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SACRAMENTO SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

Sacramento, CA 95813

VOLUME I, Number 5

February 15, 1974

ON THE NEED FOR GENERAL DEMANDS

Throughout the existence of the Sacramento Solidarity Committee we have talked of the need for better communications, the need to stop unnecessary duplication of effort and the need to join together in unity in times other than extreme crisis. In the Peoples Witness we have tried to put that concept forth to the people on the inside and outside.

It is true that in time of crisis spontaneous coalitions have developed and the crises have been met with a semblance of unity, but the inherent weakness of spontaneous coalitions formed on a once-only basis does not lead to constructive growth politically and allow for the type of criticism/self-criticism needed to analyze the development of the coalition. The other main problem of spontaneous coalitions is that the crisis is usually state produced and we end up in a defensive position fighting to hold back the flood. It is crucial that we begin to assume an offensive position that allows us to take the issues to the people on our own terms.

Moving to an offensive position produces two crucial political developments: 1) it allows us to act upon and recognize our power and strength, and 2) it creates the proper conditions for united action based on long-term political strategy. The consequences of moving offensively force the state to act in a defensive manner and defend those repressive anti-people acts that ultimately point out the inability of the system to change without the people demanding and forcing it to change. (In other words, the system does not change of its own accord to meet the needs of the people).

What would be the means to accomplish this offensive action? Since our source of strength is the people, we must find a method which al-

lows us to reach them in the most positive and united fashion; a method that forces the capitalist media to recognize our strength and power; a method that makes it clear what we want done and what has to be done. After analyzing our needs at this time, we feel that a prison movement list of "general demands" adopted and supported on the inside and the outside and utilized to the utmost would be such a method, which would satisfy this particular period of development.

It is clear that political slogans and demands that demonstrate correct thinking are necessary weapons in the fight to educate and organize ourselves and the people to seize state power. In every country, in every struggle, the slogans and demands serve not only as sources of political education, but also as rallying points for the people. We must create such a rallying, educational point for the people around the prison issues.

How are we to implement this plan? First: A general consensus has to be obtained from as many prison support groups as possible for the idea. Second: All the grievances and demands from the prisoners and different groups have to be collected and compiled by each group or person in contact with people on the inside. Third: A regional or state conference should be called for the sole purpose of creating this list of demands. Fourth: At the end of the conference/adoption convention/congress, the general list of demands would be adopted and endorsed by the groups present. A press conference would be held to expose this list for the first time. Fifth: The list would have to be exposed and supported at every possible opportunity by the groups and prisoners. Sixth: Endorsement of these demands should

be obtained from every possible source in the state. For example, prisoners could apply pressure to those hesitant groups to join in the struggle.

The key to the entire project is exposure! This list would have to be used much in the same way the Vietnamese used the Seven Point Peace Proposal in the worldwide anti-war movement. By commitment to this list and constant exposure, and the correct political content, we would force the capitalists to recognize the demands of the people. This list of "general demands" could be the prison movement's "Land, Bread and Liberty" slogan/demand if used correctly.

The situation we have now is that every group has its own particular set of demands, which in and of itself is not bad, but the value of a general set of demands that can focus attention on the problems so the particulars could be gone into by the different groups is immeasurable. It must be stressed that this general list of demands would not infringe upon the autonomy of any particular group, nor would it usurp the demands of that organization. The purpose would be to create a united voice of the prison support movement.

The Peoples Witness has carried different demands by prisoners in the few short months of its existence; first were the Folsom (4-A) strike demands, then the San Quentin Adjustment Center strike and the demands against the lockup. Following this article are some more demands and grievances that prisoners have sent to us that should be printed. In analyzing the effectiveness of these demands, we can see that there is no power or force to back them up. The demands should be heard, because they are the demands of human dignity and justice, but that is not enough to make the State take notice and acknowledge them! We must create the power necessary to have the movement recognized by the State! Let us know what you think!!! All Power to the People! Support the General Demands!

"It seems to many of us here in our group that a stronger fight could be waged to compel prison authorities, or the Adult Authority, to change the attitudes that do affect us inside, especially in the area of time.

