

COALITION FOR PRISONERS' RIGHTS NEWSLETTER

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November 1996

"MADE IN THE U.S.A."

Those politicians and government officials who are working so hard to solve our social problems have, in fact, found a way to slow the flight of U.S. jobs to developing countries - send them to our state prisons instead. From 1990 to 1995, more than 30 states made it legal to contract prison labor to private companies. These new laws reversed those enacted at the beginning of this century to abolish forced labor in U.S. prisons.

State and private prisons, and small and big businesses are rushing to join the trend. Oregon Prison Industries, a state-run operation, sold \$4.5 million worth of its prisoner-made blue jeans called "Prison Blues." The California Department of Corrections' competing line of "Gangsta Blues" is being marketed in Japan.

Eddie Bauer, a trendy national mail-order company, gets sweatshirts made by Washington state prisoners and wooden rocking horses from Tennessee convicts. Trans World Airline reservations are made at the Ventura, California, Youth Facility. Prisoners at a Texas prison run by the private Wackenhut company assemble and repair computer circuit boards for a contractor who sells to IBM, Dell and Texas Instruments. The contractor, Lockhart Technologies, Inc., shut its plant in Austin and laid off 150

(continued on next page)



"MADE IN THE U.S.A." CONT.

freeworld workers in order to relocate in the prison. The list grows every month.

Prisoners have a variety of responses to the trend. Private industry in some cases is required to pay minimum or "prevailing" wage. Even with up to 80% of minimum wage deducted for "cost of imprisonment," mandatory savings, victim compensation and restitution and taxes, there's usually more "take home" pay compared to state prison work. Many prisoners with privatized jobs send support home to their families, and can pay for their own commissary items. "The food at the chow hall is really outrageous, so if you want to eat well or smoke you're thankful," said a San Quentin prisoner working for a private data processing company.

A Missouri prisoner transferred to a privately run jail in Texas wrote that "If they choose you to work for them they give special privileges. Workers get three hot meals a day, as opposed to two for regular inmates, and even those

are very, very small portions. Workers are also allowed to smoke at any time opposed to a maximum of one hour a day for everyone else."

Prison workers often earn additional good-time sentence reductions and hope to be learning skills for employment on release. One private employer, however, admitted that "I think those people are not going to get jobs identical to what we're doing here," since most of the freeworld people he employed prior to moving his business inside were immigrant women. Prisoners who refuse to work may serve longer sentences, lose privileges, and risk disciplinary reports and actions.

Private business is more uniformly enthusiastic about contracting prisoner labor. One contractor in Texas pays \$1 a year rent for a prison factory room. "Normally when you work in the free world," he said, "you have people call in sick, they have car problems, they have family problems. We don't have that here." The state pays for workers' compensation and medical care, and prisoners

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LETHAL INJECTION GRUESOME

don't earn retirement pensions or vacations. A company in Washington state pays \$1 a month rent and gets other expenses such as security subsidized as well. TWA officials point out that prisoners "are not going to be late for work because of a traffic jam on the highway." In fact, prisoners worked 12-hour days for TWA when its main office in Los Angeles was closed during the rebellion that followed the 1992 Rodney King-related verdict.

A recent report found that "Companies are attracted to working with prisons because inmates represent a readily available and dependable source of entry-level labor that is a cost-effective alternative to work forces found in Mexico, the Caribbean Basin, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Rim countries." The report quoted one executive who boasted, "We can put a Made-In-the-U.S.A. label on our product" from prison labor.

And the difference between U.S. prison labor and the forced labor from, say, Chinese prisoners that our government regularly protests? As the Oregon Prison Industries' marketing director says, "Perhaps it smacks of old-fashioned imperialism to be making those kinds of judgments."

X-MAS IS COMING...

The Coalition joins the others on your X-Mas list in being most appreciative of any donations, including stamps.

In a recent ACLU computer network column called "Visions of Liberty," lethal injection was the focus. The "no fuss, no mess method of extermination," according to Loren Siegel, "is driving the dramatic escalation in the number of people put to death."

While the process of lethal injection may appear less painful and more humane (to the point where the arm is swabbed with alcohol to prevent infection) a number of "botched" executions have, nonetheless, occurred. According to Siegel, one execution in Texas took 24 minutes. The tube attached to the needle in the prisoner's arm leaked and sprayed toxic chemicals.

Siegel promotes further disclosure of details of executions, even prime time live television coverage, in the hope the public will become more aware of the gruesomeness of the punishment.

Siegel believes, as did the late Thurgood Marshall, that "fully informed of the purposes of the death penalty and its liabilities, the American people will reject it as morally unacceptable."

