PONTIAC PRISONERS SUPPORT COALITION

NEWSLETTER

Feb. '80 — No. 11

First Trial Ends In:

COMPROMISE VERDICT

After 7½ hours of deliberation, an all-white McLean County jury found Pontiac Brothers Luis Perez and Manuel Santiago not guilty on the main charge of aggravated battery. However, in a compromise verdict reached after an initial 11 to 1 vote for acquittal on all charges, the jury returned guilty verdicts on the charge of mob action and on a lesser charge of battery (a misdemeanor). These Brothers now face a lot of additional time. Under the Class X sentencing law masterminded by Governor Thompson, the sentence, which for felony mob action would be 1 to 3 years, can be increased to 3 to 6 years at the judge's discretion, if the defendants have been convicted of a felony before. This sentence is added on to the time they are already serving. Judge Luther H. Dearborn, who heard the case, has delayed sentencing until March.

The failure of the State's witnesses to persuade the jury of the major charge in this, the first of the nine Pontiac cases to come to trial, is an indication of the lack of credibility of the entire Illinois Department of Law Enforcement investigation on which all of the indictments are based. The jury's actions, especially the 11 to 1 vote for acquittal on the first ballot, reflected the importance of the struggle carried out both by the attorneys, Buddy Clark and Shel Bannister, and by the supporters. Their presence in court clearly forced the jury to judge the case with more care and more questions than white juries often give to Latin or Black defendants. Despite a late start, supporters of the Brothers in Bloomington-Normal organized to have some people in court every day of the trial. Their concern, together with the attorneys' aggressive attack on the State's framed-up case, made a real im-

Continued on P.2

FIRST TRIAL...Cont'd. from P.1

pact. One indication of this is the time the jury spent deliberating before returning the verdict at 11:00 Friday night. It is almost unheard of for a jury to spend 7½ hours to reach a verdict on charges such as these.

STATE'S WITNESSES ADMIT BRIBES

The evidence presented by the State in this case demonstrated the key role of bribery and intimidation in the prosecution of the Pontiac Brothers. One of the State's key witnesses, Shane Alexander, admitted in court that he had agreed to testify only after he was offered 90 days "good time" off his sentence for it, and that he had previously told investigators that he wasn't sure if Perez was the man he had seen or not. Alexander is now free on parole in reward for his testimony.

ALL WHITE JURY

The jury was chosen from a pool of 98 people, all of whom were white. Unfortunately, in 96% white McLean County, this is likely to be the case in the other six cases slated to be held there as well. This fact, and the obvious difficulties such juries have in comprehending the situation of young Latin and Black men confined in the prisons, is part of the basis for the Brothers' demand for a change of venue to Cook County. But it was clear in this case that Judge Dearborn never seriously considered this possibility.

FRAME-UP ATMOSPHERE

The frame-up atmosphere of two young Latin men being tried in a courtroom filled with rural and small-town whites was heightened during the trial. When Luis Perez took the stand, guards moved behind him as if to protect the jury--something they had not done when prisoners who were State's witnesses testified.

As a final insult, Judge Dearborn has refused to pay the defense lawyers, even though funds were appropriated by the State legislature for the purpose of defending those indicted for the rebellion.

FREE THE PONTIAC BROTHERS!

The struggle to free Luis Perez and Manuel Santiago is not over. Many grounds for appeal are on the record. And it is important that we continue to support them, to demand that the special Class X sentences <u>not</u> be imposed, and to continue to expose the illegitimacy of the State's cases against all of the Pontiac Brothers.

MCLEAN COUNTY JURY SURVEY

In support of their motion to change the site of the trial from McLean to Cook County, the defense produced an attitudinal survey of McLean County taken under the direction of the National Jury Project.

The survey showed that of the people who answered the question, "From what you've read and heard, do you think that the people being charged with felonies related to the disturbance are probably guilty?" more than 95% said yes. In addition, 97% of those interviewed heard of the rebellion through the media, and 82% thought that those accused were probably involved. It also showed that 35% of those surveyed knew someone who worked in the prison.

Judge Dearborn rejected the survey and denied the motion for change of venue.

