



**'Clockwork
Cure'
in
California:**

**PSYCHOSURGERY
IN THE
PRISONS**

A Letter From San Quentin

The following is a letter from a San Quentin inmate expressing his thoughts about the psychosurgery project:

"The California Department of Corruptions Director, Raymond Procunier, once asked for \$48,000.00 to finance surgical operations on the minds of prisoners who show anti-social tendencies. Of course, 'anti-social' means Third World people, prisoners with high political awareness, or those involved in rebellions. Although the imprisoned never asked the traditionally conservative detention empire, filled with class and race prejudice, to do their thinking for them, state prison authorities are determined to give them mind control, called 'assistance.' Thus, recently another federal grant was requested to stop, by way of lobotomies, those who strive for a better world. Only now, the intentions of the state are running amuck, with certain sick characters proposing that centers be established in the outside community, to mutilate and pacify with psychosurgery.

"According to the Department of Corruptions, its prisons have two basic functions: (1) to retain custody of its prisoners and (2) to send them out of the prison rehabilitated. This philosophy assumes that, in the words of an assistant superintendent at Soedad, "It's the individual's fault he or she is in prison, not societal factors. We must fix the individual."

"For those on the inside or the outside of the walls to swallow and agree with this myth, is in effect, for the victims to submit and to hug their chains. Because such a fairy-tale justifies injustice, robot guidance, and the proposal for lobotomies, only in the interest of profit and power can it be a good thing. Because only then may the bosses and lackeys blame 'human nature' rather than social problems they are responsible for. To blame individuals is to give up ideas of social improvement - not to mention it places blame away from those doing the blaming.

"Present day malpracticing physicians and the like who are prepared to resort to extermination in a 'civilized' manner,

seek to blame 'human nature' or individuals for social ills and crimes of today. They condemn persons for their conduct and ignore what shapes thoughts and actions. Thought and consciousness are products of the human brain and the mind the product of nature. But, in a word, what human did not develop in and along with the environment? And isn't what we are today reflected by what we were born and bred in? People are brutalized by their environment and not the reverse.

"We know from experience that those who are hired to police their fellow humans are also regarded for their foul make-up and brain-washing schemes. We have witnessed shock treatment used for punishment, tranquilizers to insure quiet, and we have, ourselves, been at the mercy of rehabilitation. Now we are faced with another 'reform' from the opposition the new experimental units at Vacaville. But even if the goodness in us is perverted, it cannot be destroyed. Proof is that the captured and convicted conceive of liberty and justice. They want and love it.

"Our demands should go beyond those who do the dirty work. We want the official criminals in government and big business, who determine the extent of abuse and make malpractice legal. To do this, we must co-operate to resist, because when the courage of many declines, the few gain more and more power."

"UNITE TO FIGHT!"



What is the "Center for the Study and Reduction of Violence"?

On March 23, 1973 the Neuropsychiatric Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) announced the formation of a new Center for the Study and Reduction of Violence. Even before this announcement individuals and groups in the Los Angeles area were organizing to find out more details about the Center, and to stop portions of the project which could become a serious threat not only to our brothers and sisters in prison, but to many individuals and groups on the streets.

Many people in the Bay Area were involved in the successful campaign against a similar program in 1971. The 1971 program involved psychosurgery (basically a fancy term for lobotomy) on "violent, aggressive" inmates, and the use of chemical castration through injection of female sex hormones. These "treatments" were to take place at the California Department of Corrections' Medical Facility at Vacaville, on inmates who were termed the failures of the State's Adjustment Centers. The program was scuttled when a letter from CDC Director Raymond Procunier regarding the project was leaked to the press.

Most of the information available about the new center at UCLA has come from the proposal of the California State Health and Welfare Agency for implementation of the project. Though the proposal is intentionally vague, which in itself is disturbing, the implications of the program are alarming.

According to the proposal, the Center "will explore the causation, identification, prevention control and reduction of those individual and social factors which contribute to violent behavior."

The proposal mentions the following facilities to be used for the development of treatments for violent behavior:

- Atascadero State Hospital
- Camarillo State Hospital
- UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute
- Langley-Porter Institute
- California Medical Facility, Vacaville
- California Correctional Facilities

Atascadero is an institution for people who have been judged criminally insane by a court, or who have been found to be too mentally disturbed to stand trial. Many of the people at Atascadero therefore, have never been convicted of any crime.

Camarillo is a state mental hospital for civil commitments; it is scheduled to be the last state mental hospital to be closed down under Reagan's plan to close all of the state mental hospitals. Vacaville is the hospital which serves the state prison system, with a strong emphasis on psychiatric treatment.

