

# The Commune

## Community Control of the Poor Community

Practical Ideas for Building the  
Free Community



Zabalaza Books

*"Knowledge is the Key to be Free"*

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ance movement that I spoke of earlier should think of itself as a paramilitary movement, rather than a strict political association. We must assert our rights to armed self-defence and revolution, even though it is true that there is a lot of loose talk about guns, self-defence, revolution, urban guerrilla warfare, etc., in the Working and radical movements, but with very little study and practice in handling and using weapons. Some of the same folks think picking up the gun means that you pick one up for the first time on the day of an insurrection or confrontation with police. This is nonsense and is the real revolutionary suicide; you could get killed not knowing what you are doing. But many instances attest to the fact that armed community self-defence can be carried out successfully. Even as important as the act of defence itself is, is the fact that these instances of successful self-defence can make a tremendous impact on the Black community, encouraging other acts of resistance.

## *ONWARD TO THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION!*

# The Commune: Community Control of the Poor Community

"How do we raise a new revolutionary consciousness against a system programmed against our old methods?... We must use a new approach and revolutionise the [ ] Central City Commune, and slowly provide the people with the incentive to fight by allowing them to create programs that will meet all their social, political, and economic needs. We must fill the vacuums left by the established order... In return, we must teach them the benefits of our revolutionary ideals. ... We must build a subsistence economy and a socio-political infrastructure so that we can become an example for all revolutionary people"

**George Jackson, Blood in My Eye**

The idea behind a mass commune is to create a dual power structure as a counter to the government, under conditions that exist now. In fact, we Anarchists believe the first step toward self-determination and the Social Revolution is community control of the Poor community. This means that people must form and unify their own organisations of struggle, take control of the existing communities and all the institutions within them, and conduct a consistent fight to overcome every form of economic, political, and cultural servitude, and any system of racial and class inequality which is the product of this racist Capitalist society.

The realisation of this aim means that we can build communes that will be centres of counter-power and social revolutionary culture against the political power structures in the principal cities of the world. Once they assume control, such communes would be an actual alternative to the State and serve as a force to revolutionise people and by extension large segments of society, which could not possibly remain immune to this process. It would serve as a living revolutionary example to all progressives.

There is tremendous fighting power in the community, but it is not organised in a structured revolutionary way to effectively struggle and take what is due. The Capitalist ruling class recognises this, which is why it pushes the fraud of Black Capitalism and Black politicians and other such responsible leaders. These fakes and sell-outs lead us to the dead-end road of voting and praying for that which we must really be willing to fight for. We Anarchists recognise the commune as one of the primary organs of the new society, and as an alternative to the old society. But we also recognise that Capitalism will not give up without a fight; it will be necessary to economically and politically cripple it. We should not continue to passively allow this system to exploit and oppress us.

The commune is a staging ground for revolutionary struggle. For instance, people should refuse to pay taxes to the government, should boycott the Capitalist cor-

porations, should lead a General Strike all over the country, and should engage in an insurrection to drive the police out and win a liberated zone. This would be a powerful method to obtain the demands of the movement, and weaken the power of the State. We can even force the government to make money available for community development as a concession, instead of as a payoff to buy-out the struggle. If we put a gun to a banker's head and said: "we know you've got the money, now give it up!" he would have to surrender. Now the question is: if we did the same thing to the government, using direct action with an insurrectionary mass movement, would these both be acts of expropriation? Or is it just to pacify the community why they gave us the money? One thing for sure, we definitely need the money, and however we compel it from the government is less important than the fact that we forced them to give it up to the people. We could then use the money to rebuild our communities, maintain our organisations, and care for the needs of our people. It could be a major concession, a victory.

But we have also got to realise that people are not simply oppressed by force of arms, but that part of the moral authority of the State comes from the mind of the oppressed who consent to the right to be governed. As long as people believe that some moral or political authority of the government has legitimacy in their lives, that they owe a duty to this nation as citizens, or even that they are responsible for their own oppression, then they cannot effectively fight back. We must free our minds of the ideas of the "Rainbow Nation" and begin to see ourselves as a new people. This can only be accomplished under dual power, where the patriotism of the people for the State is replaced with love and support for the new commune. We do that by making the commune a real thing in the day-to-day lives of ordinary people.