Attend the Next Trials

BANNISTER & BLOCK
343 S. DEARBORN, SUITE 1717
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60604
(312) 663-1119

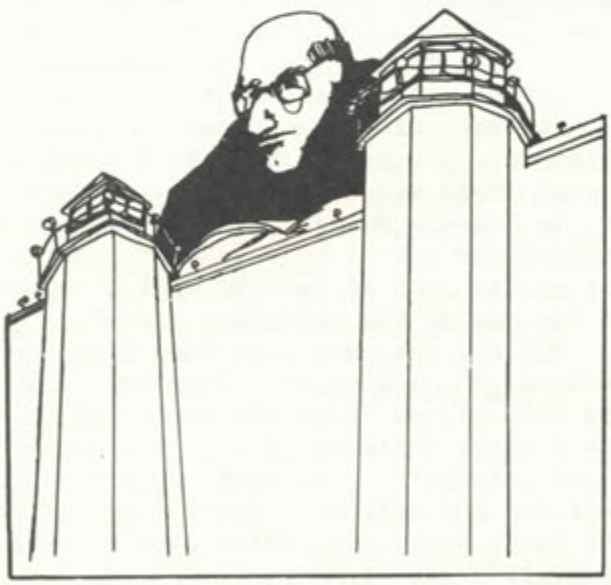
SHELLEY A. BANNISTER
GERALD A. BLOCK

Dear PPSC,

Here, on my official stationery, I offer my thanks to you folks for your support during Manuel & Luis's trial in Bloomington. They and I appreciated it very much. For your info, the jury voted 11-1 for acquittal on the first ballot. Buddy & I have decided that we didn't give "our" jurors enough reasons to hold out more than the 7½ hrs. Next time will be different! I also noticed that the jurors were looking at the crowd of audience as much as the videotape when you all were down on Thursday.

So, thank you for your hard work & please keep it up.

In the struggle,
Shel Bannister



Robert Tosado will probably be the next Pontiac Brother to go on trial. Jury selection in his case is set for February 25 in Peoria before Judge Harrod. Tosado is facing two counts of burglary, and is before a judge who has so far been perhaps the most unsympathetic of all the judges to defense requests.

John Lee and Lamont Richards are scheduled to go to trial in Bloomington on Monday, March 10. This case is before Judge Wayne Townley, who also has a reputation for unfairness. Lee and Richards, both Black men, are charged with attacking a white woman guard during the July 22, 1978 rebellion. They face charges of aggravated battery, armed violente, and mob action. The guard involved has never identified them in any way. All of the State's evidence consists of prisoner testimony. Most of the prisoners who are expected to testify against Lee and Richards only claim to have heard someone say they did it. Others have already changed their stories around.

Given the weakness of the State's case the prosecution will have to rely on racism to get convictions. Despite the fact that there was no rape and the guard involved has never claimed that she feared rape, the prosecution is likely to play on traditional white prejudice to suggest it as the necessary intent of an attack on a white woman by Black men. Since it is likely that the jury will be all white, as it was in the Santiago and Perez case, this racist strategy may be effective if it is not exposed.

The presence of spectators in the courtroom will be a critical force to remind the jury and everyone involved that they are trying men and not beasts. Your concern and your presence are needed to prevent an old-fashioned railroad of two innocent Black men.

IF YOU CAN COME TO THE TRIALS, PLEASE CALL PPSC AT (312) 427-4064.

LINKS IN THE CHAIN

The Reidsville Rebellion

This article is the first of a series meant to inform our readers about struggles related to the one around the Pontiac rebellion. We hope that these articles will help us join hands with the people involved in these other struggles, as well as allow us to acquire a sound perspective for our own work around Pontiac.

We begin this series with a discussion of the Reidsville rebellion because of the striking similarities between it and Pontiac: similarities about who the prisoners are, who the guards are, where the prisons are located, what the conditions are like, what factors triggered the rebellions, how the prison and state officials respond to these rebellions, and what concerned people must do in support and defense of rebelling prisoners. After reading these articles, we hope that you will agree with us that:

THE PRISONS ARE THE CRIME!!

Introduction

In 1978, Reidsville Prison, a maximum security prison located in rural Georgia, had a population that was 65% Black. During the previous two years, twelve men had been murdered in Reidsville, and 59 others had been seriously injured. The backdrop that had defined life for the prisoners was racism - a vicious racism that brutalized and murdered Black prisoners primarily by arming and inciting white prisoners to attack them.

On July 1, 1978 three white prisoners killed Robert Tarpkins, a Black prisoner, while he was sleeping in his bed. On July 3, the sleeping quarters were resegregated. On July 23, 1978, one day after the Pontiac rebellion, 200 Black inmates rose up in rebellion against guard brutality, arming of white prisoners by white guards, degrading living conditions, nutritionless food.

The prisoners' demands were plain and simple and had been voiced often in the past. The demands were for the beatings and racist attacks to cease, and for livable physical conditions including decent food, medical care, and a second set of clothes.

The prison administration's response was predictable: then-warden Joseph Hopper directed the arming of guards and state troopers. As the troopers were lining up in the hall, prisoners voiced their demands.

The demands were ignored and the armed force began to storm the unit. The prisoners did not have the weapons to fight back with, and they ended the rebellion upon a promise by the troopers' leader that no one would be killed. When the rebellion was over, one guard and two white inmates were dead, and many Black prisoners had been wounded by the guards. Two Black prisoners would later be killed by white inmates.