The final reference in the proposal to "California Correctional Facilities" evidently refers to all of the prisons in the state of California.

Though the proposal talks somewhat of studying the social factors which contribute to violence, it seems to be mainly directed toward studying the biological causes of violence and seeking "cures", stating: "The Center will investigate genetic biochemical, neurological and neurophysiological elements of life threatening behavior" (their term for violence). In this section they specifically mention indications that an abnormal XY chromosome may cause violent behavior, and "the implications of hormones on aggressive behavior" as theories to be studied and tested. They go on to say that "new drugs now being developed hold some promise for the diminishing of violent outbursts...these drugs will be tested..."

And then there is the clincher which was the so-called "scientific" excuse for the brain surgery proposal in 1971 -- "Studies of abnormal electrical activities within the brain various forms of brain lesions and brain diseases will be carried out...through these studies a connection between the abnormalities and violence may be determined and techniques developed for controlling such behaviors." (emphasis our own).

Though the proposal is vague and couched in scientific terms, it is easier to understand when coupled with the theories and previous experiments of Dr. Frank Ervin who has been referred to as the central person to talk to for information about the new Center. Dr. Ervin came to the UCLA faculty last year after funding of a similar program in Boston by HEW fell through.

Dr. Frank Ervin

Dr. Ervin first became involved in experimenting with "violent" individuals as a result of the uprisings in the black ghettos during the mid-1960's. He and his collaborators at Massachusetts General Hospital, Drs. William Sweet and Vernon Mark, wrote in the Journal of the American Medical Association:

"...if slum conditions alone determined and initiated riots, why are the vast majority of slum dwellers able to resist the temptations of unrestrained violence?...We need intensive research and clinical studies of the individuals committing the violence. The goal of such studies would be to pinpoint, diagnose and treat those people with low violence thresholds before they contribute to further tragedies."

The first thing to notice about the Ervin-Mark-Sweet analysis is that they consider the violence of Third World "slum dwellers" to be of an unusual and dangerous character. Dr. Sweet has confirmed this by stating that: "The proponents of urban disorders seem to be the people most likely to suffer from organic brain diseases."

No mention is made of the violence of the white community or the white corporations: the police riot in Chicago,

the murders at Southern U, Jackson State, Kent State, the napalm and bombs of Vietnam. To this Dr. Sweet replies: "But we're talking about senseless violence." As a doctor at the Harvard Medical School pointed out:

"When all these institutes around the country decide to study violence, who do they go look at: the black man. But who's committing all the violence? The white man, white society, white policemen. They don't consider that somethings wrong with their brains."

Psychosurgery at Vacaville

The use of brain surgery and other exotic techniques of controlling behavior would be nothing new to the California prison system. During the late 1960's doctors at the California Medical Facility at Vacaville were found to be performing lobotomies upon prison inmates. Prefrontal lobotomies have been vividly described as "swishing an ice pick around behind the eyeballs to destroy portions of the brain's frontal lobes".

Such operations reached their peak in the 1940's and 50's when over 50,000 Americans, mostly prisoners and mental patients, were subjected to this inhuman torture. During the 1950's, however, a new and more subtle technique of control



Prisoners in Attica Compound during 1971 Rebellion

was developed -- the use of tranquilizing drugs. Also replacing the lobotomies were electroshock treatments. When word leaked out in 1968 that the California Department of Corrections (CDC) was still playing around with the "ice-pick" method, people became outraged and the practice was supposedly stopped. But during the 1960's, a number of doctors began experimenting with a new, refined version of the old lobotomy. They called it "psychosurgery." Psychosurgery consists of the removal of certain isolated portions of the brain which are believed to have an effect on violent behavior.

In 1971 the CDC announced its new Medical Psychiatric Diagnostic Unit (MPDU) at Vacaville. The stated purpose was to treat "violence-prone" inmates who were chronically housed in the CDC's various Adjustment Centers. The press, however, quickly broke the story that, among other things, the MPDU was intending to use brain surgery as one method of controlling prisoners. The CDC denied this, saying that the only use of psychosurgery would only be for inmates suffering from temporal lobe epilepsy. But a letter from CDC Director Raymond Procnier to the California Council on Criminal Justice (CCCJ), written September 8, 1971 and asking for funding for the new project, never mentioned epilepsy and spoke only of surgery on "aggressive, destructive" inmates. Furthermore Dr. George Bach-y-Rita, a psychiatrist at Vacaville, who was also a collaborator in the work of Dr. Ervin in Boston, was to be in charge of the screening and testing of Vacaville inmates for the 1971 project.

