

COALITION FOR PRISONERS' RIGHTS NEWSLETTER

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May 1997

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY



How is the U.S. economy doing? For corporate executive officers (CEOs) like Michael Eisner of the Disney empire, everything's been coming up roses.

The board of Disney was so pleased with Eisner's work that it gave him a corporate stock deal worth \$195,000,000. The head of the committee that approved the deal was Eisner's personal lawyer.

In 1965, CEOs pulled down an average of 44 times the pay of the average factory worker. This statistic is outrageous enough. But today, CEOs make 212 times the average worker's pay.

What did these executives do to

earn such rewards? Some laid off workers. The CEOs of the 20 companies that laid off the largest number of workers received 25 percent increases in salaries and bonuses, according to the magazine Business Week.

For years, workers have been told that they must be satisfied with little or no raises, may have to pay more of their insurance costs and even have to cut back on their hours in order to keep their jobs in the U.S.

All the while, corporate boards have had no problem whatever finding the money to give their

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WORKERS DAY, CONT.

top management obscene pay raises and bonuses.

This is part of the economic picture as we again celebrate May 1 as International Workers' Day. The U.S. doesn't recognize the day, although many other countries do. The anniversary honors the struggles of U.S. workers in the 1880s, who won the right to the eight-hour day.

There is more to the economic picture than the greed of the ruling capitalist class, however. Unions are showing that strikes--workers' last resort against unjust corporate management-- haven't gone out of fashion, although the mainstream media does it best to ignore them.

Here are a few struggles from just one month--April of this year.

April 11: More than 1,800 workers at an engine plant owned by Chrysler Corp. went on strike in a dispute over company plans to shift work on engine drive shafts to an outside, non-union supplier. The strike, noted a United Auto Workers official, is "all about

jobs."

April 21: Job security also was a key issue at Godyear Tire and Rubber, where 13,000 workers went on strike. "Among other issues, we're very concerned about employee security," a union official said.

April 23: Nearly 5,500 workers walked off the job at a pickup plant owned by General Motors. GM, like other auto manufacturers, wants to send work to outside suppliers.

Strikes are a terrible hardship on workers and the families and friends of workers. But strikes are also a sign of strength in the labor movement. Standing up to corporations that want to wring the last ounce of sweat from their workers, **before moving** on to exploit the workers of some other country--is the only way to combat the brutal capitalism that has hurt so many workers in so many countries.

On this May Day, we salute the workers who struck rather than submit to injustice. They are the true descendants of the brave workers who more than 100 years ago brought us an eight-hour day.



WHAT WE CAN'T
DO ALONE

WE CAN DO
TOGETHER



The Coalition for Prisoners' Rights Newsletter is published monthly by the Prison Project of Santa Fe, Inc., PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504-1911. Subscription rates are: free to prisoners, their family members, and ex-prisoners who request it themselves; \$12/year for other individuals; \$25/year for government agencies and for-profit institutions. Please do not send us other peoples' names for our mailing list; we can no longer respond to these requests. We appreciate those who help us by sharing their newsletters.

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WHAT IS CRIME?

Why are we writing about workers as well as prisoners?

One reason is that the same people are sometimes workers and sometimes prisoners. There is no unbroken line between the two groups. Another reason is that the same social and economic system exploits us - when we are prisoners and when we are workers. But the most important reason is that we have all been had when we were taught to think about crime.

The Coalition for Prisoners' Rights believes that crime is the bad, oppressive things people do to each other. The more people you hurt, the bigger criminal you are.

So the big criminals in our country are the people who are rich when others are poor, those who make profits from other peoples' misery. The big criminals are the people who cripple us at our workplaces, control the manufacture of unsafe cars and other products, and send us to fight the people of other countries to make the world safe for their investments. The big criminals give us diseases through our food, air, medicine and water - cancer, black lung, birth defects.

Street crime is a very small part of all the crimes really committed each day. Even mobster crime is small in comparison to unemployment, homelessness, the bad food, education and medical care that hurts so many of us. Yet we have been taught to believe that street crime and organized crime are big enemies to us. And when we believe that, the real, big criminals are safe.

The Coalition believes that enormous changes are needed to rid ourselves of the system that results in the big crime in this country, and that workers and prisoners, the unemployed, the disabled, the retired - all poor, minority and working people - have to work together to stop the big crooks.