Once the rebellion had been crushed, the entire prison was "locked down." No one was allowed to leave his cell except for meals. No one could take a shower, receive mail or visits, or get any exercise. The lockdown continued for weeks.

This abuse was only the beginning of the state's retaliation for the rebellion. For at least five days after the rebellion, prisoners were beaten by guards night and day on their way to and from interrogation by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) Many of the guards voiced their anger at not having been allowed to kill prisoners on the day of the rebellion itself.

But the beatings were more than expression of guard anger. They were also the main way by which the state and prison administration began to tie the noose for a legal lynching. By means of brutal beatings and extreme psychological coercion, the state managed to force some prisoners, themselves rebellion participants, to testify falsely before the Tattnall County grand jury.

With the help of state officials such as Gov. Busbee, indictments were finally issued against the six Reidsville Brothers. The grand jury which issued the indictments was the same one which had managed not to

return indictments against the three white prisoners who had killed Tarpkins.

With the indictments issued, the state was well on its way toward scapegoating Black prisoners for a situation which was the result of its own violence toward people.

The Reidsville Brothers, being led out of the Tattnall County courthouse in shackles. From left to right: James Johnson, Case Johnson, James Collins, Moses Evans, Forrest Jordan, and Jesse Whitaker.

The People Fight Back

A Black-led coalition of progressive organizations and individuals has been formed to defend the Reidsville Brothers. Several creative organizing tactics have been employed to get out the truth about Reidsville and to rally people to the side of the Brothers. One such tactic was an 80 mile march from Savanah to Reidsville, employing the device made famous years earlier by the civil rights movement. When the march reached Reidsville, 67 of the demonstrators, including Dick Gregory who recently spoke at a Pontiac benefit, were arrested. The response to this repression was to march again. And march again they did, thus creating an atmosphere of struggle and solidarity in the county where the trials would be held - an atmosphere that could not be missed by the townspeople who would become jurors for the trial.

Such activities have paid off to some extent. Despite the fact that the trials have been held in the same county that contains the prison, and that the governor and prison officials have called for the death penalty for all six Brothers, some victories have emerged - along with some very serious defeats.

So far, four of the Brothers have been tried: Jessie Whitaker received three consecutive life sentences; Forrest Jordan received one life sentence; Andrew Johnson's jury was hung with ten voting for acquittal; and James Collins was found "not guilty." Since Collins' original sentence ended on October 28, 1979, he is now out of prison. Moses Evans and Case Johnson, the other two Reidsville Brothers, will soon be tried.

Although the first two convictions were painful setbacks, the state did not succeed in its all-out drive for the death penalty. The third and fourth trials - a hung jury and an acquittal - were major victories. In fact, Johnson's jury, hung ten to two in favor of acquittal, contained three guards' wives!! All the Brothers and their lawyers attribute these victories to the support they have received from concerned people.

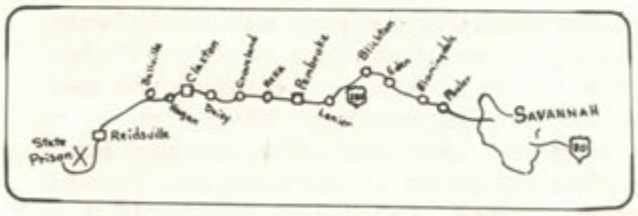
MARCH ON REIDSVILLE

We Invite YOU and YOUR COMMUNITY to join "THE MARCH ON REIDSVILLE"
(To Close It Down and Stop The Death Penalty)

This historic March on Reidsville has been called by a wide array of civil rights, community, political and labor organizations, and individuals active in the struggle for human rights. Reidsville symbolizes the Old South that has continued over into the New South. It is a plantation, where Black and poor White prisoners slave, sweat, and are beaten and killed by guard overseers. It is a racist hellhole, a part of the future that this system holds out for Black and poor White people, who refuse to accept unemployment, poverty, and shoddy medical care, housing, and educational opportunities, as a way of life. "Jimmy" Carter travels around the world running his mouth about human rights, but right here in his backyard Black men are dying in prisons every bit as horrible as those in South Africa. This March will say to the U.S. and to the world that poor and working people in Georgia, Black and White, are organizing to say no to the death penalty.

