

COALITION FOR PRISONERS' RIGHTS NEWSLETTER

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DEATH PENALTY ABOLITION CONFERENCE REPORT

The annual conference of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty was held the weekend of October 16-18th in Chicago. Abolitionists gathered from around the nation and Canada to share ideas and philosophies, learn new organizing techniques and exchange victories and defeats. The conference included:

- 22 members of families of Death Row prisoners in Georgia ^{who} drove 12 hours from Savannah to Chicago for the meeting. These folks from New Hope House, a place for families visiting their loved ones on Death Row, returned home inspired to re-activate their state's coalition.

- 2 wardens, who had participated in executions in North Carolina and Mississippi publicly expressed their feelings against the death penalty and urged abolitionists to reach out more to prison employees.

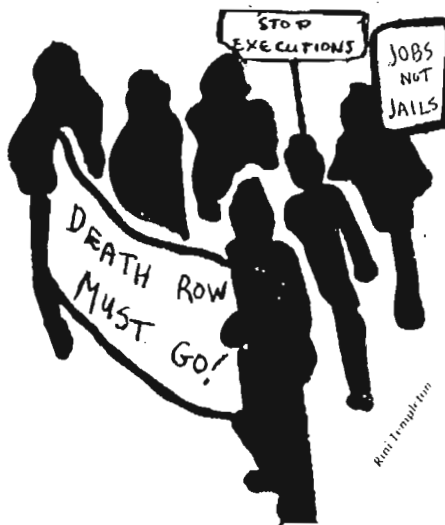
- Abolitionists in Washington, D.C., credited their success in defeating a referendum to reinstate the death penalty to working with groups that hadn't ordinarily been involved in anti-death penalty efforts in the past. D.C. citizens voted 2 to 1 - 67% - against resurrecting the death penalty in their city.

- A panel consisting of a New York attorney, a New Mexico activist and a Chicago academic addressed the issue of finding real alternatives to the death penalty. Rather than offering life-without-parole, which is in reality "death by imprisonment," the speakers advocated offering decent employment opportunities, early childhood programs, drug treatment on demand and better

schools as some of the alternatives for a more just and less violent society. A poll in New York has shown public support for these and other true alternatives.

- Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation invited all abolitionists to join the group in a 2-week "Journey of Hope" in Indiana this summer. Folks and families will gather to educate, organize, rally, march, debate and enjoy. A woman whose daughter was kidnapped and murdered encouraged participants to attend the event and said the work of abolitionists is to help people change their attitude of fury and revenge to an attitude of forgiveness and reconciliation.

To obtain more information on any of the events or projects mentioned above, contact the NCADP office at 1325 G St. NW, LL-B, Washington DC 20005.



BAD OLD DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

According to a study released in September, 1992, by the Public Citizen's Health Research Group and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill - nationally known advocacy groups - more than 1 in every 14 prisoners in jails suffers from serious mental illness. This is the same as in the 1830s.

The study covered 1,391 local jails, which together cage 62% of all jailed prisoners. The 7.2% of prisoners in jail now who suffer from serious mental illness are as many as those who were in jail in the 1880s. This means more than 30,700 seriously disturbed people are in jail every day. Another way of putting it is that 11 million days a year are spent by seriously mentally ill people in jails.

These numbers do not include mentally ill people in state or federal prisons. As the Public Citizen Health Research Group's November 1992 Health Letter states: "Our jails have once again become surrogate mental hospitals, recriminalizing the seriously mentally ill."

"Deinstitutionalization" emptied state mental hospitals in the 1960s and 1970s. Governments did not provide necessary follow-up services. Now, 29% of the jails in the survey incarcerate mentally ill people without any criminal charges against them. Often, their only "crime" is their illness. Only 6 jurisdictions reported no such people in jail: Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. In Florida, 16% of jails reported caging mentally ill people without charges. New York reported 14% and New Mexico 63%.

Most seriously mentally ill people are criminally charged when arrested, although the vast majority of their "crimes" are trivial misdemeanors which



are manifestations of their mental illness. More than 20% of jails have no access to mental health services of any kind. More than 30% of seriously mentally ill people who do time in jail are or have been homeless. A majority of jails in 41 states and 69% of jails over-all report more prisoners with serious mental illnesses now than 10 years ago.

