

THE PEOPLES WITNESS

VOLUME 1, Number 2

SACRAMENTO
SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

November 15, 1973

FOLSOM "HOLE" ON STRIKE!

On Oct. 15, 30-40 inmates on the first tier of the adjustment Center (4-A) at Folsom went on strike, issuing this statement:

"Due to the consistent harassment and mistreatment of us prisoners here in the "adjustment center" at Folsom Prison, such as mail and visiting restrictions and unnecessary harassment in the everyday routine "adjustment center" procedures.

We, the victims of the "hole" who are subjected to the most inhumane conditions in the whole of the California prison system are totally fed up with the ill treatment we are forced to suffer. We refuse to accept the mistreatment and denial of our rights any longer and we, the people, who are contained in the "adjustment center" are going on strike until our grievances are remedied and we are treated like decent adult human beings. The strike will begin October 15, 1973 and it will be "peaceful" on our part. We only want what we are entitled to and what the other prisons already have...

1. Mail and visiting; we want "open correspondence" and full visiting privileges with adequate time.
2. Arbitrary confinement; we want an end to the arbitrary confinement of prisoners for no reason other than the whims of a fascist-like staff and their guards.
3. We want an end to the lengthy and excessive time we are forced to serve here in this condemned death trap.
4. We want sufficient medical aid and practice.
5. We want our meals under required sanitary conditions, to meet the standards and specifications of the Dept. of Public Health.
6. We want an end to the sporadic violence without discretion of means, or concern for prisoners, such as indiscriminate shootings, gassings, and beatings.

The above mentioned strike will consist of:

1. Not standing for the 5:30am, 3:00pm, and 6:30pm counts.
 2. And we are refusing to shave, too.
- The #2 "Refusal to Shave" is because 98% of all prisons in California are allowed to grow mustaches and we feel that we should be allowed to grow them too.

This is a brief synopsis of the flagrant violations of our rights and privileges here in what's euphemistically the "adjustment center (4-A) of Folsom Prison". We sincerely hope that this will succeed in arousing the public attention to the point where appropriate measures are taken...and investigative impartial committees are formed for the purposes of looking into these matters for themselves. Which would also enable the fact finding committees to be presented with a profound picture of this horrible reality, to wit, any amount or combination of words would hardly suffice. We're in dire need of your support.

---Struggling Prisoners of the Hole at Folsom Prison."

Information about the strike was scanty, with prisoners on the mainline and even some people in 4-A unaware that it was even going on. Media coverage was almost no-existent.

Oct. 17, the Sacramento Bee carried a small article stating that a "mild protest" was going on, with a summary of the demands released by UPU.

The Prisoners Union and United Prisoners Union began organizing demonstrations to support the strike on two different days (Sat. & Sun.) of the same weekend at the prison. However, they were able to agree on Sunday.

At an initial meeting for the demonstration it was reported that there had been indiscriminate shooting by the guards with buckshot. At least one prisoner, we know of, had about 60 pellets removed from his face alone.

FOLSOM STRIKE--continued

A press conference was held in front of the CDC in Sacramento to publicize the strike and announce the demonstration on Oct 19.

Oct 21, a demo was held at the main gates of Folsom; about 150 people picketed, chanted, and passed out leaflets to visitors & passing cars from noon to 1:30 pm.

After the demo it was announced that after the strike started, 3 brothers from 4-A were transferred to Quentin, and that one of them, Larry Justice, had an attempt made upon his life by a guard after he arrived at Quentin (Death Row).

We also heard that prisoners in 4-A had torn up the plumbing Saturday in protest of conditions. (This was carried by the press on Oct 25.)

A man who went in to visit a Folsom inmate immediately after the demo ended reported that just over the hill (out of sight of the gate) there were 6-7 carfuls of guards heavily armed with riot equipment.

This demo received good TV and poor newspaper coverage in Sacramento.

Oct 24, we received word from Folsom that about 20 people from 4-A had been transferred to Chino. We have since heard that about a dozen people were transferred to Quentin around the same time.

Oct 28, a second demo was held at Folsom, with 30-40 people turning out. We did not hear of any media coverage.

