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The Road Ahead And The Dialectics of Change

Applying the science of dialectical and historical materialism to the prison construct as it exists within the California prison system today.

Introduction

By Ed Mead

You know what the situation is: Slavery legally sanctioned today in America by the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. As a result of this crime an entire segment of the U.S. population has been systematically disenfranchised, and much worse.

How big a deal is it? This is how big it is. If ex-prisoners in just Florida alone had been permitted to vote in the 2000 presidential election, George W. Bush would never have been president—100,000 plus Iraqi civilians (mostly women and children) would still be alive, not to mention the thousands of dead and wounded Americans. If prisoners had the vote, not just absentee ballots but the right to vote in the communities where their census is taken, where they are incarcerated, then the local politicians in these remote areas would be seriously wooing the prisoners' ballot. When that day comes there would be measurable change.

Of course the roots of crime and prisons lie in the nature of the existing social system, and cannot be changed through the electoral process. Indeed, if elections would be illegal if they had the potential to actually result in fundamental change.

In this day and age who in their right mind would oppose a mass struggle against slavery? Who is against all citizens having their human right to vote? Talk about having justice on our side! But where is our

struggle for these basics of democracy? It is lost in the alienation that has been conditioned into us.

Every time you turn on your radio, television, or pick up a newspaper, magazine, etc., on some level you are being told what to think. The cumulative effect of this incessant bombardment is adjustment oriented politics. Yes, even as you read this I too am working to twist your thinking in a certain direction, to wrap your mind around the concept of prisoner empowerment and progressive change. This is what I do, I am a propaganda officer for a revolutionary prisoner rights movement that does not yet exist.



Yet the article that follows does not attempt to teach you what to think. Rather, its purpose is to start the process of teaching you how to think. It applies the science of dialectical and historical materialism to the prison construct as it exists within the California prison system today. This document is an introduction to this science; a jumping off point from which you can start implementing the dialectical process of constructive personal and social change.

Like any science, the material in these pages will require study. The information is not going to passively wash over you,

like some television program or fiction novel, you are going to have to do some actual mental work. Unlearning old idealist thinking patterns and replacing them with materialist methods and analysis is not easy. But the reward of being in touch with the material realities around you, and in finally understanding the world, the whole global construct, is the reward at the end of the rainbow. There is also the additional satisfaction of being on the side of justice, democracy, and truth—on the side of poor and oppressed people everywhere.

The Road Ahead

By C.L., A California Prisoner

The "state" is a powerful tool of the ruling class. It consists of the military, the intelligence, the judicial system, security, the police, etc., including the prison system. The state is not the product of external forces imposed on society from without as the metaphysicians contend, but came into being as a result of the internal contradictions within society itself. The state has not existed since time immemorial, but came into existence with the introduction at a certain stage of social development, that being with the introduction of property rights.

With the introduction of property rights, wealth and the means of production (tools, land, natural resources, etc.) became more accumulated and concentrated in the hands of a small and ever-growing wealthy minority of society's population, thus resulting in a society consisting of social classes, hence great social inequalities. This extremely wealthy minority gained its wealth, power, and privileges through the exploited labor of slaves and the lowest classes. For

the preservation and continuance of this status quo, it became necessary for the ruling classes to protect their so-called “property rights,” i.e., their right to exploit, and this led to the creation of the state. The history of prisons is the history of class society. Lenin was correct when he said the “state is a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another,” that is, the class that dominates economically. And today in the epoch of imperialism, the relations between nations become like the relations between social classes, where a small minority of the world’s nations exploit the labor and natural resources of other nations.

Despite the various transformations the economic base has and continues to develop through (slave-owning society of antiquity, feudalism, capitalism-imperialism) the function of the state remains the same today. Whether it’s the U.S. imperialist war machine killing and plundering the natural resources, labor and populations of third world countries in order to further increase its wealth and continue its privileged status, or imprisoning over two million of its own population in an effort to maintain social control, i.e., protect its property rights, the essence of the state remains the same.

I.

“Never try to teach a people that through education alone they can conquer their rights. Teach them, first and foremost, to conquer their rights...”

– *Che Guevara*

In the last ten to fifteen years, we have undeniably experienced and continue to experience drastic transformations within the California prison system. The two most noticeable changes are the number of prisons being built, including various solitary confinement facilities. The second most noticeable change is the deteriorating quality of our living conditions and the mentality of the overall prison population itself. These two developments, the increase of new prisons and their populations accompanied with the declining quality of our material conditions, is interconnected and having a profound impact on the entire prison population.