To learn more about ACLU's on-line columns, contact ACLU-NM, PO Box 80915, Albuquerque NM 87198.



VOICES FROM INSIDE

REACH OUT AND CHARGE SOMEONE

Michigan City IN September 23, 1996

Did you know that you were being ripped off by Ameritech? They recently raised their rates again, but only for collect calls being made to you from the phones here at the prison. Local calls are now \$3.25. Why? And who is getting your money? Please send letters of protest to: Ameritech Customer Relations, Room 406, 240 N Meridian St, Indianapolis IN 46204.

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

Iowa Park TX October 1, 1996

The Yahwist faith has finally been recognized by TDCJ. Any prisoners desiring to establish Yahwist services, plus securing the same opportunities given to other religions, please contact: Timothy Eby, 623385, 2101 FM 369 N, Iowa Park TX 76367.

PRISON MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Beeville TX October 3, 1996

...There was a riot on my unit where 18 Hispanics beat and stabbed 4 Blacks. The major on the this unit rounded up 13 Black prisoners, who hadn't been in trouble in at least a year, took them out of general population, and put them on lockdown with the same 18 Hispanics that had just stabbed 4 Blacks less than 8 hours before. He told the 13 Blacks to go in there and take care of your business - do whatever you want to do to those Mexicans because they just stabbed 4 of your people and don't want any Blacks living with them. So they were put in there by force and there was a minor altercation between a Hispanic and one of the Blacks that was stabbed at first. The unit staff gassed everyone, hog tied them and put everyone back in the same tank together...

COMMON CONCERNS

October 3, 1996

...I've been around the system enough to know that TDCJ-ID has a medical epidemic of a contagious disease on their hands. Prison doctors and nurses want to call this illness or disease poison oak, ivy or sumac, a heat rash, a prickly heat rash, a chemical (reaction) to food, water or clothes, acne, late acne, spider bites and even ant bites.

Mailing list additions and address changes should go into effect within 2 months from their postmarked date; we don't have the resources to acknowledge these requests by letter. Requests for referrals and other correspondence will be answered within 4 to 6 weeks. Letters intended for publication must say "Do Print."

The Coalition makes information available on resources and services for prisoners. We strongly urge that readers keep copies of all papers, especially legal papers, sent to those offering assistance, and be careful about sending money. **In most cases we do not have direct experience with the quality or reliability of the services provided by the groups we mention.**

John Sealy Hospital in Galveston provides professional medical care for Texas state convicts. They issued a medical bulletin to each unit's medical administrator calling this disease/illness Methicillin Resistant Staph Aureus (MRSA-BOILS)...

TDCJ-ID allowed a...biotechnology company...to conduct illegal testing of vaccines used in biological weapons tests. This disease has evolved from those vaccine tests turning bad, which over the years has reached epidemic stage proportions when TDCJ-ID mushroomed their prisoner population and transferred infected convicts all over the state to a total of 109 prisons. TDCJ-IC employees and their own families have even come down with this disease because it is airborne.

Editors' Note: For further, medical, information concerning this situation write: Institute for Molecular Medicine, PO Box 52470, Irvine CA 92619-2470.

THE NEW SOUTH

Decatur GA October 10, 1996

...Georgia is the only state that I know of with "2 strikes and you're out." That's right - 2, not 3. Any 2 major or violent felonies are a mandatory life sentence. This included drug charges until July 1, 1996. Two drug convictions was life. Many of the convicted inmates are young Black men and women. There are almost 1,000 in prison with life for 2 sales of 2 rocks of cocaine. The majority of these people had less than \$50 of crack.

July 1, 1996 it was changed to 10 to 40. Hundreds of people petitioned to get this unconstitutional law changed. It still is bad and they did not let anyone with life go, but 10 to 40 is better than life any day. Any violent felony or class A felony is a mandatory 10, no parole. Governor Zell Miller has taken the parole board's power away to grant parole in Georgia period. See *Sultenfuss v. Snow*, 35 F.3d 1494. Miller doesn't want parole apparently and is fighting to bring back chain gangs. People don't realize there really isn't anything called a new South...



VOICES FROM INSIDE continued

TOGETHER WE STAND

Lompoc CA October 11, 1996

...Anyone who was assaulted by prison personnel while confined in the United States Penitentiary, Atlanta GA, please forward a brief statement or affidavit containing the name of the officials, date of occurrence and what housing unit or area. I need this in order to defeat a government summary judgment motion...Together we will stand, but divided we will always fall. Terry D. Reynolds, 06360-021, 3901 Klein Blvd, Lompoc CA 93456. Cannot get mail from prison to prison.