We should establish community councils to make policy decisions and administer the affairs of the community. These councils would be democratic neighbourhood assemblies composed of representatives elected by workers in various community institutions - factories, hospitals, schools - as well as delegates elected on a block basis. We must reject the Councillors and other politicians, or government bureaucrats, as a substitute for community power. We must therefore have community control of all the institutions of the community, instead of just letting the State decide what is good for us. Not just jobs and housing, but also full control over schools, hospitals, welfare centres, libraries, etc., must be turned over to that community, because only the residents of a community have a true understanding of its needs and desires.

Here is an example of how it would work: we would elect a community council to supervise all schools in the community. We would encourage parents, students, teachers, and the community at-large to work co-operatively in every phase of school administration, rather than have an authority figure like a principal and his/her uncaring bureaucratic administration run things as are done at present. The whole community will have to engage in a militant struggle to take over the public schools and turn them into centres of culture and learning. We cannot continue to depend on the Richs' puppet school boards to do this for us.

The local council would then be federated, or joined together on a local level to

underground resistance.

But what do we do right now in conditions of legality, to reclaim our community from violent cops? Do we sit around and debate the appropriateness of military preparation, when the enemy is in our community now, committing rape and murder of our people or do we hit back? How do we even get the idea across to our people and start to train them for paramilitary operations? On a mass scale, we could try immediately to form defense and survival skills study groups, under the guise of gun clubs, martial arts societies, wilderness survival clubs or whatever we need to call them, but a thorough understanding of marksmanship, ammunition making, demolition and weapon manufacturing is minimal for everyone. In addition, we should study first aid for traumatic injuries, combat communications, combat weapons, combat tactics for the small group, combat strategy for the region or inter-region, combat intelligence of police and military activities among other subjects. These subjects are indispensable if we are to live underground, or during a general insurrection.

We should put emphasis on the purchase, collection, duplication and spreading of military manuals, gunsmithing textbooks, explosive and improvised demolitions manuals, police and government technical manuals, and pirated editions of Right-wing manuals on the subject (since they seem to write the best material) and also begin the study of how to build intelligence networks to collect information on the rapidly growing totalitarian racist organisations, along with intelligence and counter-intelligence information on the government, secret police, and law enforcement agencies, like the National Intelligence Agency, Secret Service, etc., and on any and every other subject which could be of use to us in the coming struggle.

We should learn to use machine tool technology to produce our own weapons. Perfectly adequate firearms may be produced using a minimum of machine tools, providing the individual or group is willing to do the necessary studying and preparation. It is not enough to know a little about these subjects; it is a matter of future survival of life and death that one be highly proficient.

We might not need the immediate waging of urban guerrilla warfare, especially where there is no mass base for such activities. But we need to understand armed self-defence and the knowledge of tactics to resist military aggression against the Poor community. It is a foolish and unfortunate trait among Anarchists, the Middle Class Left and sections of the Working Class movement to condemn the study of military skills as premature or adventuristic, or on the other hand, to cast oneself into a blind fury of bank expropriations, kidnappings, bombings or plane hijackings. Too many people in the movement have a death trip approach to guns - they assume that if you are not fooling around, then you should prove your convictions via a suicidal shoot-out in the streets. It doesn't have to be that way.

But the movement doesn't even have the luxury of such tepid debates, and must have an armed defence policy because we have a long tradition of government political repression and vigilante paramilitary violence. Although such attacks have been directed primarily at poor communities, in the past they have also been directed at labour unions and dissident political groups. Such violence makes it absolutely necessary to acquire familiarity with firearms and military tactics. In fact, the Poor resist-

## Armed Defence of the Commune!

Our insistence on military action, defensive and retaliatory, has nothing to do with romanticism or precipitous idealist fervour. We want to be effective. We want to live. Our history teaches us that the successful liberation struggles require an armed people, a whole people, actively participating in the struggle for their liberty!

**-George Jackson, quoted in Blood in my Eye**

We must organise self-defence units to protect our community and its organisations. It is the police and the government who are the main perpetrators of violence against Poor people. Often we hear of the police murdering and maiming the people in our community, all in the name of law and order. This police brutality has included the use of deadly force against children as young as five years old and elderly persons over 75 years old. We must disarm and demilitarise the police, and force them to leave our community. Perhaps this can be done after a rebellion or insurrection drives them out, or perhaps they will have to be driven out by a street guerrilla force, like the Black Liberation Army tried to do in America in the 1970s. We have no way of knowing - they just have to go. They are an oppressive occupying army, are not of our community, cannot understand its problems, and do not identify with the people and their needs. Further, it is the corruption of the cops that protects organised crime and vice in our community, and Capitalism with its exploitative economic conditions which is responsible for all crime.