Over a decade ago with the opening of Pelican Bay SHU, followed by Corcoran and then Tehachapi SHU, the CDC implemented its first stage in a steady campaign aimed at all of us with the intention of creating a passive and compliant prison population. As convenient as it is for most

not to acknowledge this, so far the CDC’s strategy and tactics are proving very effective, but worse and self destructively, we’re unknowingly assisting them in achieving their agenda. One look at the rapidly expanding “soft yards” will confirm this. If we have any intentions of reversing this course of deterioration, we not only have to acknowledge what is happening, but more importantly, recognize that it will require mass cooperation from all sectors of the prison population before we can implement a correct plan of action.

In the early- to mid-1990s, the CDC began taking everything from us, a little bit here and a little bit there and only from one yard at a time to avoid the possibility of mass organized resistance from the entire prison population (level 3 and 4 yards). These are the rights that the convicts of prior generations had fought and struggled to achieve, the very rights that we are now shamefully giving up freely without any form of resistance. Our living conditions have and continue to deteriorate, and as a prison population we are experiencing its effects daily in numerous forms. No individual, race, or group, is immune from these changes, and the essence of these changes run much deeper than what appears on the surface.

Our access to medical treatment is becoming more difficult and accompanied with longer waits for treatments, if any. In regards to hepatitis and other life-threatening afflictions, as a result of financial interests, our treatment is either intentionally thwarted or blatantly denied. In many circumstances we’re being denied adequate clothing, sufficient hygiene and supplies to maintain healthy living quarters, adequate access to legal materials for relief and defense. They’re increasingly denying us the ability to develop socially while their practice of permanently isolating us is simultaneously increasing. They’ve taken family visits from all lifers, the weights, educational and recreational programs, and day room from most lifers in G.P. They’ve already begun cell feeding on most level four yards and have put most level four prisoners in jumpsuits. They’ve taken all concrete SHU yards from the convicts and have put us in individual isolated dog cages, while rewarding those in protective custody with the concrete yards. They’ve taken the tobacco. They’ve monopolized the packages by replacing personal packages with state approved vendor packages so they can work less passing them out

and the CDC can receive kickbacks from these “ex-correctional officer”-owned businesses that they’ve given these package contracts to. The CDC, hand in hand with MCI, have even monopolized our collect calls and are further victimizing our families by charging up to six times over the normal rate for a collect call. They’ve discontinued many of the appliances and the ones they do offer, for the most part, are overpriced. Under the guise of institutional security they’ve imposed a fascist policy concerning the educational material we can study. No more culture, history, or political literature that doesn’t correspond with their personal views, i.e., class interest. Relying on the history of other prisons and as well as our own and the direction in which it is developing, it’s only a matter of time before the number of books allowed is greatly reduced and we’re required to purchase books through a state-approved vendor and we know how that will be: Ten percent inmate welfare fund and a large selection of “idiot” books. As for the history, political, cultural literature, it’ll be ideologically limited to the interests of our captors. For those who owe restitution, the CDC has convinced themselves that they’re not stealing when they slip their greasy hands into the pockets of our family members and tax them for restitution debts that have been imposed on us. In the last ten years the CDC has extracted \$50 million dollars from our families, and let’s not forget the restitution will be increased to 55% in the near future. (Can the CDC account for this \$50 million dollars?) The prison administration and its lazy army of correctional officers have been sniveling budget crisis because they’ve plundered the state budget allocated to them by clocking in excessive amounts of overtime hours in a greedy frenzy to fatten their paychecks even further. And instead of cutting back on excessive overtime hours, they’ve cut corners in other areas which amounts to further stripping us of what little we do have left. They recently attempted to discontinue all appliances from the SHU facilities in order for the CDC to save money on electricity, allowing for them to continue collecting their overtime pay. It would not only be naïve, but another mistake on our part to believe that the CDC won’t be back at a later date for our appliances once they’re convinced that we’ve lost our leverage and ability to resist. They’ve gone so far as to shorten our food portions and for those who are confined within the hole or a SHU facility,

this is a compromization of our health. This deterioration of our material conditions is continuous and only increasing. It was Emiliano Zapata who said, "I prefer dying on my feet than living on my knees..." The question I ask: Why do we continue living on our knees?!

