



INSIDE-OUT

Same Struggle - Same Fight!

VVAW-WSO Newsletter for Prisoners

JUNE '74

VVAW/WSO National Office, 827 West Newport, Chicago, Ill. 60657

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This is our second newsletter to go to our brothers and sisters in prisons. We have paid close attention to the comments and criticisms offered in response to our first mailing, and we look forward to your comments on this newsletter. We want this tool to be as useful as possible for you, and for this to happen, we need your in-put. As we said in the first newsletter, we hope this publication will serve as a tool which can be used to discuss the problems and victories of building unity in prisons. We hope we can share our knowledge with one another for the purpose of alleviating the isolation of being politically aware and in prison, and to serve as a forum of ideas for how a viable, effective prison movement can be created. Remember, this is your publication; and for it to be a success, your help is needed. Organizing ideas, discussions of tactics used by prison administrations, how unity is being built, etc. is what we are looking for. In unity there is strength, so let's continue building that one thing which will bring about the liberation of us all!

In Struggle,

The National Collective
Vietnam Veterans Against the War/
Winter Soldier Organization



The more we read about prisons and the more we correspond with brothers and sisters inside, the more clearly we understand the concept that the whole system under which we live in this country is a prison -- the degree of oppression varies from place to place, with some people in maximum security and some in minimum. As we read about a brother in McAlester being killed by the tear gas that was used to stifle a "disturbance," we also see that the government and police repression and brutality in the communities we live in is increasing. While prison administrators use every tactic they can think of to keep prisoners from getting together, we see the same kind of tactics (racism, sexism, young vs. old) and attempts to divert the American people from the struggle against the system of our government. Of course we recognize that the methods of work inside prisons are different than the methods employed outside; but we are all fighting the same enemy, and that enemy will try to keep the people divided no matter where they are.

As discussed in the enclosed copy of Winter Soldier, we are using the tactic of a national demonstration to help build the unity which is so vital to our struggle. We hope to be able to help pull the anti-imperialist movement more tightly together as we demonstrate in Washington, D. C. from July 1-4. We will be marching, rallying, demonstrating in our country's capital as we confront the government with the thing they fear most: people, united in struggle. At the same time, we will be bringing the demands of the demonstration to the people of the country in order to increase the unity which is growing daily in the U. S.

Our demands for the demonstration include both veterans and non-veterans, just as the organization does. We believe that purely vets demands--just better benefits for veterans, for instance--omits the system of imperialism which created veterans in the first place. It is the cause which must be attacked, not just the symptoms. In the same way we recognize that prison "reforms" do not get at the root of the problem. While we live under a system which makes property more important than people, those who "own" the property will have to protect it. And to protect it they will have to push their concept of "crime" and "criminals." As long as there are those who exploit and those who are exploited, there will be people who continue to fight back against the exploitation. And the exploiters will continue to need prisons.

Reforms are good, and, until there is a radical change in the system, reforms are the best we can expect: more humane treatment for prisoners or better benefits for veterans are demands worth struggling for, as long as we do not lose sight of the long-range goal. We realize that veterans--many of whom are in prisons around the country--were often seduced into the military by special promises (the GI education benefits, VA care, etc) and we want to see the government live up to those promises. We want better healthcare for veterans through the Veterans Administration, but more important, we want free, high-quality healthcare for all the people. We want reasonable educational benefits for vets, but the real demand is for high-quality, free education for all the people.

Our demonstration in Washington is designed to present these demands--demands for all the people who live under the system of American imperialism. To make the demo as large and effective as possible, VVAW/WSO chapters around the country are organizing people to be in Washington on the 1st through the 4th of July. We would like to see all of you there too, but we know that won't happen--but we're still asking for your support. Enclosed with this newsletter is a declaration of support and solidarity with the demands and the demonstration; we are asking you to collect names of brothers and sisters who support the action and send them back to us. A time has been set aside during the demonstrations--probably the demo at the justice (?) department--to make public the results of these declarations. If you have statements of support, other than that on the declaration, send them to the VVAW/WSO National Office; the declaration forms should also be sent here.

*****SUPPORT THE DEMO*****

(If you have other suggestions for ways in which you might support the demonstration, please let us know as soon as possible, and we'll pass along the word.)

I THOUGHT SCHOOL WAS A JAIL.



UNTIL I GOT IN TROUBLE AND WENT TO JAIL.



UNTIL I GOT A JOB, BOY WAS THAT A JAIL!



AND LEARNED THAT JAIL IS EVEN MORE OF A JAIL THAN SCHOOL, A JOB, MARRIAGE, OR THE ARMY.



THEN I GOT MARRIED, EVEN MORE OF A JAIL!