PLEASE LISTEN

Gatesville TX October 12, 1996

...In August 1993, just months away from my freedom and paying the final debt to society for my mistakes, I was sexually assaulted by my supervisor, who was a ranking captain with 10 years in the criminal justice system. I was a trusty, which is a difficult status to obtain in the Texas prison system. Upon reporting the incident, I was subjected to some very harsh and cruel treatment and transferred to a different facility where no help was available. Instead of the captain being punished, it seems as though I have been given a whole new sentence for a crime I didn't commit. I begged for some relief due to troubled sleeping patterns and severe nightmares of the assault. I also began acquiring several disciplinary cases which in turn caused me to lose my date to go home. All of this was a direct result of asking for help..

FAMILY VISITS

Chowchilla CA October 13, 1996

...They have taken family visits from lifers, close custody and sex offenders as of September 18, 1996...Many family members did not believe that they would do it, and many still do not know about it...We will go to court to fight this regulation on constitutional grounds - "ex post facto" and "equal protection."...

That is why we are collecting contributions at the Family Visiting Litigation Fund, Prison Law Office, General Delivery, San Quentin CA 94964. It is our goal to inform all 140,000 prisoners and their families that there is a battle going on for family visits. Don't be discouraged - we CAN win back family visits!

PHONE SUIT PROGRESS

Ridgeland SC October 16, 1996

The present SCDC inmate phone system violates 1) inmates' access to courts, 2) the privacy of both inmates and their families, 3) it is more expensive on families, 4) the pen number is a data gathering technique used by "Big Brother," 5) families are billed for cut-offs, incomplete calls, unanswered calls and technical impairments and 6) this system amounts to illegal wire-tapping and electronic eavesdropping without court order or judicial approval.

For over the past year I have had litigation in the courts attacking the SCDC inmates' phone system as unconstitutional. (Case caption, Mattison v. Moore et al., CA #0:96-0226-6 B.D., U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina)...On October 1, 1996, the U.S. magistrate judge filed a report and recommended order that SCDC respondents be denied summary judgment and that the case be remanded to state court. I am now awaiting the district judge to enter the final order before determining what my next move will be. Thus far I am proceeding pro se. The court has denied my motion for appointment of counsel.

If any other prisoners are experiencing similar problems, read Washington v. Reno, 35 F.3d 1093 and Casey v. Lewis, 43 F.3d 1261 (9th CM.1994), at p.1269 & p.1279. For any input, please write Calvin R. Mattison, 69410, PO Box 2039, Ridgeland SC 29936.

VIDEO GAMES

Florence AZ October 17, 1996

...Today, there was an inmate, like most of us inmates, asleep at 8:05, at which time he was ordered to submit to a TB test. He was ordered to wake up and be handcuffed. Despite the fact that many of us advised the sergeant that the inmate does not understand or respond to English the sergeant used pepper spray on the inmate.

At 8:08, security staff removed the inmate from his cell and placed him into the shower, left him there handcuffed, with his hands behind his back, which left the inmate unable to operate the shower. Security staff, fully aware that the inmate had not been able to use the shower to wash off the pepper spray, placed him back into his cell.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Frontera CA October 20, 1996

California Lifers: I am collecting data to demonstrate the magnitude of error occurring in state prison lifer parole hearing decisions which result in failure to release or set dates for prisoners who should be found parole suitable. If you have attended your initial or later parole hearings, your participation in this research is requested. Write for questionnaire: PO Box 284, San Marcos CA 92079-0284.

Crime of the Month

aka Crime Toppers

Two recent cases of corporate crime show once again that if you want to steal, wear a white collar and do it in a business office. You'll be able to laugh all the way to the bank.

Archer Daniels Midland Co., a huge agribusiness conglomerate, keeps \$2.4 billion in cash on hand, according to financial analysts. It didn't hurt too much when the corporation paid a \$100 million fine for fixing the prices of some of its products, including detergents and a food additive.

Consumers in the U.S. were the victims of this crime, as they are of most corporate crime.

A second business, much smaller than Archer Daniels

Midland Co. but just as crooked, figured it wasn't making enough money on a government contract to produce the Congressional Medals of Honor awarded to people in the military.

So the firm, H. L. I. Lordship Industries, made up extras, selling more than 300 to one person. Bogus medals have been sold in the U.S. by memorabilia shops and collectors.

The company plans to plead guilty to misdemeanor charges and faces a likely fine of \$40,000 to \$80,000.

This hypocrisy in our treatment of corporate crime is yet again our Crime of the Month. If you feel the urge to steal something, put on a tie or a nice dress.



**Coalition for Prisoners' Rights/
Prison Project of Santa Fe**

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