LEAVING SAVANNAH MONDAY AUGUST 6th - 10:00 a.m.
ARRIVING REIDSVILLE SATURDAY AUGUST 11th
RALLY AT TATTNALL COUNTY COURTHOUSE AUGUST 11th - 12 NOON

Stop Racist Attacks On Black Prisoners
End The Death Penalty
Free The Six Reidsville Brothers
Close Down Reidsville Prison



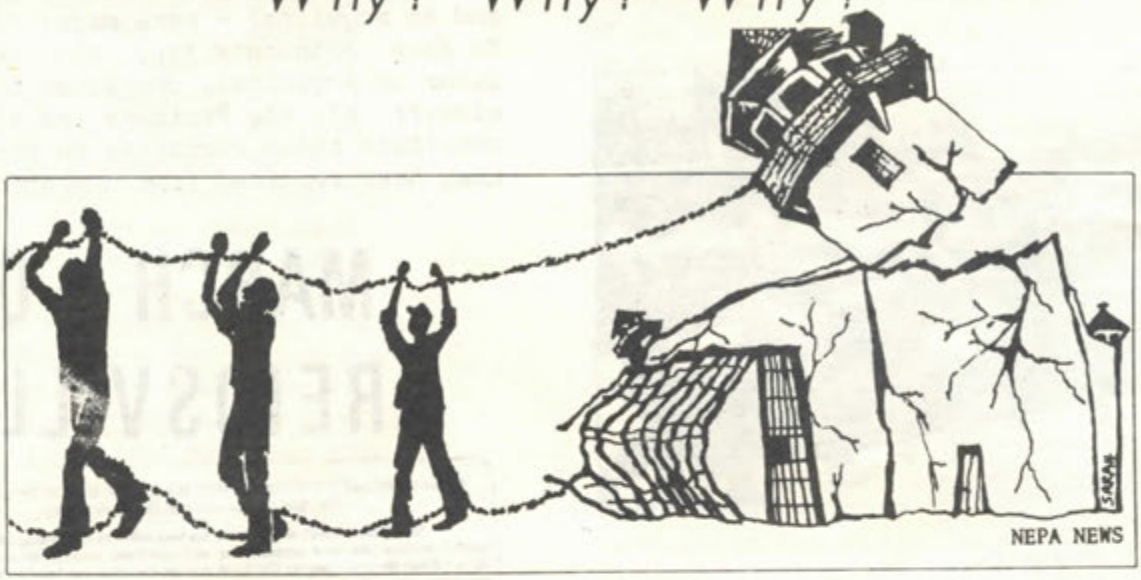
Lessons to be Learned

Someone once asked Malcolm X if the North was less racist than the South. Malcolm replied that there was no North and no South in the United States, that there was only an "up-South" and a "down-South," and that everything south of Canada was just plain South. The striking similarities between Reidsville and Pontiac support Malcolm's contention, and should spur us all on to more and better work.

(For more information about the Reidsville situation, contact: Reidsville Committee, 88 Walton Street NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30303.)

from the kamps

Why? Why? Why?



PEOPLE I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU "WHY" DID THREE MEN DIE? AND "WHY" DID 54 MEN COME TO BE INVESTIGATED FOR THEIR DYING? ALSO "WHY" DID 17 OUT OF THOSE 54 MEN HAVE TO BE BLAMED FOR THE THREE MEN'S DEATHS?

You are probably wondering what the death of three men, and the 17 who stand trial for their dying have to do with you. Well for one the three men who died as a result of a slave revolt (at Pontiac Prison July 22, 1978) were prison guards, meaning our taxes were paying these three men salary. It's only right that we know "why" the men we are paying our hard earned money to have died. And secondly, we are now paying millions of dollars for 17 men to be framed, tried and fried (if found guilty) who are not responsible for the guards' death.

I ask today "why" do we approve, allow, and lay back to watch while the State unjustifiably kills 17 men? We did not stand back and let Angela Davis be killed, we didn't lay back and let Joanne Little be killed, we didn't lay back and stand for the framing of the Wilmington Ten, and we most definitely wouldn't allow evil to prevail, when the State of Florida tried to legally murder Delbert Tibbs. "Why" then are we now standing back while 17 innocent men are presently being railroaded, and set out to be killed?

"Why" did we come to these others and aid them in exposing the racism and injustice that had been served on them? Because we are a just people, and felt the State had gone too far, because we came together as one and united to pour some light on and expose the real problem, racism and oppression that promote discrimination against all poor people and keep them locked in a position where they will never realize their full potential. Racism and oppression that have existed in our system for so many years. Oppression that will use every weapon, including murder, to keep poor people in check and to insure the inferior status that have been assigned to them.

Once again the State have gone too far. Now they are planning on the murder of 17 men, and it's time once again that we unite as one to save these Brothers from this imminent slaughter. Not only because we are a righteous people, but also because these Brothers have mothers, sisters, fathers and children who are taxpaying citizens just like yourself, and should by law be given a fair trial.