SO FINALLY I KNEW WHAT FREEDOM'S ALL ABOUT:



UNTIL I GOT DRAFTED INTO THE ARMY, THE WORST JAIL YET!



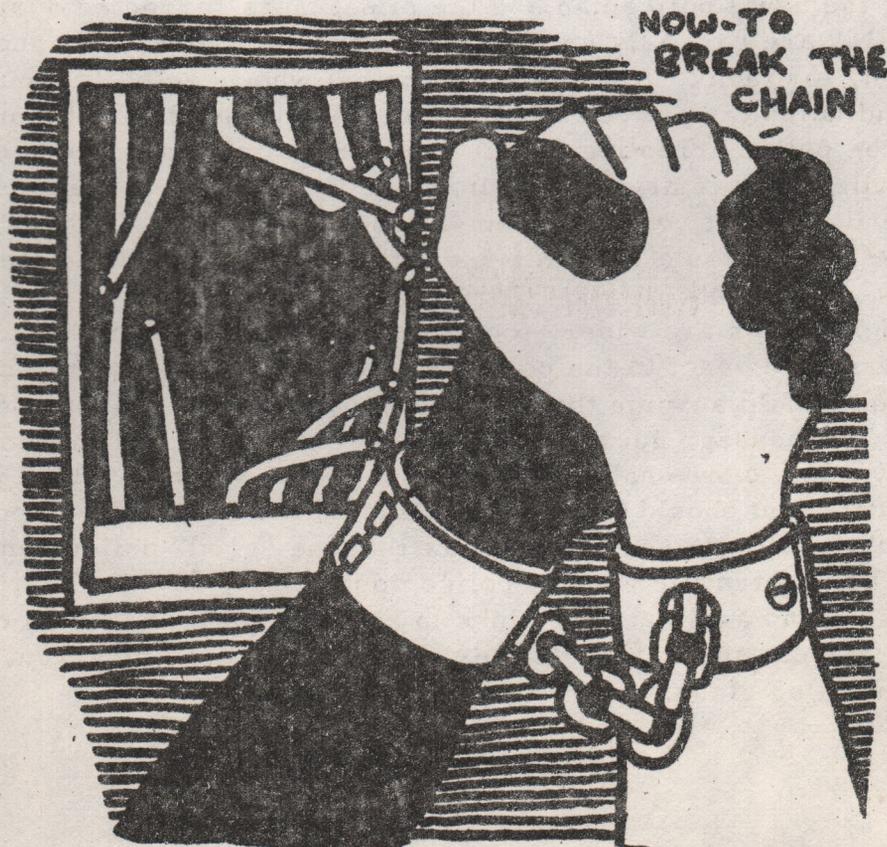
THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE WHICH JAIL.



The Demonstration is not an end in itself--we see it as a means to build support for the demands and create the kind of public support and awareness which we realize is the only road to change. One of the projects of VVAW/WSO which is being used to increase this support is our program of Discharge Upgrading, so that veterans with less-than-honorable discharges from the military can begin the process of getting the discharges changed (the longer range goal is to replace the discharge system with a single-type discharge, as described in the paper). A number of VVAW/WSO chapters have acquired the skills necessary to do counselling around upgrading discharges; at one prison in California these skills are being taught to the brothers inside so that they can help others with this upgrading work.

Discharge upgrading (DUP) work is also useful in our project of continuing education around the war; one brother in prison in London, Ohio, wrote to tell us about his bad discharge; after a head wound in Vietnam, he was placed on guard duty at an American compound. While high on drugs, he shot and killed a Vietnamese civilian, was tried, found guilty, sent to the Disciplinary Barracks, and discharged with a dishonorable discharge. Yet the American military propagandized consistently about the inferior nature of the Vietnamese--they were "gooks," "dinks," "subhuman"--the same kind of racist policy which the U. S. government still uses to keep people apart. That an American soldier would kill a Vietnamese civilian is hardly surprising; in the field in Vietnam civilians were killed all the time, and only when the stink got too bad (as in the case of Lt Calley) did anyone even care.

The same racism which was prominent in the war in Vietnam is being used today in the war in this country and in the prison camps operated by the U. S. government. Keep the people divided--set white against black and black against white--and they will not see who is the real enemy. Once again, it is the same on the streets as it is in prison--the same enemy working against the interests of the people. Only in prison the methods are more open, more repressive.



Behavior modification, one of those repressive measures, is alive and well on the streets, only in more subtle ways. The VVAW/WSO National Office, where we live and work, is located in a mostly Puerto-Rican neighborhood on the near-north side of Chicago. Like most such neighborhoods, the sidewalks are the playground.