The brain surgery project was shelved as a result of all the publicity and Dr. Bach-y-Rita resigned because he had become convinced that it was impossible for prisoners to freely consent to treatment. It now seems that the project was shelved only temporarily.

Drugs at Vacaville

The use of drugs in relation to violence is another aspect of the proposed center which will not be entirely new to the California prison system.

In the late 1960's a drug called Anectine was used in "aversion therapy" on 30 inmates at Vacaville. Anectine paralyzes all voluntary muscles for one and a half to two minutes, and in larger



doses paralyzes involuntary muscles as well, and can result in death. It has been described as giving one the feeling of sinking into death. When used the "patient" is told that the next time he feels the impulse to smash or attack he will remember the experience on Anectine and be left helpless.

The 30 prisoners at Vacaville were requested to sign a paper consenting to the treatment. However, when five refused, consent was granted for them by the institution's Special Treatment Board.

Even when consent is granted for any of these "treatments", whether psychosurgery or drug therapy, it can hardly be called voluntary. All the prison officials need to do is inform the Adult Authority (parole board) that the inmate needs the treatment in order to be ready for release. As Vacaville superintendent Dr. L.J. Pope puts it: "If they don't want to take the drug, they don't have to. If they want to stay cuckoo and stay locked up all their lives, that's all right with us."

Several strong tranquilizers have been and are still used on a wide scale in Vacaville, as well as intensive group therapy sessions in a project called the Stress Program. Electroshock treatments were administered 500 times at Vacaville in 1971.

Who gets the Cure?

The MPDU was designed to deal with the "failures of the Adjustment Centers" (maximum security isolation centers). The inmates of the AC's are 63% black and chicano. Among the prisoners who have been and are now in these centers are some of the most politically conscious individuals in the system. People who understand the roots of their oppression and are struggling to fight it. People like

Ruchell Magee, Fleeta Drumgo, and George Jackson. Most of the political organizers and jailhouse lawyers who are



The Soledad Brothers

raising revolutionary consciousness and helping their fellow prisoners as "writ-writers" have been at some time held in one of the Adjustment Centers in an attempt to isolate their ideas from the rest of the prison population. It is these people that the prison officials consider "trouble-makers" and "violence prone" because of their revolutionary philosophies.

Why has the CDC found these 1984-style cures necessary? Throughout the '60's and '70's the consciousness of prisoners about the political nature of their situations has grown along with the various movements on the outside. As a result, they have attempted to expose the inhumane conditions and brutal treatment which they have received at the hands of the State. They have gone to the courts with their writs and petitions seeking legal relief. They have gone to the people with strikes and other actions designed not only to expose their conditions, but to deal directly with the system which is oppressing them.

The CDC can't tolerate the disruption of their smooth functioning system of slavery. They may talk about "rehabilitation", but in reality they see themselves as protecting the status quo, or the rich and powerful people who run this country from anything that threatens their existence, whether it be "crime" or revolution.

The CDC has tried various methods of squelching the political movements inside. They've tried punishing dissidents by putting them in the "hole" or Adjustment Centers, physical beatings, or by denying them parole year after year. But this hasn't stopped the spread of revolutionary consciousness. The only means of real control left is their rendition of thought control.

"Rehabilitation" CDC style means the acceptance by the individual of the inhuman conditions he is forced to live in, either inside or outside the prison. To rebel against substandard living conditions, racism or the brutality of police and guards is regarded as an irrational response to one's environment and a sign of mental deficiency.

The Wider Threat

The control of prison inmates by means of these clockwork techniques is by no means an isolated event. While prisoners are the prime target, there are many other potential victims.

Although most of the experiments done by Drs. Sweet, Mark and Ervin were conducted on prisoners, their initial purpose was aimed at rioters, i.e. those who strike back at the society which is oppressing them. Mentioned in the Health and Welfare Agency proposal for the center at UCLA in the same sentence with sex-offenders, gang violence, psychopaths, etc. are rioters. Dr. Peter Breggin of the Washington School of Psychiatry has pointed out that such brain studies are "oriented toward law and order and control-toward protecting society against the so-called radical individual."

After prisoners, one of the prime targets of these governmental studies has been children. Dr. O.J. Andy, of the University of Mississippi Medical Center, has for a number of years been performing psychosurgery on overactive kids, whose parents are having difficulty controlling them. Many of these operations have had adverse effects on the memory and intelligence of the juvenile patients, results which are rationalized by Dr. Andy's assistant by saying: "These individuals will not be contributors to society, but at least they will be tolerated."

The federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration currently has an experimental project in several California

counties to test, evaluate and diagnose kindergarten and first grade children who may be "predelinquent". These are children who have never done anything wrong, but the LEAA proposes to start computer files and treatment programs for these children, and keep track of all their activities throughout the rest of their lives.

It is significant to note that the proposal for Dr. Ervin's new center at UCLA specifically mentions "various types of violent behavior such as seen in hyperkinetic children and sex crimes"-- a strong combination, except for people like Dr. Ervin and Governor Reagan.

Finally, the UCLA Center proposes to "scrutinize intensely the relationship of violent behavior to such factors as the individual's attitudes, his way of reasoning, his methods of controlling impulse and action, his perception of other people, and his mode of adaptation to his environment..."

The center specifically proposes to set up preventive and control models for use by "public school programs, law enforcement activities, governmental actions, and private organizations."

Fascism continues to move upon the men and women in the prisons of California in the form of a supposedly scientific

approach using new drugs and psychosurgery, but this time it may go beyond the walls into the communities where we live in the form of mass psychological testing and biological screening for the purpose of social and political control of people of color, noor whites and anybody that does not fit into the racist and repressive society in which we live.

Nixon's Law Enforcement Assistance Administration working through the CCCJ and the State Health and Welfare Agency is asking for funds to finance this particular aspect of fascism. Other programs have been started such as the Treatment Alternatives Against Street Crime using the drug methadone. The TASC program is not nearly as blatant as the proposed Center for the Study and Reduction of Violence and the methods they want to use.

A similar program was defeated in 1971 and it can and must be defeated again. We as working and community people must get it together in support of our brothers and sisters behind the walls to stop this fascist attack. The pigs experiments in prisons are a preparation for the use of these techniques on the streets of our communities against all of us.

Together We Will WIN!

STATEMENT OF THE VENCEREMOS PRISON COMMITTEE

The political motivation of these punitive oppressors extends far beyond the confines of prison walls. Prison administrators as well as Central Intelligence Agents recognize that incomparable contributions of revolutionary spirit and strategic directions are produced from the souls and minds of men in prison. And that there is an endless vein of revolutionary leadership within the confines of Amerika's punitive hell holes. In the national interest of prolonged fascist control, it is necessary that such a reservoir of production be eradicated. And the psychosurgery project is designed for just such a political work order.

If this inhumane program is not crushed by the collective power of the people, thousands of imprisoned men and women who reflect political consciousness will be sought out and subjected to treatment performed under the banner of modern medicine designed to transform them

into helpless human specimens of dire vegetation. As the result of California's unquestionable sophistication in matters of authoritative control, they have become the godfather of a fiendish plan, scheme and design which makes the Attica massacre appear barbaric, and yet, on the scales of undiluted truth, the psychosurgery project will prove twice as deadly.

We of the prison committee recognize much too clearly, the attempt of the imperialistic oppressors to control the will and behavior of mankind by means of robot controls is part and parcel of a master plan to enslave the people of our society.

It is the humane responsibility of all people who recognize the fascist, fiendish aspects of such programs and projects, to inform all people of our communities and to organize resistance against the possibility of such control programs becoming a reality.

What Can We Do?

Incredible as it may seem, since the UCLA "Center for the Study and Reduction of Violence" is scheduled to begin operations within a matter of weeks, the funding of the Center has not yet been completed. The proposal is right now before the California Council on Criminal Justice, and is also being considered by the state Senate Health and Welfare Committee. It is crucial, therefore, that people write immediately to these agencies, expressing concern over the Center and asking that the funding be delayed, at the very least, until a full investigation into the Center's operations can take place.

The people and agencies to be contacted are the following:

Sen. Anthony C. Beilenson
Chairman,
Senate Health and Welfare Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, California

Dr. Charles Hitch
President,
University of California
2200 University Avenue
Berkeley, California

Dr. Charles E. Young
Chancellor
University of California at
Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California

California Council on
Criminal Justice
100 Librarian Courts Bldg.
Sacramento, California

Most importantly, information about the proposed Center should be distributed as widely as possible in communities around the state, for it is only through pressure brought by the people that programs like the present one can be stopped short of their goals.

This pamphlet was written and produced by the Venceremos Prison Committee. We encourage other individuals and organizations to use the material in this pamphlet for their own literature, and to reprint this pamphlet for wider distribution. (April, 1973)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Call: 326-2839 - Palo Alto
534-4223 - Oakland

Or Write:

Venceremos Prison Committee
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