The locality with the worst record for jailing the mentally ill is Flathead County in northwestern Minnesota. Only the jail there - not the hospitals - routinely accept psychiatric emergency admissions. The state with the worst record is Kentucky.

There are "jail diversion" programs - to keep the seriously mentally ill out of cages - in Norristown PA, Memphis TN and Seattle WA.

The recommendations of this report include: 1) That jail diversion programs be set up everywhere to minimize the number of people with serious mental illness who end up in jail; 2) That follow-up care should be mandated by the courts as a provision for release; 3) That at each jail there should be a standing mental illness committee which includes representation from the local chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

The complete 152 page report is available for \$10 from: Public Citizen Publications Department, "Jail HL," 2000 P St. NW, Washington DC 20036.



VOICES FROM INSIDE

LAW LIBRARY ACCESS

Santa Fe NM October 21, 1992

...I am hardly able to access the Law Library more than once a week for seldom more than an hour at a time due to the overload of requests by other inmates for physical access. As circumstances would have it, the direct telephone lines to the Law Library are inoperable, thereby preventing us from communicating with the Law Library Officer and/or Librarian as required by Duran v. King...

It is virtually impossible to conduct legal research in a reasonable manner at the North Facility Law Library. Numerous reference materials are not provided for our use. Policy manuals are outdated, if not outright incomplete. Spanish translations of the same and other reference materials do not exist, which is also contrary to Duran v. King.

Be advised that the U.S. Supreme Court has held that prisoners have a right of access to an adequate law library or adequate assistance from persons trained in the law to have "a reasonably adequate opportunity to present claimed violations of fundamental constitutional rights to the courts." Additionally, courts have condemned schedules that provided too little time for meaningful legal research... 4 to 6 hours per month of physical access is grossly inadequate...

THE TRUTH ABOUT CONTROL UNITS

Crescent City CA October 30, 1992

There is psychological and physical warfare being waged against the people of color within California's state prison system through the use and misuse of the Control Units located at Pelican Bay. It only serves as a means to promote and justify the continuous practice of racial segregation by the Department of Corrections.

A sentence to a Control Unit means the automatic suspension of the right to education, job training, religious practices, and also the right to conjugal and contact visits which would provide the means to keeping and strengthening family ties. All the rights I have cited that are denied you in control units are cited by experts in the field of rehabilitation of prisoners as key ingredients if a successful rehabilitation program is desired.

The Department of Corrections is practicing racial segregation with Control Units. They assure themselves a continuous supply of the so-called 'worst of the worst' people of color, thus providing them justification for building their high-cost maximum security prison which they have staffed with highly paid predominantly white racist males... This persecution and placement of people of color in control units provides space for white prisoners in the educational and training programs...

New prisoner subscribers will no longer routinely receive information packets and confirming letters when they ask to be put on the CPR Newsletter mailing list. Changes of address notices will also no longer be acknowledged by letter. Mailing list additions and address changes should go into effect within 2 months from their postmarked date. 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. However, in most cases we do not have direct experience with the quality or reliability of the services provided by the groups we mention. We strongly urge that readers keep copies of all papers, especially legal papers, sent to those offering assistance.

SUPPORT DEATH ROW SUPPORT PROJECT

Somers CT November 5, 1992

I'm working on a project to promote the Death Row Support Project. I need to expand my list of churches outside of Connecticut. Many papers run an ad page on Saturdays in which churches invite people to come and worship with them. Please send me this page. We also need names and addresses of any other religious groups, justice organizations, and anti-death penalty groups. Please send this information to: Michael Ross, #127404, Death Row - CCIS, PO Box 100, Somers CT 06071.

STAND TALL

Indian Springs NV November 10, 1992

On August 10, 1992, I wrote to you and told you how the state of Nevada was feeding their prison inmates meat that had been injected with experimental health care vaccines. Well, a civil suit has been filed in the U.S. District Court. This suit was received and filed by the Court on September 7, 1992. All defendants have been served and they're now running around like chickens with their heads cut off. I know we have them very scared.

On September 23, 1992, I was rolled up and taken to Unit 8 (the Hole). Somehow, without a victim to call, I was found guilty of assault and battery and given 180 days Disciplinary Segregation. I know why this was done; they have to get me away from the legal library - but it didn't work!!!

...If you've got a beef, stand up. Don't let them take everything from you - stand tall!!!