The big crooks - the owners and bureaucrats and politicians who protect their interests at our expenses - don't have horns or fangs or shifty eyes, just like the people now in the pen don't. Maybe they're nice people, just trying to be comfortable like the rest of us. But the pursuit by these few of comfort and wealth and power means violence and oppression against the vast majority of us, and it's more than a crying shame. It's a crime.





VOICES FROM INSIDE

TATTO INK ALERT

Concord NH March 23, 1997

Tattoo ink made from soot may cause skin cancer. I have corroborating evidence. If you have a tattoo that was put on with this ink, you should have it removed. For more information please contact me. Scott Prado, PO Box 14, Concord NH 03301.

MEDICALLY INDIGENT

Crowley CO April 4, 1997

...We, housed here in L.U.-6 B Pod) Segregation without due process, are also denied access to the courts by way of the law library system. We are only allowed our first amendment U.S. constitutional rights through an "exact cite paging system" that is next to useless...We, being indigent, make \$5 amonth...It leaves us in serious jeopardy of injury to our criminal case appeals and our civil cases that may not allow recovery if a case is dismissed in the appellate court of Colorado. Such issues may not be refiled, causing irreparable and irretrievable damages and loss of freedom...We are under duress since September 16, 1997, medically unassigned for a decade or more...

IMPROVE NUTRITION

Atmore AL April 7, 1997

Since 1995, the Alabama prison system (has been refusing to provide or allow prisoners to receive and/or to pay for their diets, including the diet recommended by the American Diabetes Association. As a result, in January 1997, I lost my sight to diabetic retinopathic which requires adequate diet. By claiming either budget problems and/or punishment, the prison system at the Holman prison does not provide: milk, cheese without sugar, fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, dried cereal, powdered milk and/or vitamin supplements...At Holman prison sugar is added to all beans and stews, including chili and greens (canned). Of course, Correctional Medical Services is the medical service provider. Medication alone cannot and will not replace an adequate diet. I need copies of as many prison systems' menus as I can get. Honorio Montanez, 144343,D/4, Holman Prison, Atmore AL 36503.

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.**

CUSTODY POLICY CLARIFIED

Vacaville CA April 12, 1997

Attention California prisoners who are designated as Close B Custody prisoners: A memorandum was issued out of CDC headquarters February 5, 1997, to all wardens throughout the state that clarifies departmental policy regarding the eligibility of Close B Custody prisoners to participate in work program assignments and activities located within the institution's security perimeter. Per Directors' Rule 3371. (a)(5)(B), inmates designated as Close B Custody are to be allowed activities within the security perimeter during daylight hours only, except for limited evening activities such as bathing and haircuts within housing units. See also Departmental Operations Manual Sec. 62010.7.3.

The memorandum clarifies that the term "security perimeter" refers to the area encompassing work areas and housing units as enclosed by a double-security fence line with razor ribbon. When a program or activity including work change areas is located within the prison's security perimeter, the prison shall not preclude participation of Close B Custody prisoners...

BALANCE OF POWER ALTERED

Jackson MI April 14, 1997

...The Anti-Terrorism Bill passed in Washington infringes deeply into the backbone of American jurisprudence, which is based upon British common law, by slicing away at the Great Writ, the Habeas Corpus. It further restricts constitutional liberties by altering the balance of power among the branches of government. The Act re-introduces the concept of guilt by association. No law should ever be permitted which disallows a citizen to challenge his/her detention and/or incarceration. This Act has been followed by an even more infamous one, the Revised Prison Litigation Act, which further diminishes and in some cases eliminates a citizen's right to petition his government for investigation and redress of violations of her/his constitutional rights...



VOICES FROM INSIDE continued

SUPPORT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESTORATION ACT

Rosharon TX April 17, 1997

On January 28, 1997, Nevada Senator Harry Reid introduced Senate Bill 206 which on February 11, 1997, Louisiana Senator John Breau and on February 12, 1997, Mississippi Senator Thad Cochran agreed to co-sponsor. The bill prohibits all prisoners and detainees from filing a lawsuit pursuant to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 to protect their religious rights, including shaves, long hair and diet. Ask all of your states' congresspersons to vote "no" to Senate Bill 206. Everyone living in the above states should ask family, friends and the general public to oppose the reelection of the above congresspersons....