Several nights ago the neighborhood kids were playing a new game. They were on bicycles and one group, mostly boys, were the police--there was a police headquarters, and sergeants. The others, mostly girls, were drivers who the police were going to arrest. The "police" would stop the bike, take the "keys," go through the search routine, arrest the driver and take her off to the headquarters. No protest; no question about why they were being arrested; simply passive agreement that, if the police said they were under arrest, that's all there was to it.

Nothing very significant, though these are the kids who will be the targets of the racist politics of the Chicago police in a couple of years. It seemed necessary to ask, however, why this game was going on.

One reason is TV. And there is a definite reason for that. As the American ruling class moves closer and closer to facism, to complete disregard for the interests of the American people, it is more apparent that the police will be used as the front-line weapon to repress the people. And if the people, particularly the young people, will accept police power, if they will see the police as authority figures who must be obeyed without question or protest, then a large part of the work of the exploiters who run this country will be done for them.

Millions of Americans spend their evenings watching Kojac, or Hawaiiin Eye, or Streets of San Francisco, or Police Story--the list goes on and on. In fact, it is possible to watch evening--prime time--TV without ever seeing anything but stories which are simple police propaganda. The policeman on the screen is human--he even makes mistakes. But the mistakes are always corrected. Very seldom is there "police brutality"--and if a policeman actually attacks a black man, it is made clear that he is not the usual policeman and the situation is corrected during the program. The "criminals" are carefully chosen so that there is no way the audience can feel much sympathy for them. A so-called criminal who is actually a human being either "reforms" and helps the police, or else dies before the end of the program (so we will not see the police arresting him). The contradictions between criminal and police are made as clear as possible in order to drive home the message--police are your friends, do not resist, accept authority because police are right and you are wrong (or if not, it's a little misunderstanding which will be cleared up very quickly).

The implications are wider, too. Another part of the message deals with how the individual should react to the police at work. If you see a man being beaten by the police, you should assume that the police have a good reason and leave well enough alone (so the TV message goes). If 500 heavily armed police murder 6 people in Los Angeles, they must know what they're doing. When you hear about police protection of heroin traffic, you should ignore it; if such a thing is really happening (which is of course doubtful), then you should know that the "good" policemen will find out and stop it. Don't struggle against police oppression, say the TV programs. And they say it again and again until it sinks in and kids play policeman on the front sidewalk, and the people sit back to let the police do whatever they want in the service of the American ruling class.

Sometimes the contradictions between the police (who are supposed to be the servants of the people) and the facts of police tactics become so clear that people fight back--demonstrate against police brutality, file suits in prisons against the prison police, join together to insist on civilian control of police. But how many people--inside prison and out--are happy to watch TV, accept the police message even when they know it's not true. The oppression goes on and on and on. And it will continue until people unite to struggle against it.



In many of your letters there were requests for literature, newspapers, pamphlets, etc. We are trying to compile a list of papers, publishers, bookstores, who will send free literature to prisoners, or will at least provide literature at a reduced cost. One of the problems is that those people who publish or sell the types of things we would be most interested in are likely to be the same people who are struggling to stay in business (one of the problems of trying to serve the people under capitalism) and cannot afford to send out quantities of free books. Before the next newsletter, however, we will have written to as many of these people as we can and print the results. If you know of publications or publishers which other brothers and sisters ought to know about, let us know and we'll pass the information along.

What follows is an incomplete listing of those items we know about now.

Winter Soldier, the monthly newspaper of Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization. The paper is sent free to prisoners; to get on our mailing list, write to VVAW/WSO, 827 W. Newport, Chicago, Illinois 60657.

Revolution, the monthly national newspaper of the Revolutionary Union, also sent free to prisoners. Write to Revolutionary Union, P. O. Box 3486, Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Illinois 60654.

The Call, the monthly national paper of the October League; as far as we know it is sent free to prisoners. Write The Call, P. O. Box 2278, Bell Gardens, California 90201.

The Guardian, a weekly independent radical newsweekly which covers news of the various struggles going on in this country and around the world. The cost is \$1 per year for prisoners. Write to Guardian, 33 West 17th St, New York, N. Y. 10011.

(The following papers, most of which are sent free to prisoners, are workers' papers; although they deal with national and international issues, their primary focus is the struggles going on in the community where the paper is published.)