Continued on P.7

(WHY) Continued

People we pay our taxes to have criminals brought to trial for crime committed. We believe the persons responsible for the death of the three guards should be brought to trial, but right now we have the wrong people on trial. The people who officially sanction the unjust and cruel punishment that brought about the revolt at Pontiac should be on trial for the murder of the three guards. The people who were in authority at the time of the guards' death is the responsible party.

These are the people who create a situation where human beings are living under unsanitary conditions. The food is oftentimes found with rocks, rodents and other objects which is unfit for an animal. Men are stacked on top of men with hardly room to move. Medical attention is a total joke, unless you are seconds away from death. These same people are responsible for the hiring of racists and illiterates who police these prisons and keep prisoners in constant fear through various forms of intimidation, threats and even plain murder.

We as citizens must start now asking "why" "why" "why"--then we will find out "why" these Pontiac Brothers were picked as scapegoats. "Why" have three of the Brothers been charged with conspiracy to murder instead of plain murder? "Who" and "why" did some prisoners agree to work along with the State's Attourney and then contradict each other's story? "Why" haven't the State and the media kept the public informed of the court appearance of the Pontiac Brothers?

And last ask yourself's "why" haven't you noticed 17 men shackled in iron like cattle, who have been going to court at 26th and California for over siw months.

ASK THESE QUESTIONS NOW, AND DEMAND ANSWERS, BECAUSE THERE IS NOT AN OUNCE OF EVIDENCE TO CONVICT THESE BROTHERS, BUT THERE IS SURELY A TON OF FALSEHOOD AND LIES WHICH WILL TAKE THEIR LIVES.

Yours in struggle
Edward Jones #C/74127
(Stateville Penitentiary)
Joliet Illinois 60434

Date: 18th Month Pontiac Brothers Crisis Continues

President Carter has constantly been appealing to the public throughout the world, about the Iranian students holding fifty (50) American hostages. We have heard Smiling Jimmy Carter bullshit for the past four (4) years. We know he is only a Puppet on a string being used by the big business, Incorporates. Smiling Jimmy is appealing to the World, to find out how the World and the Third World peoples will react, if the Big Bad U.S.A. move out in force against a small country such as Iran.

Smiling Jimmy's interest do not lay in the interest of the fifty American hostages--if it did he would free the hostages being held right here in the U.S. of A. His main interest and concern lay on Iran's big money business, oil. Surely taking Iran's oil supply won't bring back any hostages. If Smiling Jimmy's interest was geared toward freeing those American hostages, he would definitely intervene on the State of Illinois holding 17 Black men of the Third World hostages in Chicago's infamous, notorious Cook County Jail. Or do he simply turn his back with a smile, to the Oppressed and Third World peoples?

Smiling Jimmy made it clear if Khomeini the head of Iran try an American hostage or citizen or bring bodily harm to an American, then the Big Bad U.S. of A. will spank them. Yet the State of Illinois, with the assistance of the Department of Corrections headed by Gayle Franzen, one of Governor Thompson's top flunkies, is holding 17 Pontiac Brothers hostages for the electric chair. Heading this genocidal attack against 17 Black men of the Third World, is no one other than Big Jim Thompson himself, yet he deny this fact. This racist I have just mention above is talking about legally lynching 17 Oppressed Men, and sentencing 14 of our comrade Brothers to life-in-prison terms. Yes there is 31 Third World men being held hostage here in the Good Ole U.S. of A.

Continued on P.8

CRISIS CONTINUES...Cont'd. from P.7

Yes we are being held hostage, but society fail to recognize how can we be held hostage, the same way all Third World peoples are being held hostage. Some of us were lucky for the time being, others of us wasn't so lucky. We fall prey to the shrewd trickeration of our so-called court system. If you are a broke person then the court system make an example out of you. If you are one of those rare ones with some money in your hand, then you can never do any wrong. This is the reason why Justice wear a blindfold: she cannot see you unless you drop some gold in the scale she is holding. If you do not have any gold to give her, I am sure you have seen the sword in her other hand, which she will cut a poor person badly with.

to ascend on his political career to the White House. 31 human being's lives are being played with by this man and his honchos. Governor Thompson's choice was simple, he openly and publicly elected to legally execute 17 of us, and try with all of his power to sentence us to Death in the electric chair. With the other 14 brothers he choose to send them to trial. If found guilty for any charge he would personally see to it that they would receive a life sentence in prison.