"For example, one man just returned from the Board and he was told by Hoover...that he didn't have a serious crime, that he always maintained a good prison record, but that since he was a multiple termer he wasn't getting out.

"To many of us here, this is the attitude that we have to combat. This is where the pressure has to be constantly applied."

A Brother in Susanville

"I am writing of a problem many of us here at DVI face: About 250-300 inmates at DVI have been separated and segregated from the general population 'for no reason at all.' But the problems we face are the following:

- 1) Showers are infrequent, maybe one a week
- 2) Medical attention is inadequate
- 3) Food is served cold and unbalanced
- 4) We are not allowed to shower or adequate clothing prior to visitation
- 5) We are allowed no recreation at all
- 6) We are not permitted an opportunity to take part in educational programs, nor permitted access to a general law library
- 7) We are not allowed religious services, or furnished religious reading materials
- 8) Some incoming and outgoing mail is not being delivered
- 9) My cell is damp and chilly

"And many, many others which I cannot write at the present time. Many of us are being constantly harassed by the pig for no reason at all. As we both can see, many of our constitutional, institutional rights are being violated in every way possible."

A Comrade at DVI Tracy

"...I and the rest of the convicts who are confined in SHU (Security Housing Unit) will appreciate it if you and representatives from the other organizations will exert a prompt attentive concern to this issue: that the administration of Folsom is trying to exercise and establish a constructive cross-fence as a divider between the SHU exercise yards of the Lower and Upper, to provide for the separation of opposing factions. This outrageous act of compulsion could definitely not go into effect--if we receive a fairly good local coverage from you and other representatives concerning this vital issue."

(Enclosed with this letter was a copy of a letter from Warden Gunn to prisoners, from which we include this excerpt:

"SECURITY HOUSING UNIT

"Half day exercise periods have been instituted in order to cut down the number of men on either yard at one time. Eventually, the yards will be cross fenced or divided to provide for the separation of opposing factions.")

A Comrade in Folsom

"The convict does not want hostility, as does the CDC, but only seeks to have some control over his own destiny, and the use of political and economic knowledge that is essential to every free man and woman. He wants protection from those interests that are detrimental to his rehabilitation. But

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we are in danger, for we are at the mercy of those negative interests, and in need of support. By international standards, the lock down would surely be interpreted as a hostile and unfriendly act.

"All concerned people should demand a look at the inside, and see for themselves what the administrators are doing to their society."

A Comrade in San Quentin

NOTICE

We have had some response from comrades in prison who read our "Notice to Exchanges" in the last issue and thought it might apply to them. That notice, which stated that if we did not hear from some of our "exchanges" they would be removed from our mailing list, applied only to other organizations and newspapers. We remove comrades inside from our list only if 1) they specifically ask to be removed, or 2) newsletters are returned to us marked that they are not there. For this reason, it is a good idea to send us a letter or card if you have not received an issue within a reasonable time after the 15th of each month; sometimes it's possible that the authorities "make an error" and send the newsletter back marked that you aren't there when you are, and we have no other way of knowing.

GRAHAM-ALLEN CASE

The case of Ernest Graham and Eugene Allen, two DVI Tracy prisoners, continues with little or no coverage in the press. It is essential that more extensive coverage develop at this time, as the trial date is rapidly approaching and there has been talk of the death penalty being used for the stabbing death of a prison guard at DVI (Graham and Allen are the alleged attackers).

Their trial date has been set for April 15, 1974, with a possible change of venue. Thus far all motions by the defense have been denied, with little time being spent by the State-appointed defense attorneys working with their clients in preparation. Because of their lawyers' unconcerned attitude and lack of political consciousness, the defendants have made a request for different attorneys.

Apart from legal help, there is a need for the people to support the two brothers, because this trial represents another attack on the poor and oppressed peoples - not only through the threat of the death penalty, but through a blatant attempt to rationalize a fascistic policy such as the lockup through such dubious cries as prisoners' brutality toward guards. In reality the CDC has gone to

MEN OF THE TOMB

All lights are out in the cellblock black as a storm struck night, nothing but artificial stars known to bulls and convicts alike, as security lights.