Existing police forces should be replaced with the Poor community's own self-defence force, made up of members of our community elected or appointed by their neighbours to that position, or from an existing street guerrilla force or political organisation if the people agree. They would be subject to immediate recall and dismissal by the Community Control boards of an area. This is only so that we will have community control of the self-defence force, begin to deal with fratricidal Poor-on-Poor crime, and be able to defend ourselves from racist or police attacks. With the increase of violence today, and the possibility of mob action in the future, usually in the name of law and order, this community self-defence force is most important. The only question is: can we do this now?

We exist now under conditions of nominal legality and civil rights, but at some stage in the process of building up our forces, it is inevitable that the Capitalist power structure will recognise the danger to itself represented by such a free commune, and will then try to forcibly repress it. We must have the self-defence capability to resist. This concept of organising a self-defence force accepts any level of violence that will be necessary to enforce the demands of the people and workers. Yet these self-defence forces would not be a party vanguard, a police force, or even a standing army in the Statist or usually thought of sense; they would be a Poor People's militia, self-managed by the workers and community itself, or in other words the people-in-arms. These militia organizations will allow us to engage in offensive or defensive actions, either in general community defence, or as part of an insurrection or

create a city wide group of councils who would run affairs in that community. The councils and other neighbourhood collectives organised for a variety of reasons would make a mass commune. This commune would in turn be federated at the regional and inter-regional level, the aim being to create an inter-regional federation of communes, which would meet periodically in one or a number of mass assembly meetings. This federation would be composed of elected or appointed delegates representing their local commune or council. Such an inter-regional federation of communes would allow community councils from all over southern Africa to work out common policies and speak with one voice on all matters affecting their communities or regions. It would thus have far more power than any single community council could. However, to prevent this inter-regional federation from bureaucratic usurpation of power by political factions or opportunistic leaders, elections should be held regularly and delegates would be subject to recall at any time for misconduct, so that they remain under the control of the local community they represent.

The community councils are really a type of grassroots movement made up of all the social formations of our people, the block and neighbourhood committees, Labour, student and youth groups (even the church, to a limited degree), social activist groups, and others to unite the various protest actions around a common program of struggle for this period. The campaigns for this period must use the tactics of direct mass action, as it is very important that the people themselves must realise a sense of their organised power. These grassroots associations will provide a form of organisation to the usually mass spontaneous actions, whose social base is of the working class, instead of the usual middle class mis-leadership.

We Anarchists recognise these community councils as being a form of direct democracy, instead of the type of phoney parliamentary democracy, which is really nothing but control by politicians and businessmen. The councils are especially important because they provide embryonic self-rule and the beginnings of an alternative to the Capitalist economic system and its government. It is a way to undermine the government and make it an irrelevant dinosaur, because its services are no longer needed.

The commune is also a revolutionary counter-culture. It is the embryo of the new revolutionary society in the body of the old sick, dying one. It is the new lifestyle in microcosm, which contains the new social values and the new communal organisations and institutions, which will become the socio-political infrastructure of the free society.

Our objective is to teach new social values of unity and struggle against the negative effects of Capitalist society and culture. To do that we must build the commune into a class conscious movement to build class pride and respect, class and social awareness, and to struggle against the Capitalist slave masters. This communalism would be both a repository of Class culture and ideology. We need to change both our lives and our lifestyles, in order to deal with the many interpersonal contradictions that exist in our community. We could examine the Class family, Class male/female relationships, the mental health of the Working and Poor community, relations between the community and the Ruling Class establishment, and among

working and poor people themselves. We would hold Class consciousness raising sessions in schools, community centres, prisons and in Poor communities all over southern Africa which would teach our class' history and culture, new liberating social ideas and values to children and adults, as well as counselling and therapy techniques to resolve family and marital problems, all the while giving a Working Class revolutionary perspective to the issues of the day. Our people must be made to see that self-hatred, disunity, distrust, internecine violence, and oppressive social conditions among working and poor people are the result of the legacy of slavery and the present day effects of Capitalism. Finally, the main objective of Working Class revolutionary culture is to agitate and organise Working Class people to struggle for their freedom.

