lay one of the largest uranium reserves in the United States. All through the years, treaties with the Indians had been consistently violated because of the major mineral reserves beneath the Indian territories.

When Pine Ridge became the focus of the United States government, the Indian residents were strongly opposed to uranium development on their turf. Bitterness grew as problems were exacerbated with the increasing threat of U.S. intervention. Turning to the American Indian Movement (AIM) for assistance led to military conflict with the FBI, which refused to listen to the complaints of the Indians. The struggle lasted 71 days, resulting in the deaths of two Pine Ridge natives and the outlawing of all activities at Pine Ridge.

During the following three years, now referred to as the "Reign of Terror," violent assaults continued to take place in which vast numbers of Indians were murdered or maimed. With the government intent on destroying the AIM and thereby removing a major obstacle in their plans to exploit the uranium booty, homes were burned, shootings and beatings became rampant. So many native Americans were killed that Pine Ridge had the highest annual murder rate in the U.S. Again the AIM came to their assistance, and among those who responded was Leonard Peltier. The conflict led to three murder indictments including that of Leonard Peltier, accused of shooting two FBI agents. No evidence was ever introduced to support the accusation. Subsequently, Peltier escaped to Canada, convinced that he would never receive a fair trial in the U.S. Less than a year later, he was apprehended.

Myrtle Poor Bear was an Indian woman who had never met Leonard Peltier. Terrified under interrogation by the FBI, she testified against him. This terror-induced accusation led to the extradition of Peltier to the U.S. All

of her incriminating statements were later withdrawn, and Myrtle Poor Bear confessed that her fear of the FBI had led her to make false statements. With the government determined to pin the guilt on Peltier and thus remove the bête noire from their uranium quest, her confessions were thrown aside and ignored.

Despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence, the trial was rigged against him with perjury and manufactured evidence. No witness was ever found who could identify Leonard as the man who shot and killed two FBI agents. Hundreds of thousands of pages of critical evidence pinpointing the unprovoked attack on Pine Ridge were withheld from the trial.

The events here described and the part played by Peltier were detailed in a book by Peter Matthieson, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*. This revealing report was kept out of print for eight years, while the FBI sued the author and publisher for libel. Although the Supreme Court eventually denied the suit, the stunning evidence produced by the book was unavailable at the time of Leonard Peltier's trial.

Today Pine Ridge has an 86 percent unemployment rate, the lowest life expectancy and the highest infant mortality rate in the nation. The government's vindictiveness toward the Lakota people led to the ruin of innumerable lives. The ongoing penal servitude of Leonard Peltier at Leavenworth Prison is the direct consequence of the FBI's unabated pressure to keep him confined.

Despite worldwide appeals from human-rights organizations, and the publicity given to the merits of his case, 500 FBI agents marched in Washington to oppose clemency for him. They continue to use their authority to thwart all efforts to obtain his freedom, now denied him for 28 years.

Leonard Peltier is not in prison for the murder of two FBI agents. Of that he is demonstrably not guilty. Leonard Peltier is in prison because he is a potential threat to governmental forces intent on exploiting the mineral resources that lie buried beneath Indian territory. The facts of Leonard's conviction

are well known. Well known also is the bitter massacre of the Indians at Wounded Knee, which left an entire community devastated.** Terror-stricken families and ruined lives draw little compassion from those whose motives are purely profit-driven. They are "collateral damage." The drive for profit under capitalism overrides all human considerations. Like the conflict in Iraq, the huge loss of lives and the obliteration of the infrastructures are a price worth paying for the control of huge oil reserves needed for the operation of the capitalist machine.

Such reports are not unique to America. All over the world human values are subordinated to the primal needs of capital.

Indeed, they scream out for a change from this power-driven, cash-oriented social system to one that emphasizes cooperation, and in which human values are the measure of all human action. They send a message to all who will listen that the world hungers for a society that will eliminate needless suffering and replace it with opportunities for all human beings to lead fulfilling lives.

— Mardon Cooper

* Sources: Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, Anthony Rayson (Prison Abolition), Matt Sherman (AIM) and Leonard Peltier ("Prison Writings").

** The massacre at Wounded Knee took place on December 29, 1890. See, for example, <http://www.lastoftheindependents.com/wounded.htm>. The siege at Wounded Knee, referred to above, began on February 27, 1973 and lasted 71 days.

Leonard Peltier has provided us with words that should resonate with those who share this vision:

The Message

Silence, they say, is the voice of complicity. But silence is impossible.

Silence screams.

Silence is a message, Just as doing nothing is an act.

Let who you are ring out and resonate in every word and every deed.

Yes, become who you are.

There's no sidestepping your own being or your own responsibility.

What you do is who you are.

You are your own comeuppance.

You become your own message.

You are the message.