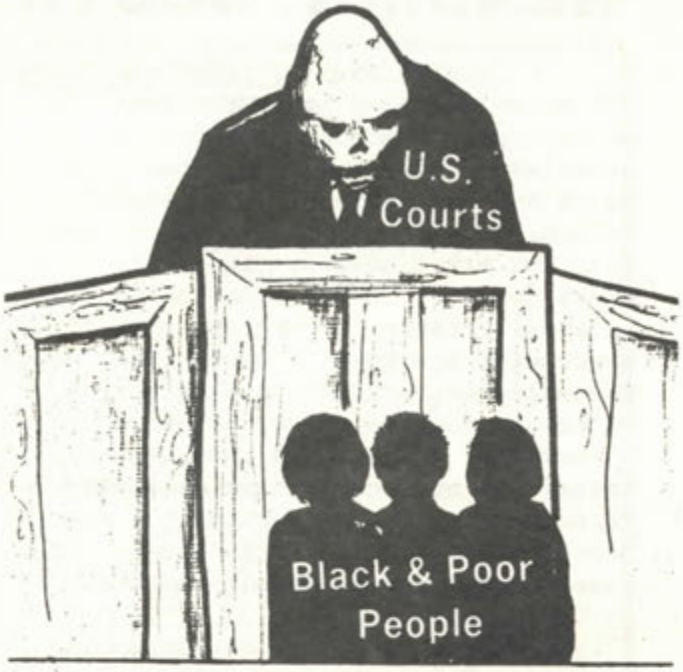
Only you the Peoples can stop this genocidal attack that Governor Thompson has launched against us. It's us today. Who will it be tomorrow?--maybe you.

We already know Smiling Jimmy Carter cannot hear the cries of the Oppressed Third World Peoples. Can you remember

The 31 of us have seen how this racist rich court system work and operate. Now each of us have to face this system again, not for the crime that we are being accused of, but because we are 31 Oppressed Third World peoples, who were kidnapped and are being held hostage, since July 22, 1978. We are scapegoats for Big Jim Thompson's political ambition. The Illinois Department of Law Enforcement, commonly called I.D.L.E., gave Big Jim Thompson a hefty political contribution, us 31 Oppressed Third World men, to do as he pleased with us. He chose to make us scapegoats

Rev. Chavis, asking and appealing his case to Smiling Jimmy Carter for a pardon? Smiling Jimmy's words were: "Y'all" know I as !The! President of the !The! United States of America, does not intervene in a political case, such as that of Rev. Chavis. But I sincerely wish "Y'all" the best of luck. It's just not Presidential-like for me to interfere in Local Government Affairs. But this same Smiling President turned right around one year later and interfered in Local Government Business, and pardoned a political prisoner, because her Daddy was a rich man with

Continued on P.9



political clout. I am sure most of you are familiar with Patty Hearst. Yes, Smiling Jimmy Carter gave her a pardon after his speech against not giving one of our Oppressed Third World brothers a pardon.

Americans held hostage in Iran received over one million letters in their behalf to be freed. Those million and some letters shook the White House and made Smiling Jimmy Carter quit smiling. He knew that the public meant business by sending those letters. There is 31 hostages being held in the Cook County Jail. Let's show this racist system we have Peoples who care about us also. Our 31 voices are only a whisper in a large sea. With your help, support and concern, our voices can be heard like those fifty (50) American hostages. Together our whisper can become a roar, and make the World stop and listen.

Forward any letter of support for the Pontiac Brothers to:
Judge Ben Miller
2600 S. California Ave
Chicago, Illinois 60609

Governor Jim Thompson
207 State House
Springfield, Illinois 62706

PONTIAC BROTHERS
BEING HELD HOSTAGE

17 UPDATE...Cont'd. from P.12

Finally, Earlean Murphy, representing Ozzie Williams, told Judge Miller that she couldn't continue to represent her client under those conditions. She and Jeffrey Haas, representing Joe Smith, both walked out of the courtroom. As they got to the door, Judge Miller ordered them to remain. They left, and after other defense lawyers objected to Miller's actions, he recessed the hearing. He then had the Brothers brought in and informed Murphy and Haas that they were in contempt of court. But the Brothers were able to participate in the rest of the hearing. Miller later fined Haas $100.

Miller is also pressing a schedule that allows the defense very little time to prepare. As one example, the current schedule requires all motions based on discovery material turned over by the State to be filed by February 21--even though over 10,000 pages of discovery, including 113 prison files key to uncovering the State's intimidation and bribery of witnesses, was not made available until January 21. The prosecutors, of course, have had all of this information at their command since the day of the rebellion, as well as having 36 paid full-time investigators working on finding prisoners who would give false testimony in exchange for bribes or immunity for eight months prior to the indictments. The trial itself is currently scheduled to start on March 24. Defense lawyers have vowed to resist this attempt to mangle the Brothers' right to an adequate defense.