In regards to the 602 process, it's an important and necessary aspect of struggle, but it's ineffective when we rely on it as the only form of struggle. When utilized by itself, we shouldn't continue deceiving ourselves and those around us. It doesn't, and it never has produced any long term or meaningful results, and on the rare occasions that it does, these victories are short-lived and in appearance only. These so-called victories are nothing more than illusions and temporary crumbs being tossed to us with the intentions of pacifying us while they're simultaneously depriving us of something else and implementing other measures to counteract and neutralize the victory we supposedly achieved. This is the same old story of taking one step forward and three steps back. The 602 process serves two main simultaneous functions: 1) By seeking relief on an individual basis, it distracts and divides us from the issues that affect all of us as a group. 2) The administrative process is dragged out for so long and the petitioner is required to jump through so many unnecessary hoops that eventually the petitioner grows exhausted and abandons all attempts at seeking relief from violations committed by the state.

The CDC's fascist validation policy is a prime example in regards to the 602 process and it's futility when utilized by itself. The ten year long legal battle to overturn the validation process has recently come to a conclusion without victory. Although prior to its conclusion the CDC was growing concerned with the possibility that the courts might rule in our favor. So to counteract and neutralize this possibility, the CDC began and continues to hand out indeterminate SHU terms to prisoners who have a record of serving prior SHU terms regardless of the alleged offense. Despite the CDC's claim that indeterminate SHUs (validation) is solely to deter violence associated with prison gang activity, what this truly demonstrates in practice is that the CDC's primary objective is to create a defeated and passive prison population by repressing and dismantling those prisoners they perceive as potential threats and obstacles blocking the path to their goals, regardless of alleged gang association or

violence.

As for those select few who are released back into general population under the six year inactive status, not only has this proven to be a sham, it's not a solution. Seeking relief on an individual basis (602 process) only serves to divide and distract us, while leaving the foundation of the validation process as a whole intact and untouched. For the majority of the small number of individuals who are released into general population, they're soon snatched back up off the yards and slammed down again. And as usual the CDC applies their standard tactics to secure their revalidation with fabricated 10-30's and unreliable confidential informants who can't be cross examined or challenged in the 602 process. This is nothing less than the CDC's version of an illegal military tribunal. Snatching these individuals back up off the yards is part of IGI's agenda before they even cut them loose. They use this farce as justification to Sacramento that inactive validators are active and cannot be reintegrated back into general population. This farce not only justifies the continuation and existence of the SHU, but worse, it can only work so long as we continue to participate in its process. And aside from the fact that this is just another one of their numerous tactics being implemented to further their long term objective of creating a defeated and passive population, this is also a clear demonstration that reforming the validation process will not work. Besides the validation process, they've now designed other methods of keeping us permanently confined. Our only solution, as overwhelming as it may seem, is to launch a long protracted campaign of resistance throughout the prison system (level three and four yards), not only to close the SHU facilities down completely, but to gain back everything we've given up over the years. The time for us to get off our knees is long overdue. With the application of "new" and "correct" tactics employed throughout the system, accompanied with class action 502s and lawsuits, "coordinated" written statements from us to the media and support from the various prison activist groups, and of greatest significance, mass solidarity, we can achieve this.

Although before there can be a mobilization within the population of this magnitude and in order for us to be successful, some very important questions must be addressed first. For example, the legal struggle that was being waged in the interests of

the entire population to overturn the validation process failed to provoke a unified response. This was our shortcoming and it has cost us a huge setback. We as a prison population are oppressed as an entire population; therefore the solution is to be found in a group response. Several forms of struggle should have coincided with the legal one. The question is, why weren't other forms of struggle pursued on a large and coordinated scale? Addressing this in itself draws forth other pertinent questions that must be addressed before we can transform ourselves into an effective material force.

As was acknowledged above, over the years and increasingly more so in the last ten, our living conditions continue to deteriorate. And as convenient as it may be for most to turn a blind eye to all of this, the quality of the overall population's way of thinking is also deteriorating. The deteriorating, material conditions and the population's deteriorating way of thinking is interrelated and goes hand in hand. Not only are they reflections of one another, they influence the development of each other's deterioration in a continuous interacting process. We as a prison population are becoming increasingly more self-centered and driven by self interests as our material conditions continue to deteriorate, and in turn we become contributors and accomplices to the CDC's agendas and the further downward spiral of our own deterioration, and more often than not, we do so unconsciously, that is, we do so unintentionally and unknowingly. We live within circumstances where the existing and predominating ideology of "individualism" is self defeating and destructive to all of us as a population and where the "collective" mentality is an absolute necessity for the improvement of our living conditions.