We need to counter Class self-hatred and the frivolous "party mentality." We also want to end the social degradation of our community, and rid it of drug addiction, prostitution, Class-on-Class crime, and other social evils that destroy the moral fibre of the Poor community. Drugs and prostitution are mainly controlled by organised crime, and protected by the police, who accept bribes and gifts from gangsters. These negative social values, the so-called dog-eat-dog philosophy of the Capitalist system teaches people to be individualists of the worst sort - Willing to commit any kind of crime against each other, and to take advantage of each other. This oppressive culture is what we are fighting. As long as it exists, it will be hard to unify the people around a revolutionary political program.

## Building a Survival Program

But there must also be some way to ensure economic survival, in addition to providing new cultural role models. It is then when the commune, a network of community organisations and institutions, assumes its greatest importance. We will build a socio-political infrastructure to intervene in every area of Working Class life: food and housing co-operatives, Class Liberation schools, People's banks and community mutual aid funds, medical clinics and hospitals, rodent control and pest extermination programs, co-operative factories, environmental protection and upgrading groups, food growing groups and areas, community cultural and entertainment centres, the establishment of an inter-communal electronic communications network, land and building reclamation projects, public works brigades to rebuild the cities, youth projects, drug clinics, and many other such programs.

All these programs satisfy the deep needs of the Poor community, but they are not solutions to our problems, because although we can build a survival economy now, we have to realise it will take a social revolution to overthrow Capitalism and obtain full economic self-sufficiency. But communes will help us organise the Poor community around a true analysis and understanding of the situation. This is why they are called survival programs, meaning surviving under this system pending a

### What can we do?

1. Set up drug education classes in the community, for the youth especially, to expose the nature of the drug trade, who it hurts, and how the government, banks, and pharmaceutical companies are behind it all.
2. Expose the death merchants and their police protectors (photos, posters, fliers, newsletters, etc).
3. Harassment of the dealers; i.e., threatening phone calls, knocking the drug "product", having people marching outside their "place of business," and other tactics.
4. Set up drug rehabilitation clinics so that junkies can be treated, can study the nature of their oppression, and can be won over to revolutionary politics. We must win people away from drug use and to the revolution.
5. Physical elimination of the dealer; intimidation, driving the person out of a neighbourhood or out of town, beatings and assassination, where necessary.

***DOPE IS DEATH! WE MUST FIGHT  
DOPE ADDICTION BY ANY MEANS  
NECESSARY!***

***DO ALL YOU CAN TO HELP OUR  
PEOPLE IN THE ANTI-DOPE WAR!***

their lives and the life of our community. We must establish anti-dope programs in all Poor communities. We must expose and counter the government's role as pusher of dope, along with that of the police as protector of the drug trade. But also we must be prepared to help the drug victims with street counselling, street clinics (where they can clean-up and learn a trade and the socio-political reasons for drug use), propaganda against drug use, and other activities.

Junkies are the victims of the drug society, which thinks it's cool to use drugs. Children are some of the biggest victims of drug dealing, when they are tricked or forced (by economic necessity) into using or selling. The users and dealers both are victims, but the dealers are not entirely innocent. Even though the Poor man on the corner selling dope bags is a victim of the economic and political system that makes him do it, dope dealers are a corrupt, dangerous breed who must be stopped. Many people have been killed or seriously injured for naively trying to oppose dope dealers and make them leave their neighbourhoods. Therefore, the policy with junkies would be more benevolent and understanding, with dope dealers we must be cautious, and even ruthless when it is called for. We need to try to win them over first with an economic and political program to draw them away from the drug trade, but many of the dealers are so violence prone, especially the big shots (who are also protected by the cops) they must be opposed by both military and political means.

We are not advocating the summary murder of people, but we are saying if it takes death to bring about a change in the community, so be it! The issue of death is essentially an issue of who is doing the dying. It can be direct and exercised against the death merchant, or it can be indirect and exercised against our youth if we let it. To be aware of a dangerous situation and not move to change it is to be as responsible for that dangerous situation as those who created it in the first place.