This tomb, this cell, this house called hell, a man made hell called prison is where I'm spending this night.

Black be it night or day within my soul, but the men of the pen, the men behind bars can see their shadowed souls, for the men of steel are one and a kind, sharing bitterness as a cup of wine.

Men with midnight covered souls, men of steel, never have a dawn within nor shall they never once more again, blackness like a black hate thickened fog is their life long plight.

In this blackened tomb walk men five steps to, five steps fro, while security lights look always through the night, making sure all are locked within, making sure no man not one, makes a hole and flees into the night.

ONE man one night shall have disappeared 'gone cloaked by blackness of night.

Hear them townsmen and countrymen alike my God what have we done, this can not be real, this can not be right, how did this monster from the night find his way into our midst, even by the blackness of night.

This terrible thing my God we fear where did this beast come from, what house, what country, what land, what black cave did he find life.

The man of the tomb spoke with harsh hate filled voice, I'm your son and I've come home this black night.

A Comrade in vacaville.

GRAHAM (cont.)
extreme lengths to justify and perpetrate violence and repression upon prisoners.

Address: Ernest Graham B-32320
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A POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE SSC

The following is the statement of the Sacramento Solidarity Committee presented to the bourgeois media of Sacramento at a press conference on February 13, 1974. This statement relates to the demand by the Symbionese Liberation Army (presently holding Patricia Hearst, daughter of millionaire publisher Randolph Hearst, prisoner of war) that free food be distributed to the poor and aged people and people on parole or probation, and that this distribution be supervised by prison groups and other organizations.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND THE HEARST FAMILY OF SAN FRANCISCO

We of the Sacramento Solidarity Committee, a newly formed prison support group, volunteer our services to help oversee and distribute "free food to the people on State aid."

We realize we are probably not one of the names on the list the Symbionese Liberation Army sent to the Hearst family, but we stand ready to comply with their demand...IF IT IS TO BE MET BY THE HEARST FAMILY!

We take this action out of love for the people, because one of the most horrible forms of terrorism is POVERTY which is the direct result of capitalism...AND WE ARE AGAINST THIS FORM OF TERRORISM!

We will travel to any part of the state, at any time, in order to help in the task and we will do so at our own expense if necessary. The issue must not be distorted...people's suffering must be stopped, therefore we are ready to serve the people!

The Sacramento Solidarity Committee

The bourgeoisie, through their media, are attempting to label the actions of the Symbionese Liberation Army as "terrorism." There is a difference between terrorism and revolutionary action:

Terrorism is the act of a government trying to hold its power against the will of the people, action that is directed indiscriminately at people—for instance, B-52s dropping bombs indiscriminately on Vietnamese people is terrorism, poverty due to capitalism is terrorism, indiscriminate slaughter by CIA-backed military juntas (as in Chile) is terrorism, the shooting murders of unarmed people, such as 15-year-olds Raymond Brewer and Brian Singh*, by armed police, is terrorism.

Revolutionary Action is the last resort of a people against a tyrannical form of government.

"...whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness..." —Declaration of Independence

We feel that this action, the first political kidnaping in the history of the "United" States, marks a very critical period in the history of the revolutionary movement in this country. We have seen many "revolutionary" groups and individuals who support use of guerrilla tactics in other countries, yet condemn the use of these same tactics when it occurs in the "United" States. To immediately condemn an action before it is even completed, to isolate an action in your own country without viewing its relation to the world situation, shows a lack of dialectical analysis—a failure to understand the interrelation of all fronts of the people's struggle against fascism, imperialism, and genocide.

We feel that the actions of the Symbionese Liberation Army and the results—past, present, and future—of these actions, are serving as a valuable educational tool to the people and revolutionary groups who wish to serve the people.

*Raymond Brewer was a black brother from North Sacramento who was murdered by police in December 1972 while walking home with two friends. Police said they were thought to be robbery suspects. Brian Singh was an East Indian brother from Folsom who was also gunned down by police as a "robbery suspect" on February 8, 1974.