The vast majority of prisoners were not only indifferent, but made no effort to push for other forms of struggle to coincide with the legal one that was being waged to overturn the CDC's validation process. Prisoners from all sectors of the prison population would rather take a free ride and let others sweat for them and bring change rather than do everything in their ability to push for and participate in one capacity or another. Why? This is just one demonstration of the many we see on a daily basis of the backward and individualist mentality that has not only poisoned the consciousness of the prison population but has contaminated it on every level. And with continued and increasing momentum, this mentality and

practice when fully developed to its conclusion, becomes the 10-30, the confidential informant, etc. As a population we are in the later stages of transforming into our opposite, not only in regards to our material conditions, but in our way of thinking also. Everything we are opposed to (at least in words), we are in the later stages of becoming. If we are going to change the direction of this deterioration, we must “struggle” to improve our living conditions and this process we will simultaneously improve the thinking of the overall population. A correct line and guide to action must be introduced and applied, and dialectical materialism provides us with these necessary tools.

II.

“Marxist philosophy holds that the most important problem does not lie in understanding the laws of the objective world and thus being able to explain it, but in applying the knowledge of these laws actively to change the world...”

– *Mao Tse-Tung*

Though most are not conscious of it, the fallacious thinking of “idealism” prevails and is interwoven within the consciousness of not only mainstream society, but within prison society as well. This convenient mode of thinking is not only incorrect, it’s self-deceiving and destructive to us as a prison population. For example, we convince ourselves that “we can do our life in solitary confinement” because “nobody can break us” and “we know how to do our time,” etc., etc. Well this may be true for many, but regardless of what we conveniently convince ourselves of, “Truth” is found in the external world and exists independently of our minds, and the truth is, we’re still being oppressed when we are subjected to a lifetime sentence of solitary confinement behind fabricated and frivolous information no matter what we conveniently convince ourselves of. Once we make up these convenient excuses to justify our inaction, we’re essentially laying down in defeat and accepting our oppression. Not only is idealism poisonous, it must be discarded as a way of thinking if we are to progress in any meaningful way.

Idealism and this mode of thinking is incorrect on a scientific level because it doesn’t correspond with objective reality; that is, it doesn’t correctly reflect the external world around us, and therefore it is untruthful. This way of thinking must be

corrected if we are going to stop being accomplices (dead weight) of the CDC and agents of our own oppression and improve our living conditions on a material and conscious level.

Dialectical materialism, the opposing thought and philosophy of idealism, serves as a scientific guide to the action necessary for changing the course of this deterioration that is now in motion.

There is nothing in this world except matter, and all matter without exception, is in continuous motion. And the source of this motion is primarily internal, that is, the source of motion is primarily the result of the internal conflicts of opposing forces (unification of opposites) that is present and struggles within all things, i.e., its development and movement. This is true of social development, the development of human thought and knowledge, organic development and inorganic development, all development including the developments that are in motion throughout the CDC. Although the source of motion (change, development) is primarily the result of internal contradictions, external forces and influences play a significant role in motion. External forces and influences create the conditions necessary for change but are only operable through the internal contradictions themselves.



All “quantitative” changes of either increase or decrease at a certain point will inevitably leap to a change in “quality.” For example, water can undergo a certain quantitative change of either increase or decrease in its temperature without undergoing a change in its quality, so long as its temperature doesn’t increase beyond 99 degrees or decrease below 31 degrees. Although as soon as it increases beyond 99 degrees it is at this point that it undergoes a quantity-quality transformation and chang-

es from a liquid to a gas. The same is true of a decrease in its temperature. As soon as it decreases below 31 degrees, it is at this point that it also undergoes a quantity-quality transformation and changes from a liquid to a solid.

All things in the universe are not only in continuous motion, but are continuously transforming themselves at certain stages of their development into other things through quantitative increases and decreases. It is no coincidence that with the drastic increase in new prisons and their populations, that this has led to a drastic change (deterioration) in the quality of our prison conditions. It is also important to remember, external forces and influences can only create the conditions necessary for change and are only operable through the internal contradictions themselves and that the actual basis of change and development takes place internally. For example, the CDC has only been successful in imposing these changes on us as a result of the internal contradictions that exist within the prison population itself.