We cannot just simplify this problem by saying that "just kill a few street-level dealers and that will end it". No, it won't, AND WE DON'T WANT TO DO THAT ANYWAY! They are just poor people trying to survive this system, just pawns in the drug game whose lives don't matter to the big Capitalists or government. When they say so these street level dealers will be killed or imprisoned, but the drug peddling system will go on. This is a socio-political problem, which can best be addressed by grassroots organising. But it's the corporate and industrial backers of the drug trade (not just the corner dealer) which must not only be exposed, but must be moved on. In addition to educational, agitational, and other action, there must be military action by revolutionary cells.

The underground actions which we are asking people to move on can be carried out by a relatively small group of dedicated people, a revolutionary cell of armed fighters, who have been trained in guerrilla tactics. But even these small groups of people must have the support of the neighbourhoods in order to function, otherwise people will not know it from another violent gang. Once this social cohesiveness exists among the community, then we can begin to put this proposal into action against the most violent, high-level, drug dealers. We are addressing ourselves to what can more or less be considered guidelines for dealing with the problem on a neighbourhood or community-wide level, then at a higher level.

social revolution.

Building consciousness and revolutionary culture means taking on realistic day-to-day issues, like hunger, the need for clothing and housing, joblessness, transportation and other issues. It means that the commune must fill in the vacuum where people are not being properly fed, clothed, provided with adequate medical treatment, or are otherwise being deprived of basic needs.

Contrary to the rhetoric of some Leftist groups, this will not make people passive or dependent on us, rather than struggling against the government and demanding those things. Rather, it inspires confidence in the revolutionary forces and exposes the government as uncaring and incompetent. That is more of an incentive for the people to revolt and overthrow the government than holding political pep rallies, giving speeches, running for public office, and publishing manifestos, resolutions, or party newspapers (that no one reads but their own members), like most WC and radical groups do now.

We need a new way of confronting our oppressed situation. We need to unite our people to fight, and to do that we need to educate, agitate and organise. That is the only way we will win a New World.

**What follows is an example of the kind of survival program we need:**

1. We must have community control of all businesses and financial institutions located in our communities, and for those businesses not working in our best interests or not returning some of the revenue back to the community, we will seize said businesses and turn them into community co-operatives and mutual aid banking societies.
2. We must have community control of all housing and major input in all community planning of WC communities. If a piece of property or house is owned by a slumlord (either a private realtor or government agency), we will seize it and turn it into a community housing co-operative. We oppose urban renewal, spatial decomposition, yuppie gentrification and other such Middle Class schemes to drive us out of our communities. We must have complete control of all planning boards affecting and concerning the community. To enforce these demands, we should lead rent strikes, demonstrations, armed actions and urban squatting to drive landlords out and take over property.
3. We must have an independent self-sustaining economy to guarantee full employment for all our people. We demand that the government provide massive economic aid to rebuild the cities. The government spends billions per year for the military killing machine. At least that amount should be redirected to meet the needs of all the oppressed communities. Ghetto housing must be rebuilt and turned over to the occupants. Adequate jobs and services must be provided to all community residents including first preference for all construction jobs in the community, when public works brigades are assigned to rebuild the cities. We must fight for grassroots control of all government funds allocated to the community through a network of mutual aid banking societies, community development corporations, and community development credit unions.

**4. Reparations: the Big Payback.** Governments and the rich class have stolen and oppressed us for centuries. They worked our ancestors as slaves, and after slavery they continued to oppress, murder and exploit our people, on down to the present day. We must build a mass movement in our communities to compel the government and the rich to provide the means for our community re-development. They owe us for centuries of abuse and robbery! We must demand that reparations, in the form of community development money and other funds, be provided and placed in credit unions, co-operatives, and other mutual aid institutions in the Working Class communities, so that we can start to obtain some measure of economic self-sufficiency. Yet we know that they won't give the money to us, we must fight them for it, just like we must struggle to overturn the system of wage slavery today.

**5. End police brutality.** We must organise self-defence units to protect the community and its organisations, and remove the State's police forces. We demand criminal prosecution and jailing of all brutal or killer cops. No jurisdiction for the State's judicial system in liberated zones.

**6.** We must undertake a large-scale program to train Working Class people as doctors, nurses and medical paraprofessionals in order to make free quality medical and dental care available to Working Class people. We must demand that the government subsidises all such medical and dental training, as well as for the operation of clinics, but Working Class people ourselves must establish and run the free medical clinics in all Working Class communities whether urban or rural. This would include community anti-drug programs and drug rehabilitation clinics.