Nov 1, the Sacramento Bee printed an article saying that a Folsom official admitted that "about 30" people were still striking; Jim Smith of Legal Aid said about 60 people were still participating (the strike having spread to the second tier).

Nov 4, a third demo was held at Folsom. Six people were there.

Nov 11, a fourth demo was held at Folsom. 4-5 people were there.

One of the "authorities'" retaliations against the strikers was to deprive about 25 people of their basic rights. Legal cases are being prepared to force the "authorities" to restore these rights to the people.

PRESENT OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS

The issue of the strike is now completely out of the media. Information that we are receiving is scanty and old. We do not know the state of things on the inside, whether or not

the strike is still being carried on. There is, for all intents and purposes, no support or interest in Sacramento for what is happening on the inside. It is now a dead issue for the masses of people. At this time the inmates are in their greatest danger, and the outside is at its lowest organizing potential.

ANALYSIS: Criticism/Self-Criticism

In analyzing the events, past and present, of the Folsom strike, it is imperative that our criticisms and self-criticisms be honest and productive. It is easy to criticize mistakes that everyone acknowledges, it is harder to criticize oneself and accept criticism that is given.

1) We have analyzed that the single biggest failure of the outside groups was our inability to communicate and "share" information with each other. This failure made it difficult to build effective support on the outside, to give continuous news coverage to the media thereby making them reliant on us for information, and to educate and mobilize the masses of people.

Communications have to be present before effective, creative unified action can proceed. The inability of the outside to create better methods of demonstrating support than pickets once a week around Folsom gates, which is isolated from the masses of people, is an example of this non-communication. Sectarian and ideological splits real and imagined, ego trips (we are all prey to), have prevented us from fulfilling our tasks.

2) It is obvious that much of the "prison" movement energies have been directed at "talking" to ourselves & organizing each other rather than building mass support. The "prison" movement on the outside is elitist and specialized to the point of ignoring the masses of people (not excluding SSC). Because of this weakness it is virtually impossible to measure the real success of the strike on the outside, except by conjecture.

3) The SSC found itself unprepared & undefined to meet the crisis. Instead of analyzing ourselves realistically at the time, we proceeded as though we were an established group prepared to deal with the situation first hand. We proceeded as a group

Folsom -Cont.

instead of the individuals (we were/are) in search of ideology. As a result we just ploughed along hoping for the best. That is not placing the PRACTICE as irrelevant, but stating that practice that is misdirected is like a bullet without a gun. Action has to be planned and executed with our ideological weapon (theory). We deviated from our initial one-year plan not because we felt it necessary after analyzing the situation, but because it was convenient to do so. We committed some drastic errors, but fortunately they were not fatal. We overextended ourselves, neglected to analyze the situation, and acted individually under the pretense of being an organization with a defined ideology. We only had our bodies to offer, no other pretenses should have been made.

4) We realize that we cannot make a pretense of knowing what should or should not have been done in terms of the strike. All we can offer is one observation; the inability of the striking inmates to have the strike spread to the entire prison (for whatever reason), gave credence to the "authorities'" contentions that it was all located in a small group of dissidents in the "trouble wing" 4-A. We are not passing a judgement, only observing certain objective conditions that came down. It is clear to us that our job is not to organize the inmates...that can only be done on the inside by inmates. Our job is to help organize, educate, and mobilize masses of people on the outside in support of the comrades on the inside... Communications have to be better created from the inside to the outside and vice versa. Our failures to fulfill our tasks cannot be laid on the inside.

Our failures came from our lack of theory, practice and involvement with the masses of people.

PROJECTED TASKS AHEAD:

We must struggle to keep the information cohesive and continuous and open to the people. Try to build communications between various groups and individuals. Develop our internal theory and put it into sound practice with the people. It is clear that we must not isolate nor alienate ourselves from the people. Only in this way can we effectively prepare to meet crisis situations and move forward.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!!!!

QUESTION: Reform-definition and role

In our first issue we printed a question for debate and definition. Due to our lack of space this issue and the lack of response to the question, we are holding over the question for one more issue. Printed below is one comrade's response to the question.