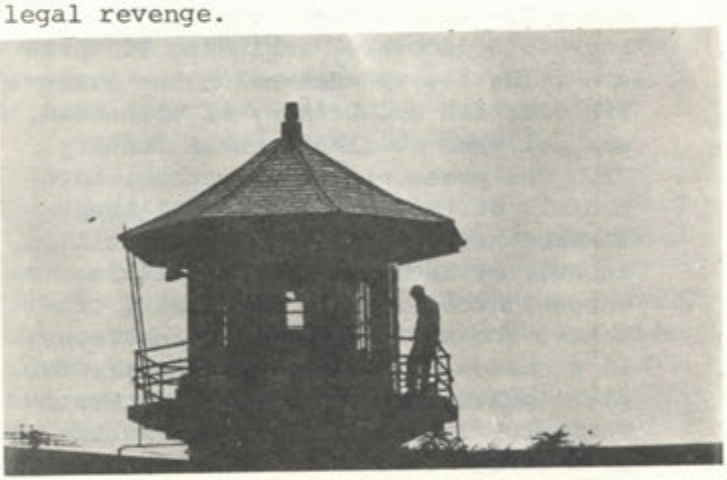
The 17 are being held in Cook County Jail until the trial is over. Two of them--Joe Smith and Jessie Hill--have finished serving their original sentences and would be free men but for the charges pending against them. Judge Miller has refused to set bond for either of them, ensuring that they will spend additional months in jail for crimes of which they have not been convicted--and will never be if we can stop the frame-up NOW!

10 STATEVILLE INDICTMENTS

STATEVILLE PRISONERS INDICTED

13 prisoners were indicted by a Will County grand jury on January 24 on charges stemming from the rebellion in the Orientation Unit at Stateville. 4 of them are already under sentence of death; one is serving a 1,000 to 3,000 year sentence. The indictees also include Terrell Walters, who was transferred to the Orientation Unit on administrative charges related to the Pontiac rebellion and while there was the victim of a vicious beating by guards. Together with other prisoners he was a complainant in a federal suit for a restraining order to halt further guard violence. Judge John Crowley refused to issue such an order.

Once again, the responsible authorities have refused to correct the injustices and abuse faced by prisoners and have responded instead with new attempts at legal revenge.



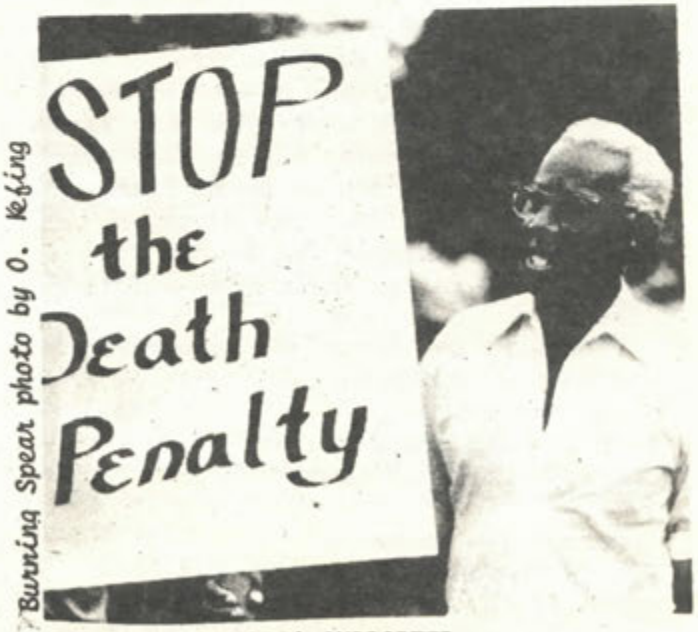
STATEVILLE GUARDS INDICTED

A federal grand jury has indicted 6 former Stateville guards, all of whom are white, on charges that they conspired to attack and beat three Black prisoners on January 1, 1979. The federal grand jury began an investigation after the Will County prosecutor refused to press charges and the prisoners filed suit in federal court for relief. The prisoners, Lee Smith, Walter Sims and Robert Stamps, were taken handcuffed one-by-one to the shower and brutally beaten by the 6 off-duty guards. The guard staff on duty did nothing to stop them.

DEATH ROW - HEADING SOUTH?

On January 25, a Chicago Sun-Times columnist revealed that Department of Corrections director Gayle Franzen was planning to move the 20 prisoners on Death Row in Illinois from Stateville Prison, 40 miles from Chicago, to Menard, 300 miles south. (In subsequent court hearings it was established that, as usual, Franzen is operating in close touch with his boss, Governor Thompson.) The main reason given for the move was the DOC's mistrust of Black guards at Stateville. "The guard population is better and more consistent at Menard," Franzen said. "It's virtually a job handed down from father to son." "The guard population is mainly white."