**7.** We must establish a community-controlled food system for self-sufficiency and as a way of fighting to end hunger and malnutrition, including a trucking network, warehouses, communal farms, farmers, co-operatives, food co-operatives, agricultural unions, and other collective associations. This will include a protest campaign challenging the theft of farmland by agribusiness corporations and rich white land barons and reclaiming it for our projects. This is especially important now that the world has entered an economic crisis that will not be able to provide for our needs. We must force the government to provide the money for many of these projects, to be administered under our total control, instead of by a government agency.

**8.** The Poor community must have control of its entire educational system from nursery school through high school. We must establish a Working Class liberation educational system which meets the training needs of Working Class children, prepares them for job training and future economic security, service to their community, and gives them a knowledge of themselves and an understanding of the true history and culture of Working Class people, as well as a program of adult education for community people whose earlier educational opportunities have been stunted. We should demand free higher education for Working Class people at full government expense, including remedial training programs for all who wish to participate.

**9.** We must demand and fight for the release of all Working Class political prisoners and victims of racial injustice, we must investigate and review the cases of all such prisoners who are the victims of government political repression and frame-ups, and lead a mass campaign for their release. Some of our best revolutionary organisers

have also been gunned down in the crossfire. The drug addict is another tragic figure; he or she was a human being just like anyone else, but because of an oppressive social environment, sought drugs to ease the pain or to escape temporarily from the concrete jungles we are forced to live in in the urban ghettos. With the introduction of crack, a more powerful derivative of cocaine, which made its appearance in the 1980s in America, even more problems and tragedies of this sort developed, more addicts, more street gang killings, and more deterioration of our communities. In the major urban areas there have almost always been drug users, what is new is the depth of penetration of crack to Poor communities in most areas of the world. But the spread of crack is just a follow-up to massive government drug peddling that began at the end of the decade of the 1960s in America. The White House is the "rock house", meaning the US political administration is behind the whole drug trade. The US government has actually been smuggling drugs into the USA for many years aboard CIA and military planes to use in chemical warfare against Poor America. At first mostly heroin was imported from the Golden Triangle of Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. But with the introduction of crack cocaine, there was no need to import drugs into the country at the same rate as before, because it could be chemically prepared in a mainland lab, and distributed immediately. Crack created a whole new generation of drug clients and customers for the drug dealers; it was cheap and highly addictive.

Crack and other drugs are a huge source of profits for many governments, and it keeps the Poor community passive and politically indifferent. That is the main reason why we cannot depend upon the police force and/or the government to stop the drug trafficking or help the victims hooked on drugs. They are pushing the drugs to beat us down, on the one hand, but the State is also made more powerful because of the phony "War on drugs" which allows police state measures in Poor and oppressed communities and because of the millions of rands in government monetary appropriations made of law enforcement agencies, who supposedly are putting down the traffic in drugs. But they never go after the bankers or the big business pharmaceutical companies who fund the drug trade, just the street-level dealers, who are usually poor.

Unemployment is another reason that drug trafficking is so prevalent in our communities. Poor people will desperately look for anyway to make money, even the very drugs that are destroying our communities. When people have no jobs or income, drugs look very lucrative and the best way out of the situation. In fact, the drug economy has become the only income in many poor households; the only thing that some people perceive will lift them out of lives of desperate poverty. Clearly, decent jobs at a union wage are part of the answer to ending drug trafficking in our community, rather than depending on police, courts and the State. The cops are not our friends or allies, and must be exposed for their part in protecting the trade, rather than suppressing it.

Only the community can stop drug trafficking, and it is our responsibility however you look at it. After all, those junkies are our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, neighbours and friends; they are no strangers. We must organise to save

reasons why activists in the Poor community must immediately take a serious look and act to change the political debate around crime, prisons and the so-called criminal justice system. Those two reasons hit right home! One is because during any given year, thousands of people are in prison, in jail, on parole or probation. It may be your brother, sister, husband, wife, daughter, or son in prison, but I guarantee you we all know someone in prison right at this very minute! The other primary reason we Pooors have a vested interest in crime and penal institutions is because by far, most Pooors are in prison for committing offences against their own community.

Prisons are compact duplicates of the Poor community in that many of the same negative and destructive elements that are allowed to exist in our community and cause crime, especially drugs, are in prison in a more blatant and concentrated form. To call such places correctional or rehabilitative institutions is a gross mistake. Death camps are more like it. These prisons do not exist to punish everyone equally, but to protect the existing Capitalist system from you and me, the poor and workers.