PAROLE SUPPORT REQUESTED

Midway TX April 21, 1997

To all Texas prisoners: Recently a Sec. 1983 civil rights action was filed in the U.S. District Court (Western District of Texas), to challenge the arbitrary, systematic denial of parole so many of us experience time and time again. Parties interested in making this cause a class action are asked to contact me.

Remember to keep copies of your letters. Samuel D. Caldwell, Jr., 684867, Jim Ferguson Unit, Rt. 2, Box 20, Midway TX 75852



VOICES IN SOLIDARITY

ACA ACTION

For the people who lost touch with the Center for Advocacy of Human Rights (CAHR) and Little Rock Reed - if you are interested in following up on the ACA action, write to: Eunice McAllister, 1100 Skyland Dr #P-2, Columbia SC 29210-8127.

RESOURCE UPDATE

Editors' Note: Mail addressed to the Freedom Press, PO Box 4458, Leesburg VA 22075 has been returned with no forwarding address known. The Coalition has also received at least one complaint that Freedom Press has left individual case work abandoned.

What Is Justice ?

When our Coalition says that the court and penal system is another example of what is unfair in this country in general, the next question that comes up is: "What would be fair; what is justice?"

We believe that the first condition of justice is not having the bad things that people do to one another, face-to-face and at a distance, happen. Justice is a process, something that has to be worked on every day. We are very far from it.

When bad things happen to us and we react by hurting the people who we think have hurt us, that is not justice - that is punishment. Punishment can only come after injustice. Punishment does not work toward creating justice, it works toward keeping things as they are. Which is how people in power want them to be - the way they are, only more so.

Many of us are so angry about how we have been treated in our lives that it is hard for us to think about how to change it. We are encouraged to use all our energy to think of how we can get back at people and get more for ourselves. And all the institutions that exist now, such as police, courts, prisons, workplaces, schools, hospitals, governments and business, encourage us to think small like that.

Putting people in jail won't make them stop drinking; offering support and assistance will. Killing people who are convicted of killing other people won't make people stop killing; making sure that everyone has a decent chance in life will. Kicking people out of school who don't come regularly won't help them get an education; changing schools so they are more respectful of the people who don't like them and feel like failures there will.

The second condition of justice, being fair, includes sharing equally. We live in a rich country. Even if we stopped taking more than our share from other countries there could still be enough here for everyone to have what they need. For some people to have a lot of money while others don't have enough to cover their basic needs isn't justice.

Having power to control our lives, to work to improve our lives, is a third condition of justice. How can we even talk about having justice when 44% of young black men can't find work, and 60,000 people are homeless in the streets of New York City?

Working for justice is hard work, especially since it goes against so many of the lies we have been brought up with. There can only be justice for one when it is there for all.



BARRIO DEFENSE COMMITTEE

One out of every 13 Chicanos Mexicanos is tied to the U.S. prison industry. That means that over 2 million Raza are locked-down either in city, county, state or federal prisons, on house arrest, parole or probation, or serving time in some kind of juvenile detention facility or program. On April 13, a National Conference on Raza Prisoners and Colonialism was held in East San Jose, California. Contact the Barrio Defense Committee, PO Box 1523, San Jose CA 95109; 408-223-0938.

AMERICANS UNITED FOR JUSTICE

Join Americans United for Justice. Whites are more likely to have charges dropped or reduced. Hispanics and Blacks receive harsh treatment compared to whites. Don't stand silent and accept these conditions. For further information contact us at PO Box 2473, Bakersfield CA 93303; or call Earneastine Harper, 805-861-0287 or Jesse Boyer, 805-366-1975.

AMERICA'S THIRTY YEARS' WAR

"America's so-called "War on Drugs" has been in reality and since its very inception a civil war on the poor in general, and in particular blacks, hispanics and the predominantly white counterculture..

"There have been smoke-ins in the past, of course, but never one nationwide beginning at the same time say twelve noon eastern standard time, Wednesday, August 6, 1997. We could gather at our county courthouses with our sleeping bags, food, musical instruments, port-a-potties, etc. and just camp there till we're either arrested or pot is decriminalized." Excerpted from "America's Thirty Years' War," by Tom Cahill, PO Box 632, Fort Bragg CA 95437.



**Coalition for Prisoners' Rights/
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