As was mentioned above, our minds, that is, our consciousness also develops in this way, through the continuous interaction and struggle of the unification of theory and practice. Dialectical materialism teaches us that the external world (matter) is reflected in our brains through our five sense organs: sight, hearing, smell taste and touch. What is first perceived through the five senses is known as “perceptual knowledge.” When enough perceptual knowledge has been accumulated in our brains, perceptual knowledge will leap to “conceptual knowledge” (the formation of ideas, theories, plans, policies, measures, etc.), that is, from objective matter to subjective consciousness, from existence to ideas. This is the first state of cognition.

The second stage of cognition begins when we test the truth and validity of our ideas by putting them into practice, that is, transforming subjective consciousness back into objective matter, from ideas back into existence. Those ideas that fail to correspond with the external world are incorrect and untruthful, while those ideas that do correspond with the external world and achieve their intended results, are correct and truthful. The continuous interaction and struggle between the material world and our ideas is inseparable, and through this continuous struggle and interaction, knowledge is gained, our consciousness is raised, and we simultaneously transform

the external world around us which inevitably gives shape to new ideas and ways of thinking in a continuous process of practice-theory-practice.

Although there are times when our consciousness (ideas and ways of thinking) lags behind the changes taking place in the external world around us, and it is at this point when once correct and truthful ideas become incorrect and untruthful and no longer correspond with the external world that we must form new judgments according to fresh knowledge and make new decisions that will correspond with the new and developing situations.

As was pointed out above, “truth” is found in objective reality, that is, in the external world that exists outside of our minds and the truth is only true so long as it correctly reflects and corresponds with the external world. As a result of the poisonous idealism that runs so rampantly amongst us, we hold “personal” feelings and views that do not correspond or reflect reality correctly as being true. By holding these “personal views,” we not only deny ourselves of truth but we deny ourselves of correct ideas, thus preventing ourselves from developing in a direction that is necessary for the improvement of our living conditions. All possible development for struggle – social relations, ideas, communication, solidarity, cooperation, etc., are hindered and retarded as a result of these incorrect and untruthful ideas that do not correspond to our changing conditions. And to further function as a break on progress, this creates the conditions that allow for the CDC to exploit these incorrect ideas in an effort to further their campaign against us.

All things are in continuous motion and are continuously changing from one thing into another. Prison conditions have and will also continue to transform, in our material conditions and in our reflections of them. Although currently our consciousness (ideas) lags behind the material transformations that have been in motion over the last ten to fifteen years.

We’ve lost a great deal and have been subjected to a great deal of changes in our material conditions. The CDC has advanced and developed their methods of repressing us and yet we haven’t advanced or developed our forms of resistance. In our minds (idealism) we have convinced ourselves and each other that we are warriors, soldiers, soldados, etc., and although the potential exists, preying on one another doesn’t make us soldiers. It makes

us accomplices to the CDC and furthers its agendas, because in truth, that is, in practice, we have laid down and submitted to the changes the CDC has and continues to impose on us without any form of organization and resistance. We have stagnated in our old ways of thinking and have thus become contributors to our own conditions, especially by the utter lack of cooperation between the prison population when it comes to improving the quality of our lives.

In other words, the material conditions within prison has and continues to change drastically with every passing year month, and day, and our ideas and methods of resistance does not correspond to these changes in order to struggle effectively and counter them, therefore our ideas have become untruthful and no longer reflect reality correctly. And as a result of this stagnation in our consciousness and lack of action, we have allowed our living conditions to deteriorate and this deterioration finds its reflection in the self-destructive and defeatist idealism that has spread like a disease contaminating an extremely large portion of the prison population’s way of thinking and finds its ultimate reflection amongst the so-called “soft yards” – the most defeatist sectors of the population. As a result of the existing status quo within prison society and its current way of functioning, we unwittingly contribute to the creations of these “soft yards” and the mentality that accompanies them. This mentality and way of thinking first originates and begins its development from within us, the so-called “solid yards.” It is of absolute necessity that we develop in the opposite direction and struggle to unify and create cooperation, organization and solidarity amongst the prison population so that we can begin to improve the quality of the convict, gain back what we have given up and stop being accomplices to the CDC and its agendas as we have become over the years.

Cooperation, solidarity, and organization at this stage is a necessity. A new and correct theory for the prison masses must be introduced, studied, and applied to lead us out of these deteriorating changes that continue to transpire throughout the prison system. Otherwise our situation may deteriorate beyond repairability. With the prison population completely divided and the will of the people completely defeated, there will be no ability to effectively organize and counteract the damage that is now in motion. The SHU facilities and the repression will continue to increase and what lit-

tle we do have left will continue to be used as incentive for so-called “solid” convicts to betray other prisoners, and eventually there will be no distinguishing between so-called “soft” or “solid” yards as is already becoming the case. This course of deterioration has been in motion for years and it continues to develop in this direction with increasing momentum. We must adhere to the scientific revolutionary concept: It is not enough to interpret the world, it must be transformed.