The high rate of going back to crime proves, and the so-called authorities all agree, that the prison system is a total failure. A large percentage of those entering prison are repeat offenders who commit increasingly serious crimes. The brutality of prison experience and the ex-con stigma, when they are finally released makes them worse. Basic to solving these crucial problems is organisation. The Poor community and the Working Class Liberation movement must support the prisoners in their fight for prisoners' human rights. They should fight for the release of political prisoners and victims of injustice. They should also form a coalition of groups in the Poor community to fight against the penal and judicial system, and especially the death penalty, which is just another form of genocide against the Poor. And finally, and maybe most importantly, local community groups must begin programs of re-education with brothers and sisters in prison because only through planned, regular, and consistent contact can we begin to resolve this problem that so directly touches our lives. Abolish prisons!

## The Drug Epidemic: a New Form of Poor Genocide?

One of the worst forms of criminality is drug dealing, and it deserves some separate comments all its own. There is a negative drug sub-culture in the Poor community that glorifies, or at least makes acceptable, drug use, even though it is killing us and destroying our community. In fact, very often we hear of some junkie in our community dying from an overdose of drugs, or of some street corner drug dealer dying from a shoot-out over a dispute or rip-off during a drug deal gone sour. The tragedy of the latter is that these days innocent victims - children or elderly people -

could be rotting away in the prison houses.

**10.** The central demand is for Working Class control of the Working Class community, its politics and economy. We have to take over the cities, establish municipal communes, and exercise self-government as a vital step. We are the majority in all of the cities of the world and we should be able to control our own affairs (or at least obtain some autonomy), but as we should now be aware we won't ever get this community social power through voting for some Capitalist politician, or from passively depending for salvation on leaders of one sort or another. We have to do it ourselves if we are ever to get on the road to freedom.

## Crimes against the People

It is the rich who decide what is or is not a crime; it is not a neutral designation. The laws are written to protect the rich and those who act as agents of the State. But most personal crimes are not committed against the rich, they are usually inaccessible. It is poor and working people who are the major victims of violent crime. The poor female is the primary victim of rape and abuse by the poor male in today's society. Sadly, Our children are among the leading victims of child abuse, many times by her or his own parents. We do not like to think of these things happening in our community but we are battering and killing ourselves at an alarming rate. This is not to deny that the Capitalist social system has created frustrating, degrading conditions of life, which contribute to this brutality and fratricide. Even so, we would be lax in our humane and revolutionary duty if we did not try to correct this problem and also make people assume responsibility for our actions. I am not talking some conservative or law and order garbage here, but rather a recognition of the fact that we have a problem.

We have an external and an internal crisis situation facing us in our community. The external crisis is racism and colonialism, which works to systematically oppress us and is responsible for whatever internal crisis there is. The internal crisis is the result of an environment where drugs and violence (both social and physical) are rampant, and life is sometimes considered cheap. Poor-on-Poor crimes and internal violence are destroying our community. It is undoubtedly self-hatred and the desperate economic and social conditions we live under which makes us prey on each other. Drugs, frustrated rage, prostitution and other vices are symptoms of oppression.

We kill, beat, rape and brutalise each other because we are in pain ourselves. Thus we are acting out anti-social roles defined for us by someone else, not ourselves. In our pain and confusion we strike out at convenient and familiar victims; those like ourselves. There are ordinary Poor people who steal and rob just to survive under this system, because of the unequal distribution of wealth. Further, for some of us, in our desire to make it in Capitalist society we will stop at nothing,



including murder. And finally, there are those who do whatever they do because of drug addiction or mental illness.

Whatever the reasons, we have a serious problem that we must remedy because it is tearing away at the moral and social fabric of our community. It will be impossible to unite the Poores if we fear and hate one another. It is also obvious that the police and government cannot rectify this problem, and that only the Poor community can do so. The courts and prisons cannot prevent the situation from recurring. Therefore what can we do?

It is the community, through its own organisations of concern, which will have to deal with this problem. Community self-managed programs are needed to work with Poor youth gang members who are a source of much violence in the community. Rather than the military approach of calling in the cops we can empower the community rather than the racist prison bureaucracy and the cops. Also, the community-run drug rehabilitation groups, therapy and counselling groups, and other neighbourhood organising help us to effectively deal with the problem of internal violence and hopefully diffuse it. Most importantly it involves the community in the effort.