The Bay Area Worker, P. O. Box 7154, Oakland, California

The Dayton Workers Voice, P. O. Box 707, Dayton, Ohio 45402

Milwaukee Worker, P. O. Box 3305, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

On the Line, P. O. Box 4449, Baltimore, Maryland 21223

Movin On Up, P. O. Box 19304, Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

Peoples Voice, P. O. Box 158, Maywood, Illinois 60153 (Chicago area paper)

Workers Voice, P. O. Box 18443, Denver, Colorado 80218

The Worker, 129 W 22nd St, 9th Floor, New York, New York 10011

The Peoples Press, 968 Valencia St, San Francisco, California 94110 publishes a catalogue of their pamphlets about various struggles going on around the world (Africa, Asia, Latin America); both the catalogue and the pamphlets are sent free to prisoners.

The Jailhouse Lawyers Manual, a book on self-help in-prison legal work, is sent free to prisoners from the Prison Law Collective, 588 Capp St, San Francisco, California 94110.

The Midnight Special is the prison publication of the National Lawyers Guild. Write Midnight Special, c/o National Lawyers Guild, 23 Cornelia St, New York, N. Y. 10014.

Struggle, a paper from Boston, covers local events and national/international struggles, particularly for Black Liberation. The paper is free to prisoners; write to Struggle, P. O. Box 211, Grove Hall, Boston, Mass 02121.

New York City Star, also covers local and national problems and struggles. It is free to prisoners; the address is New York City Star, 149 Hester Street, New York, New York 10002.

(This is a start; we will find out more by the next issue, and we can use your help in letting us know about others we have missed.)



"Police!"

"FBI!"

William Hurst -- A Fallen Brother

As reported in the enclosed issue of Winter Soldier, William (Whitey) Hurst was found dead in his cell on May 9th. William was known and loved by many brothers and sisters throughout the prison colonies. His death comes as a blow to us all. He was a brother committed to the struggle for the rights of prisoners and all oppressed people, and his death is a loss to all of us. An autopsy and investigation is being conducted by the Leavenworth Brothers Offense/Defense Committee and the results of this investigation will be reported when we have received word on the findings. Many of you have asked what can be done for Whitey. We have discussed this with Whitey's defense committee and they have suggested that people try to set up local defense committees for the Leavenworth Brothers, asking people to donate in memory of William. We feel that Whitey would have approved of this, and if money is raised, it should be sent to the LBODC, P.O. Box 5818, Kansas City, MO 64111. William's spirit and dedication will live on in our hearts and his courage will not be forgotten.

New System Established for Handling Prisoner Grievances

The U. S. Bureau of Prisons has established a new redress system for the grievances of federal prisoners. The policy will bar the inmates of federal prisons from filing suits in courts until they have completed a new complaint procedure. This nationwide plan seriously threatens the Constitutional rights of all federal prisoners around the country.

A prisoner who feels he has been victimized by some prison rule, custom, guard, condition or practice must first file a complaint with the prison warden. The warden is obligated to reply in writing to the grievance within 15 business days. If the prison is not satisfied with the warden's ruling, he may appeal to the Bureau of Prisons. The Bureau must reply to the grievance within thirty business days (or about 6 weeks). Then, if the prisoner has still not received justice, he may take his complaint to the courts. The intent and result of all this red-tape will be that prisoners will become discouraged from pursuing their legal and guaranteed rights by official "kangaroo courts" before the matter of controversy gets to the "legitimate court."

The Bureau of Prisons will now have the opportunity to selectively grant a right here and there and prevent any meaningful victories in the courts. It will mean that the repression of the prison system might not ever be brought to light or questioned before a real judicial body. Also, the danger exists that this plan may very well spread from the federal prisons to the state and local prisons as well. The inevitable result will be to keep prisoner grievances and protests from public view and scrutiny, and the repression now facing prisoners across the country will be on the rise -- putting the brothers and sisters in prisons in a situation where they can do little or nothing about it.

Supreme Court Bars Arbitrary Censorship of Prisoners Mail

Early in May, the U. S. Supreme Court upheld a district court order ending the practice of certain kinds of censoring and suppressing of the personal mail of California prison inmates. Correctional authorities had appealed the lower court ruling to the Supreme Court after the state corrections director, Raymond Procnier, claimed that mail is a "privilege" and not a legal right. The Supreme Court unanimously disagreed with Procnier's opinion.

The Court's opinion states: "Prison officials may not censor inmate correspondence simply to eliminate unflattering or unwelcome opinions... Rather, they must show that a regulation authorizing mail censorship furthers (the) interests of security, order and rehabilitation."

Though the censorship will still be up to the individual California prisons, this Court ruling does set the basis for ensuring prisoner's legal rights to send and receive uncensored mail. This ruling on California prisons also sets a precedent which may be used in other states filing "mail-tampering" suits. This one Court decision may be seen as a small victory in the prison struggle, and it will be interesting to see just how this ruling will be applied, enforced and assuredly ignored.