On February 1, the American Civil Liberties Union obtained a 10-day emergency stay blocking the transfer on the grounds that it would interfere with the Death Row prisoners' right to legal assistance. Menard is in a white rural area totally isolated from both family and legal visits, 60 miles from St. Louis (the nearest city), and far from the homes of 16 of the 20 men currently sentenced to die, as well as most of those now facing death penalty charges.



Burning Spear photo by O. Kefing

PONTIAC BROTHERS' SUPPORTER

THE PONTIAC FRAME-UP

On July 22, 1978, prisoners at Pontiac State Penitentiary in Pontiac, Illinois, rose up against the inhuman conditions and racism of the prison. The causes of this spontaneous rebellion were so obvious that the director of the Illinois prisons said, "*It came a year later than most of us anticipated. You can only crowd so many people into a warehouse for so long before something happens.*" 3 guards were killed and 3 others injured; damages were estimated at $4 million. Many prisoners were injured by guards and National Guardsmen retaking the prison.

The entire prison population was then put on deadlock — locked in their cells 24 hours a day without showers, visits, recreation, work, or basic necessities like soap and toilet paper. The deadlock continued for *8 months*.

The "investigation" that was carried out under deadlock conditions consisted principally of attempts to coerce prisoners to testify against selected scapegoats by threats and bribery. Not until 3 months after the rebellion did State officials begin to claim that the prisons were "run by the gangs" and that the Pontiac rebellion had been a "gang" conspiracy. This phony story both took the responsibility off Governor Thompson and the State officials running the prison and placed it on Black and Latin prisoners and prejudiced the public against the men to be indicted.

Administrative charges were brought against 67 prisoners, each of whom was sentenced to a year in segregation and loss of one year good time without a single witness being presented.

On March 5, 1979, an all-white grand jury handed down indictments against 31 prisoners — all Black and Latin. 17 were charged with murder and 14 with other felonies. The State's Attorney had already announced that he would seek the death penalty for any prisoner convicted of murder, making this the largest mass death penalty case in the U.S.

WHO WE ARE

The Pontiac Prisoners Support Coalition is a broad-based coalition of community and human rights organizations. The PPSC is organizing in primarily white communities while other organizations are working in Black and Latin communities.

We share the conviction that the Pontiac Rebellion was a natural and predictable response to the inhuman treatment of prisoners, most of whom are Black and Latin.

We understand that this inhuman treatment begins on the outside, in the community, where Black and Latin people live with many different forms of oppression. Those men and women who organize against this oppression are warehoused into cages in overcrowded prisons and jails where slave labor, inhuman conditions and arbitrary rules are enforced by racist guards.

We know that the indictments against the Pontiac 31 are the product of a frame-up carried out under coercive conditions and not a genuine investigation.

The PPSC respects and supports the initiatives of prisoners, takes leadership from them, and unites with them on the following demands:

* **Abolish all inhuman and abusive conditions at Pontiac and other Illinois prisons.**
* **Repeal Class X legislation.**
* **Revoke the death penalty.**
* **Expose the investigation and its coercive strategy to scapegoat prisoners.**
* **End the deadlocks.**
* **Drop the indictments.**
* **Free the Pontiac Brothers!**

We have taken responsibility for:

* Educating white people about the racist nature of the prison system.
* Combatting anti-prisoner, racist attitudes and practices.
* Winning support for the demands of the prisoners.
* Providing ongoing political and legal support for the Pontiac Brothers.

ACT NOW! WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

Name _____

Address _____

one _____

____ I want to work on one of the PPSC committees.
____ I can arrange for PPSC to show its slideshow or give talks to people or groups I know.
____ I enclose $10.00 for a 1-year subscription to the *PPSC Newsletter*.
____ I enclose a $____ donation to the Pontiac Brothers Defense Fund.

RETURN THIS FORM TO: PPSC
c/o Alliance to End Repression
407 South Dearborn Street, Room 1000
Chicago, Illinois 60605
OR CALL: (312) 427-4064

LEGAL UPDATE ON THE 17

Pre-trial hearings are continuing before Judge Ben Miller in the bullet-proof cage in the fourth floor courtroom at 26th and California. Judge Miller continues to deny most defense requests for information from the prosecution necessary to prepare the cases.

LAWYERS HELD IN CONTEMPT

In the most dramatic confrontation to date, two of the defense attorneys were held in contempt of court after they refused to continue a hearing without their clients present. The incident occurred at 1:30 P.M. on February 8. Court was scheduled for 11:30 A.M. and began at 12:30. Judge Miller refused to allow the Brothers into court for over an hour as a series of significant questions were argued, despite repeated objections by the defense attorneys. The Brothers were therefore held in the "bullpen," a bare concrete cell with nothing to sit on, for over two hours.

Continued on P.9

PPSC
407 South Dearborn Street, Room 1000
Chicago, Illinois 60605