But we cannot totally depend upon counselling or rehabilitation techniques, especially where there is an immediate threat of violence or where violence has occurred. So, to insure peace and public security, a Poor community guard service would be organised for this purpose, as well as to protect against the Richs' power structure. This security force would be elected by local residents, and would work with the help of people in neighbourhoods. This is the only way it would work. It would not be an auxiliary of the current occupation army in our community, and would not threaten or intimidate the community with violence against our youth. Nor would such a community guard protect vice and organised crime. This community guard would only represent the community that elected it, instead of city hall. Similar such units would be organised all over the city on a block-by-block basis.

Yet we Anarchists go further and say that after a municipal commune is set up, the existing courts must be replaced by voluntary community tribunals of arbitration, and in cases of grave crimes, connected with murder, or offences against liberty and equality, a special communal court of a non-permanent nature would be set up. Anarchists believe that anti-social crime, meaning anything that oppresses, robs, or does violence to the working class must be vigorously opposed. We cannot wait until after the revolution to oppose such dangerous enemies of the people. But since such anti-social crimes are a direct expression of Capitalism, there would be a real attempt to re-socialise, politically educate and rehabilitate offenders. Not by throwing them into the Capitalist prisons to suffer like animals and where, because of their torture and humiliation, they will declare war on all society, but by involving them in the life of the community and giving them social and vocational training. Since all the criminology experts agree that crime is a social problem, and since we know that 88 percent of all crimes are against property and are committed in order to survive in an economically unjust society, we must recognise that only full employment, equal economic opportunity, decent housing and other aspects of social justice will ensure an end to crime. In short, we must have radical social change to eradicate

the social conditions that cause crime. An unequal, unfair society like Capitalism creates its own criminal class. The real thieves and murderers, businessmen and politicians, are protected under today's legal system, while we poor are punished. That is class justice, and that is what a Social Revolution would abolish. But understandably, many persons want to end the rape, murder, and violence in our communities today, and wind up strengthening the hands of the State and its police agents. They will not get rid of crime, but the cops will militarily patrol our communities, and further turn us against one another. We must stay away from that trap. Frustrated and confused, Poor people may attack one another, but instead of condemning them to a slow death in prison or shooting them down in the streets for revenge, we must deal with the underlying social causes behind the acts.

Anarchists should begin to have community forums on the cause and manifestations of crime in the Black community. We have to seriously examine the social institutions: family, schools, prisons, jobs, etc., that cause us to fuss, fight, rob and kill each other, rather than the enemy who is causing all our misery. While we should mobilise to restrain offenders, we must begin to realise that only the community will effectively deal with the matter, not the racist Capitalist system, with its repressive police, courts and prisons. Only we have the psychology, background and understanding to deal with it; now we must develop the will. No one else cares.

Instead of an eye-for-an-eye punishment, there should be damages paid to the victims, their families or to society. No revenge, such as the death penalty, will bring a murder victim back, nor will long term imprisonment serve justice or protect society. After all, prisons are only human trashcans for people society has discarded as worthless, no sane and just society would adopt such a course. Society makes criminals and must be responsible for their treatment. Capitalist society is itself a crime, and is the greatest teacher of corruption and violence.

In an Anarchist society, prisons would be done away with, along with courts and police (except for the exceptions I have suggested), and be replaced with community-run programs and centres interested solely with human regeneration and social training, rather than custodial supervision in an inhuman lock-up. The fact is that if a person is so violent or dangerous, s/he is probably mentally warped or has some physical defect anyway, which causes them to commit violent acts after social justice has been won. If s/he is mentally defective then s/he should be placed in a mental health facility rather than a prison. Their human rights should never be stripped and they should not be punished. Schools, hospitals, doctors and, above all, social equality, public welfare and liberty will prove the safest means to get rid of crimes and criminals together. If a special category such as criminal or enemy is created, then these persons may forever feel outcast and never change. Even if he or she is a class enemy, they should retain all civil and human rights in society, even though they, of course, would be restrained if they led a counter-revolution; the difference is we want to defeat them ideologically, not militarily or by consigning them to a so-called re-education camp or to be shot like the Bolsheviks did when assuming power in Russia in 1917.

As we move to change society, its values and conditions, there are two major