The Peoples Witness is the monthly newsletter of the Sacramento Solidarity Committee. It is available free of charge on request to interested people or organizations. We also welcome people to submit material for the newsletter and otherwise share with us their ideas and criticisms.

Sisters in the women's prisons, we desperately want to hear from/establish better contact with you. Our failure to cover news, etc., in the women's prisons is due to our inability —SO FAR—to get input from sisters inside... not our unwillingness to do so by any means. Please let us hear from you!!!

QUESTION FOR DEBATE

In the previous issue of the People's Witness, we asked for definitions and analysis of the Lumpen proletariat. To enable a clear understanding of the term and its historical basis it is necessary to present more information and references.

On the basis of our research and the response of our readers, perhaps we can develop a clearer picture of the lumpen proletariat in relation to class struggle, particularly in contemporary Amerika. It is increasingly important to realize the Lumpen's potential in a growing revolutionary movement, especially regarding the changing definitions and the differences of analysis they carry.

Drawing from different individuals, who in some cases are writing about distinctly different historical and political situations, one can see the changing definitions of the lumpen proletariat. Specifically they are the theories of Karl Marx, Frantz Fanon, Huey Newton, and Eldridge Cleaver.

Marx described the fundamental class division as that of the Proletariat and the Bourgeoisie. "By Bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of production and employers of wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live."

(Marx/Engels—Communist Manifesto)

Continuing his class analysis, Marx defines the Lumpen proletariat as the "dangerous class" which...here and there, may be swept up into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life however prepare it more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue... In his writings "On Revolution," Marx describes the Lumpen as..."Vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, pimps, brothel keepers, beggars, etc." The French termed them "la Boheme." Bonaparte (ruler of France) organized the Lumpen proletariat and members of all classes benefiting themselves at the expense of the laboring nation to fight against the Proletariat. (France 1848-51)

Frantz Fanon, speaking of the effects of imperialism on Africa in the mid-20th century, views the Lumpen proletariat as a revolutionary class... "It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the Shantytowns, at the core of the Lumpen proletariat, that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the Lumpen proletariat, that horde of starving men uprooted from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically

revolutionary forces of a colonized peoples ..."So the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed, and the petty criminals, urged on from behind throw themselves into the struggle for liberation like stout workingmen."

(Wretched of the Earth)

Huey Newton, in an interview with Erik Erikson, speaking of American society stated that... "It has been estimated that ten years from now only a small percentage of the present work force will be necessary to run industries... The working class will be narrowed down, the class of the unemployables will grow because it will take more and more skills to operate those machines and fewer people. And as these people become unemployables, they will become more and more alienated, even socialist compromises will not be enough...The proletarian will have become the lumpen proletarian..." (The Black Panther — Nov. 1973)

Eldridge Cleaver speaking of Lumpen Ideology asserted that..."It is in this regard that Marxism has had disastrous effects upon the revolutionary movement. Marx, misunderstanding the basic condition of oppression, identified the proletariat, the working class, as the most revolutionary element of society. So that for generations, revolutionaries have been relating religiously to the working class.In reality, the working class has become as much a part of the system that has to be destroyed as the Capitalists themselves. They are the second line of defense after the cops.

...The point is not equality in production, which is the Marxist view and basic error, but equality in distribution and consumption. ...The basic task confronting revolutionaries today is to further define the lumpen condition, to refine the ideology, spread Lumpen consciousness, and lead the struggle, through righteous practice, to seize physical control of the machines, of technology, and destroy, forever, hegemony of the usurpers over the social heritage of humanity."

(The Black Scholar—Nov & Dec 1972)

In the following issues of the Peoples Witness, we will struggle to further analyze the Lumpen proletariat.

We are compiling a list of publishers, organizations, etc. which will send free books, newsletters, and other literature to convicts free of charge. If you would like a copy of this list when it is completed, or if you know of a group which sends free literature which should be included on the list, please write and let us know.

exchange

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