

Committee Opposing Psychiatric Abuse of Prisoners - COPAP -

PRESS RELEASE
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"CLOCKWORK ORANGE AT UCLA"

The Committee Opposing Psychiatric Abuse of Prisoners (COPAP) today posed serious questions of public concern regarding the conception and operation of the proposed Center for the Study and Reduction of Violence, which is being quietly implemented at the University of California, Los Angeles, in conjunction with the Neuropsychiatric Institute there. Specific projects to be undertaken by the Center have generated political, ethical and scientific controversies around the allocation of substantial sums of taxpayers' money for ambiguous and potentially harmful research.

Proponents of the Center claim it to be a multifaceted research and development program designed to analyze and diminish the incidence of violence in our society. While COPAP agrees that violence has reached a critical level in America and the world today, it feels that the proposed Center constitutes a greater threat than it purports to remedy. This statement and supporting documents will attempt to spell out some of the objections COPAP has raised to the Center as a legitimate response to a major social issue. COPAP believes that the Center will be an institution dedicated to the exploration of technological means for social control of individuals and population pacification.

In testimony before the State Senate hearing last month on the proposed Center, Dr. Louis ("Jolly") West, Medical Director of the Neuropsychiatric Institute and a key spokesman for the project, admitted, "We understand that most of the violence is not caused by sick people, but often by respectable institutions and their leaders. Much group violence stems from social oppression, racism and neglect. But we are primarily concerned with individual violence." (emphasis added)

The focus of the Center will be on individual violence. As Dr. West's comment suggests, the Center will thus be irrelevant to the preponderance of contemporary violence. To be ignored is group violence carried out at the highest level of authority (such as the Indochina war), institutionalized violence (such as police brutality, coercion in prisons, schools and mental institutions), and the social and economic underpinnings of violence (such as poverty and racism). Rather, the narrow focus of individual violence will be constricted even further in the Center's express concern with biological and psychiatric models of aggressive behavior. It would seem clear that valid scientific research into the causes of violence cannot be done at the Center when only biological and psychiatric correlates are to be examined. Moreover, this orientation toward the study of violence has grave political significance which COPAP feels must be brought before the public.

It is important to ask why the Center has been so restrictive in its field of inquiry. Close inspection of its structure and the content of its proposed work reveals that it is primarily designed to put into the hands of law enforcement and correctional agents legitimated "scientific" models for prediction, identification and control of individuals and groups.

Proponents of the Center observe that it will be a "university-based" institution. What they leave unsaid is that it will not be a "university-controlled" institution. Analysis of the drafts of the proposals for the Center reveals that selected state officials from law enforcement and correctional agencies will direct its operations and make the key policy decisions.

Not only will these agencies control the operations and determine the research priorities of the Center, they are in

fact providing the major source of funds. The California Council on Criminal Justice, bankrolled by the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), will contribute 75% of the \$1 million first-year budget.

Law enforcement and correctional officials are expressly the intended beneficiaries of the research to be undertaken at the Center, as well as the ones to determine the nature of that research. The final irony is that they are also to act as the ethical overseers of the projects!

In response to increasing community demands that the Center explore the political, social, legal and moral implications of its research, the most recent proposal for the Center establishes a Task Force on Law Enforcement, Law and Ethics. The political nature of the project is clearly revealed in the expressed purpose of this Task Force. The contempt with which Center officials view ethics and law is manifested by the selection of a police officer with 30 years' experience to be Coordinator of the Task Force. Even more revealing is the specific requirement that the Task Force maintain ties with state and local police agents, correctional officials and court personnel. The intent of the Task Force is therefore far from to be guardian of the rights of affected persons and equally divorced from moral consideration of the social and ethical principles of research. As the proposal states:

The success of the Task Force on Law Enforcement, Law and Ethics will be evaluated on the basis of (a) the degree to which it succeeds in receiving and interpreting the needs and concerns of the law enforcement and criminal justice community to all the other task forces within the Center; (b) the degree to which it succeeds in transmitting the information and findings developed by the Center to the law enforcement and criminal justice systems working with the Task Force on education and training, and in helping those systems to improve performance; (c) the degree to which it provides the Center as a whole with a sound legal and ethical basis for its ongoing activities.

It should be clear from the above quotation from the proposal that the Task Force on Law Enforcement, Law and Ethics will be a handmaiden of law enforcement agencies specifically designed to whitewash research at the Center. With such a watchdog over the civil liberties and social rights of potential victims, COPAP is moved to express its fear of encroachment by the Center on the liberties and rights of all people.

The Center plans to utilize persons incarcerated in prisons and state mental hospitals as subjects for experimentation which will involve invasion of their mental and physical privacy. COPAP feels that the use of these populations which are subject to coercion from state officials and do not possess many basic civil rights or the means of protecting them has raised serious questions about the meaning of "informed consent" in this context. How can an individual under these constraints give voluntary consent to being used as an experimental subject?

Furthermore, the Center will be focusing on populations primarily composed of black and other Third World people. The proposal states that "The major known correlates of violence are sex (male), age (youthful), ethnicity (black), and urbanicity." This leaves little doubt about what kinds of communities will be studied. A project to survey violence in schools and test out programs will look at two schools only: one in a black neighborhood and the other in a Chicano area.

Therefore, in its use of imprisoned populations of which a disproportionate number is nonwhite, in its development of ethnic "correlates" of aggressive behavior, and in its use of police data for identification and prediction which is racially biased, the Center will be undertaking research that is racist in its implications and in the practical applications it will generate.

COPAP believes that the specific projects to be undertaken at the Center represent an effort to achieve easy technological solutions to difficult social and political problems. The medical and psychiatric research on individual behavior may be utilized by law enforcement agencies as a "scientific" legitimation of increasingly sophisticated and repressive techniques to identify, predict, control and treat "troublesome" populations. Experimentation to be conducted on violence and brain waves, studies of males with XXY chromosomes to seek a "link" with aggressive behavior, use of experimental castration drugs, research on hyperkinetic children and on violence in women connected to menstrual cycles all indicate that the Center intends to do work oriented toward future mass screening and behavior modification through chemical and surgical means. COPAP feels the imperative of alerting the public to these serious potential threats, particularly at this time.

In response to the upheavals of recent years, the machinery of law enforcement is expanding and adopting new technologies of surveillance and monitoring. At the same time, correctional agencies are testing new means of controlling and altering behavior on imprisoned individuals. Drug use, psychosurgery and intensive group therapies are being implemented in institutions across the country for use on individuals labeled as violence-prone by the state.

With federal money for social programs being cut back drastically, it is significant that the Center is being generously funded at this time. The work of the Center must be viewed in this context of increasing usage of medical and technological models for repressive "law and order".

The Committee Opposing Psychiatric Abuse of Prisoners (COPAP) is composed of doctors, lawyers, social scientists, criminologists, teachers and representatives of community groups that has formed in response to the use repressive techniques of behavior modification, ranging from the abuses of drugs and psychotherapy to psychosurgery. Raising questions and objections to the Center for the Study and Reduction of Violence has been a critical focus of our recent work, for we view the Center as a potential threat to the liberties and human rights of not just the immediate persons concerned, but of all of us.

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