III.

Can a bad thing be transformed into a good thing, that is, can unfavorable circumstances be transformed into favorable circumstances? As was previously explained, contradiction (unification of opposites) is the source of motion, i.e., development, change, movement, etc., In fact, motion itself is contradiction. To further expand on this universal law, in the development of a complex process or thing, there are numerous contradictions involved that are all interconnected and which struggle with one another pushing development forward. And within the development of a complex process or thing and its various interpenetrating contradictions, there is always one “principal contradiction,” that is, one dominating contradiction whose existence and development determines and influences the existence and development of the other lesser and secondary contradictions. Only by correctly identifying the principal contradiction can we then harness and guide the direction of its development for a resolution, will the secondary ones be resolved.

It is important to remember that there are two states of motion (contradiction), “relative rest” and “conspicuous change.” Like the example of the quantity-quality transformation of water that was given above, relative rest is a non-antagonistic state of motion that goes through purely “quantitative” changes without undergoing a change in quality. This state of motion is relative, that is, it is only temporary. Conspicuous change is an open antagonistic state, when at a certain point quantitative change leaps to a change in quality. It is only through the state of conspicuous change that true progress in our living conditions and the raising of our consciousness will be achieved.

The principal contradiction within the prison system is that between the prison population as a whole and the CDC. This is an interdependent contradiction, that is, we create the conditions for each others’ exist-

tence. Without the CDC there would be no prisoners, and without the prisoners there would be no CDC. Not only is this principal contradiction interdependent, but so long as the prison system exists, i.e., class society, this contradiction is “inseparable.” The other contradictions that exists within the prison population itself are secondary contradictions. It is the contradiction between us and the CDC that is principal and that will continue determining and influencing the development of our existence.

Within a principal contradiction, of the two aspects engaged in struggle, there is one “principal aspect” which determines the struggle’s direction and development, although at certain stages in the process of struggle (development), the roles of the principal aspect and the non-principal aspect are reversed as a result of an increase or decrease in the force of each aspect engaged in struggle. That is, at certain stages in struggle, the principal aspect and the non-principal aspect are transformed into their opposites. By correctly identifying the principal contraction within the prison system as that between all prisoners and the CDC, and by correctly identifying the CDC as the principal aspect of this principal contradiction, we can correctly focus our energies and efforts to reversing these roles and improving our living conditions on a material and conscious level. That is, we can transform unfavorable circumstances into favorable circumstances.

In order to transform unfavorable circumstances into favorable circumstances and wage successful struggles to improve the quality of our living conditions, there are necessary conditions that must be present as prerequisites for conspicuous (qualitative) change. “Objective” and “subjective”

conditions must be ripe and coincide with one another. The objective conditions, that being our deteriorating material conditions, already exist. The subjective conditions, that being the consciousness (ideas and ways of thinking) of the prison population is lacking and does not correspond with the objective conditions. The consciousness of the prison population must be raised through correct political education and guidance. In other words, not only must we be aware of our oppression, its origins, and the various stages it has and continues to develop through, we must all be on the same page before a qualitative improvement and transformation in our living conditions can materialize.

At this point it is necessary to address the question of strategy and tactics and their interdependent relationship. A strategy is a long term, more or less, stable plan of actions for achieving a specific long term goal, while tactics are the more fluid aspects of that strategy.

Moreover, what is our strategy and tactics? Our main objective must be to close down the SHU facilities and gain back all that we have given up, while our strategy for achieving this objective needs to consist of legal struggles accompanied with acts of physical demonstration. In order to pursue this strategy effectively, our tactics of struggle will have to remain fluid, changing with, and corresponding to the new and developing situations that will emerge as a result of the CDC’s countermeasures that they will take against us.