RECIPE FOR REAL CHANGE

Huntsville TX November 10, 1992

Incentive pay in Texas did not reduce overcrowding. "Incentive Pay" is a fancy way to say: "We ain't gonna pay no inmate here in Texas."

What reduced prison overcrowding in Texas is a class action suit (Ruiz v. Estelle et al.) that's been in the courts for 20 years! The judge mandated a 95% cap and the problem simply shifted to the county jails.

Don't expect overcrowding to disappear, because it won't. Real change will come when we start taking care of our kids. We got to put them first, and then a couple of generations down the road, change will come...

MORE DEATH BY IMPRISONMENT

Los Lunas NM November 17, 1992

In the last three years, I have tried to get the Special Master to have an investigation into the deaths of inmates of the N.M. Department of Corrections. Each time that there has been an inmate who has died in the Department of Corrections, the officials claim that the inmate died of an overdose.

In the last two weeks, there have been two inmates die from an overdose and one died from not getting the medical treatment that he needed to save his life...

The Special Master has promised that there will be an audit of the Correctional Medical Systems (CMS) in January. There could be a lot of inmates die before January... There are inmates who are afraid to take the medication that is given to them by the medical staff of the CMS in fear of being given an overdose of medication. We have reported all of this to the warden of this institution and he will do nothing about it because the medical staff of CMS has told him that they are giving the proper medication to each inmate...

When are the officials of the N. M Department of Corrections going to stop these killings of inmates of the N.M. Department of Corrections and when are the justices of the U.S. District Court going to back up their rulings under the Duran decree?...



CEGA SERVICES MARKS 25 YEARS

CEGA Offender Services is proud to announce our 25th year of providing services to the inmate community nationwide. Founded on the belief that each community has sufficient resources to serve those most in need, CEGA Services routinely matches people in need anywhere in the United States with people who can fill that need... Gary Hill, president and founder of CEGA Services says, "In our work with more than 68,000 individuals, we have never told clients that no help is available - it may not always be exactly what is requested, but it is enough to keep mind, body and spirit together. The key to this success is found in the philosophy of helping people help themselves. We provide only guidance and support."

If you are making plans for your release and/or parole hearing, but don't know where to look for a job, housing, counseling, etc., CEGA Services can help you. We offer an Offender Referral Service which for a \$10.00 processing fee can help you locate appropriate agencies in the city of your choice to assist with these needs, and more...

If you don't know where to look, or whom to contact, contact CEGA Services. We will locate the programs to assist you with employment, housing, counseling, education or anything you may need upon release. Write to CEGA Services, Dept. PP, PO Box 81826, Lincoln NE 68501-1826.

Editors' note: CEGA Services, of Contact Center, Inc., is the new name of their post-release program.

Crime of the Month

The new trade agreement among the U.S., Canada and Mexico has some fine print about the costs of prescription drugs that's enough to make you want to take a tranquilizer.

Corporation presidents have been telling us for months that the agreement, called the North American Free Trade Agreement, will mean more trade among the 3 countries and therefore economic progress. The agreement certainly does provide for the free movement of money across borders, although it continues to prohibit the free movement of workers, that is, labor. Prices for consumer goods will come down, they keep saying.

But the agreement contains some fine print about drug pricing that gives an idea of some of the real corporate aims of the agreement.

In the U.S., drug companies can patent a drug for 17 to 20 years. During that time, no other company can produce it. Generic copies of the drug, which dramatically reduce the price, are prohibited during that 17 to 20 year period.

In Canada, however, the law limits drug patents to 7 to 10 years. After

aka CrimeToppers

that, other companies can produce the drug, bringing down the price.

As part of the free trade agreement, the Canadian Parliament is required to bring its drug-patent laws, and therefore its prices, in line with those in the U.S.

Labor unions, organizations for the elderly and the health ministers of Canada's provinces are fighting the change in the law, which is expected to cost Canadians a total of \$400 million a year. Many of the hardest hit will be people with chronic illnesses like cancer who need regular prescription drugs.

Just as this news about drug prices was becoming known, the media reported that Upjohn, the giant U.S. drug company, is making a killing on the widely used sleeping pill Halcion. Halcion, made in Puerto Rico, costs Upjohn 10 cents to make for every dollar in sales.

The outrageous prices for medically necessary drugs in the U.S. is our Crime of the Month. It would be nice if some U.S. attorney somewhere would start getting after some of the really big drug dealers in this country.



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