"To me, reform and rehabilitation, is one and the same: Which means to regain your former status, and being a black man in the wildness of North Amerikkka, I've never had any status! Except that as a slave--So it plays no role in my revolution. That which is reform, is simply that which is counter-revolutionary!! What is not reform or counter-revolutionary: is any action that is conducive to the creation of a larger predisposition on the part of most people to view revolution as the only course of conduct available to end oppression. That's what I relate to - that's what I understand, and see very clearly as being real -- To The Knife !!

Jomo
Soledad

We hope that more comrades will be motivated to respond to the question so that in the next issue we can try and create a position based on all of our thoughts on this definition.

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ON PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE

We printed a form in our first issue asking people if they wanted to correspond individually. Unfortunately, due to our small size, our ability to correspond individually with inmates is reaching a saturation point. In other words, we've overextended ourselves! We are asking that close groups of inmates write collectively or share letters (if possible) and that more Brothers and Sisters write to the paper. Ideological discipline is necessary to our struggle. We can only grow through criticism/self-criticism and open communication. THROUGH UNITY WE WILL WIN!!!!

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Address all correspondence and subscription requests (free to inmates) to:

SACRAMENTO SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE
P.O. BOX 13051
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95813

SAN QUENTIN "AUTHORITIES" CONFISCATE
THE PEOPLE'S WITNESS

On October 15, the first issue of this newsletter was mailed out to prisoners in six California State prisons, including San Quentin. So far as we know at this time, everyone to whom it was sent received the paper, except the brothers in Quentin.

About October 25, we received a letter from one brother in Quentin stating that The People's Witness was denied entrance to Quentin, allegedly being in conflict with PC 2600 (concerning, among other things, "any matter of a character tending to incite murder, arson, riot, violent racism, or any other form of violence") and/or 311 (concerning "obscene matter"). Shortly after, we received another letter (dated October 24) from a brother who stated that he was anxiously awaiting receiving the newsletter.

So, on October 30, we sent a letter to each person in Quentin to whom the newsletter was sent, explaining the situation and asking for written verification of whether they had received the newsletter. Since then, we have received several more replies from people who did not receive the newsletter. We have not heard from anyone in Quentin who did receive the newsletter.

On November 4, a member of the SSC went to talk to people at the Prison Law Collective and some other legal people about this situation. From them we learned that previous interpretations in the courts have gone in our favor.

We were advised to write to Warden Nelson requesting that we be informed of reasons why the paper did not reach those to whom it was sent, which we did on November 5.

We received a reply from Information Officer Nyberg stating that if our newspaper was not allowed into the prison, the inmates would be notified of the reasons, but we would not. He disclaimed any knowledge of The People's Witness by himself or the mail room, but offered to see that those to whom it was sent receive it if we send him copies of the paper and names of those to whom it was sent, and if it conforms to PC 300, 311, and 2600. In response to a statement in our letter,

he replied that, "In closing, you're right, no one in authority at San Quentin would knowingly violate the law of the land. It is very gratifying you gave us that much credit."

As usual, the "authorities" instrumental in making the laws are violating their own laws and trampling on the rights of inmates.

We feel it is most important to pursue this struggle for the right of inmates to receive The People's Witness; consequently, we are preparing to take this struggle to court if necessary in order to get the newsletter in to the comrades in San Quentin.

"I hold that it is bad as far as we are concerned if a person, a political party, an army or a school is not attacked by the enemy, for in that case it would mean that we have sunk to the level of the enemy. It is good if we are attacked by the enemy, since it proves that we have drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves.

"To be attacked by the enemy is not a bad thing but a good thing."

--Comrade Mao Tse-Tung

Essence of Man

Out of the night that covers me
Black is my heart in this *fucked-
up hole
I thank whatever God may be for my
unconquerable soul--

In the evil clutch of circumstances I
have not winced, nor cried aloud,
and under the bludgeoning of chance...
My head is bloodied but unbowed!!!

Beyond this place of wretch and tears,
looms but the horror of the grave--
and yet this menace of the years
finds/shall find me unafraid--

For, I am the master of my fate....
The captain of my soul.....
*imperialist

Jomo Majizil
Soledad

ALL
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