More specifically, what should our primary goals consist of? Close down the SHU facilities, end the CDC’s unwritten policy of no parole for lifers, reinstate family visits weights, recreational programs, college education financed by the state, end the criminal taxing of our family members for restitution debts that have been imposed on us, guarantee our constitutional rights to read and study the history, culture, language and political education of our choosing, provide adequate access to legal materials and defense, adequate access to timely medical treatment, reinstate personal packages, and end the monopolization of our telephone calls. Provide a minimum wage for all prison labor and end the use of prison labor that produces goods for profit.1

As mentioned above, when our consciousness (ideas) lags behind and does not correspond with the changes transpiring in the external world around us, our ideas become incorrect and untruthful. This is the

result of the world around us continuing to develop while our ideas and ways of thinking become stagnate and left behind undeveloped and unmatched with the changes transpiring around us. This is true of our tactics, that is our methods of struggle have not developed an inch in years. Our methods have become worn out and rigid, thus rendering them ineffective as a result of the CDC’s tactics and methods of repression becoming more refined and improved in all aspects over the years. To be effective we must break with tradition and its unchanging rigid methods and adopt a more fluid guerilla tactic of hit and run struggle where defensive maneuvers are transformed into offensive maneuvers so that our tactics will correspond and counteract theirs.

When they raise the alarm bells and announce “budget crisis,” rather than continue to lay down in passive defeat and allow ourselves to be relegated to the victims of their budget cuts, transform these unfavorable circumstances into favorable circumstances in order to further our struggle and improve our living conditions. Make them spend as much money as possible while simultaneously depriving them of the monies they extract from us and our family members. Make it more expensive to take our rights than it would be to give them back to us. Wear them down in every possible aspect. Be unpredictable as possible and keep them continually guessing while causing them to expend as much of their resources as possible through a long, organized and centrally led protracted struggle of our own. We’d have to deny them kickback and profits from those who they do business with. This would require that we boycott all packages, store, and special purchases and stop receiving money orders. We’d also have to create as big of a work stoppage as possible. No doubt the CDC will have their countermeasures for our tactics, such as bring in workers from the lower levels to break the work stoppages, etc. It is important to recognize that nothing develops exactly straight, that is, nothing goes exactly according to plan, so when the CDC applies countermeasures to our tactics, we must not continue to commit the same mistakes as we have and continue to do by sticking to the same unbending and rigid tactics. The creativity and ingenuity of the prison masses must not only be unleashed, it must be continuously developed. Improvise when necessary and remain fluid. And although the fluidity of our tactics is essential to counter and correspond to their

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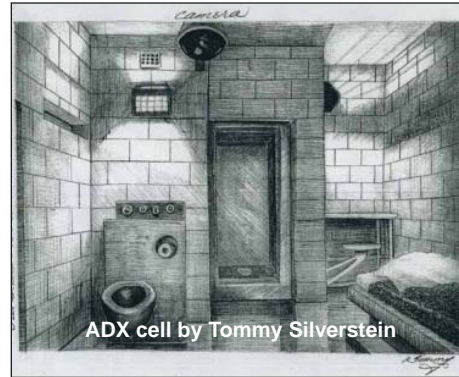
tactics, the one thing that must remain solid and firm is our objectives. We must not deviate from our objectives and sell them short with a compromise, that is, with a surrender and betrayal.

And also essential to the continued progression of our living conditions, we must not repeat the same mistake as we have in the past and retreat into a passive and content state of mind and abandon the struggle as gains are achieved. As was pointed out above, prisoners and the CDC create the conditions for each others' existence. As long as the prison system exists, i.e., class society, this contradiction between the CDC and ourselves is inseparable and will continue with or without our participation. Therefore, we must actively and consciously participate in it in order to maintain what we gain. Without contradiction there can be no progress. ♣

Note. 1: When the state contracts our prison labor to companies, the companies not only provide the state with a kickback (percentage) for using this source of cheap labor, the companies sometimes provide a minimum wage to the prisoners as incentive. In appearance, that is, on the surface, the prisoners who participate in this labor believe they are benefiting, and in the immediate short term individualist sense they are. Although in essence, whether prisoners receive a minimum wage or not, what is essential to recognize is that these same companies would have to pay workers outside of prison higher wages for the same labor. Being that these companies could use prison labor at a much lower cost, this creates for these companies and the CDC a financial interest in the availability of this cheap source of labor. Therefore, not only will these companies contribute financially and any other way they can to politicians who support and propose harsh and mandatory sentencing laws, etc., the CDC also has a financial interest in the creation of a defeated and submissive prison population (labor force) for the percentage they will receive from the companies who use prison labor. By participating in these work programs that produce goods or services for profit, not only are we essentially contributing to our own incarceration, we're contributing to the existence and expansion of SHUs and internal repressive policies such as the validation process which is designed to break us up into a defeated and submissive mass.

Although the use of prison labor which

produces goods and services for profit is fairly low on the level three and four yards at this time, we should expect as the CDC continues its campaign to dismantle and break us up, prison labor for profit will simultaneously increase as the population becomes more defeated and compliant and the "soft yards" continue to expand.



PELICAN BAY SHU CONVICT'S LETTER TO H.S. SOLIDARITY COALITION

By by Todd Ashker
(Reprinted from *SF Bay View* Feb. 29,
who received it from the *Prison Activist
Resource Center*)

Discussions are underway with the intent to set short term and long term goals in the resistance struggle against SHU practices and the prison industrial complex. People are indoctrinated, brainwashed into believing they are weak or powerless – that prisoners in this state are evil and deserve to be punished and treated as some type of sub-human animal, based on their felon status. By "people," I'm referring to prisoners, their families, friends and supporters, as well as the general public at large. This is the wrong way to see things and it has to change!

Here in the prison system, it's become the norm for men to brag that they have become "institutionalized," complacently accepting more and more abuse and deprivations. They talk about "I can take whatever they do to me and won't give them the satisfaction of complaining about it." This is the example set by many older cons for the younger cons.

I don't agree with this type of mind set! We should never accept being abused or mistreated. It's our duty as human beings

to FULLY RESIST! Our hunger strike activity over the past year has shown that solid resistance is not only possible, but also very effective, and it can be done in smart, fully advantageous ways. It simply requires prisoners to come together collectively for the common good of all and with the support of the people outside, forming a powerful force to force the changes that are long overdue. Changes dictated by morals and common sense principles which the lawmakers and courts refuse to make are based upon the politics and greed related to manipulative special interest groups.

We need to do all we can to open people's eyes and minds to the following reality: Most prisoners are not serving valid, legal sentences! Our sentencing laws are not based on valid, sensible public safety interests. Rather, our sentencing laws are based on the politics associated with failed policies – e.g., the war on drugs.

We are not serving valid sentences. Most prisoners serving "term-to-life" sentences are many years beyond minimum terms. We're in prison based on the money made off of us by special interests! Thus, we need to resist and by our resistance gain additional exposure and outside support.

Our compliance and recognition of the prison's power over us is our downfall. If we collectively refuse to comply, and refuse to recognize the prisonrats having any power over us via refusal to work, refusal to follow orders, then these prisons cannot operate! Our goal needs to be to force major changes, beneficial to prisoners and our families and loved ones regarding prison conditions and the amount of time people serve. Our supporters outside need to make a hard core, serious stand on the same agenda.

People need to see that we are not in here legally. We've served our time – a great many of us have – and paid our debt and then some! We are no longer accepting the abuse and torture. We are human beings and demand humane, non-punitive treatment from this point on. And until there are major changes toward this end, we collectively refuse to comply with orders – and will possibly go back on hunger strike. Our outside supporters can rally and demand out release!

On the radio today we heard that a 27-year-old man at Corcoran died Feb. 2 in Ad Seg. How many more have to die this way? Here we are in 2012 and prisoners are dying in peaceful protest of prison conditions. What is really going on?! ♣

HUNGER-STRIKER DIES

By Nicole Jones

A spokesperson with California's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has confirmed that an inmate on a hunger strike at Corcoran State Prison died on Feb. 2 after refusing food for four days.

Gomez began fasting to protest conditions in the Administration Segregation Unit at Corcoran. Over thirty inmates housed in the isolation unit at Corcoran had also been refusing food since January for the same reason. On Feb. 13, all inmates resumed eating, according to CDCR's

spokesperson Terry Thornton.

Correctional Healthcare Service spokeswoman Nancy Kincaid once he started missing meals the medical staff monitored him daily. The effects of starvation typically start to show in the third week of fasting, but someone who is diabetic or has other health complications is going to feel the impacts quicker, she said.

Isaac Ontiveros, spokesperson for the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity coalition, said inmates in Corcoran's segregation unit report being kept in "horrendous conditions" for months after they've served their assigned terms. In an open letter to CDCR's Director Mathew Cate and Cor-

coran Chief Deputy Warden C. Gipson last December, strikers listed demands that included access to educational and rehabilitative programming, adequate and timely medical care, and timely hearings on their cases and petitions.

Thornton said revisions to its policies regarding security threat group management and changes to the gang validation process is nearly complete. He anticipates the revision will go out for legislators and inmate advocacy groups to review near the end of this month. 🌟

<http://informant.kalwnews.org/2012/02/hunger-striking-inmate-dies-in-california/>

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