

# Fully Support the Prisoners' Struggle

**L.D.**

PRICE: 10 CENTS

LTP  
365.2  
C 73 F

Throughout Australia prisoners are rebelling against the conditions in gaols.

The prisoners' rebellion is occurring within the context of the struggle of various sections of Australian society in defence of democratic liberties and against the foreign domination of our country. The prison revolt is a component part of the national struggle against imperialism and for a truly independent Australia. Only an independent, anti-imperialist, people's Australia can solve the question of gaols. The people will then detain the real criminals – the imperialists and their stooges.

The real rulers of Australia are the huge foreign monopolies which dominate our economy and all its political institutions, including the jails. They are aided and abetted in the plunder of Australia by a small handful of local traitors, like McMahon, Whitlam, Dunstan, and all the other puppets who support 'foreign investment'.

It is logical, therefore, that the spokesmen of imperialism create a hullabaloo about the prisoners' demands for better conditions. In chorus, the rulers of Australia condemn the prisoners, workers, small farmers, aborigines, unemployed, pensioners, and students, as being disreputable elements in the community.

The most disreputable element in our community in fact is the ruling class itself. Imperialism has bought nothing but discomfort to the Australian people. It has involved us in unjust wars of aggression, it has plundered our resources and labour creating pollution, unemployment, economic crisis, cultural decadence, and it has destroyed much of our traditional heritage.

### JAILS: FOR WHOM?

The foreign owners of Australia also wield state power. They control the machinery of the state – the courts, the police, armed forces, the government and the prisons – which they ensure

5 OCT 1972

STATE LIBRARY  
OF VICTORIA

SOURCE

LD 10C

CALL No.

LHP

365.2

C73F

STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA

STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA

function to serve their own narrow interests against the interests of the Australian people. The question 'For whom?' is fundamental. Jails in capitalist society serve the ruling capitalist class (which is dominated by U.S. imperialism in Australia.) It is no coincidence that those sectors of the population who oppose imperialist domination — i.e., the working people and students — are the inmates in capitalist jails. Every time the prisoners rebel in protest against the jails they are joining with all patriotic Australians in dealing a blow against imperialism for Australian independence.

### “A GLIMPSE OF THINGS TO COME”

No other jail has captured the public's attention as much as Pentridge. Pentridge, like most of our jails, was born out of the economic domination of Australia by British colonialism in the C19th. The old British colonialists needed jails and armed forces and courts in order to maintain the newly found (i.e. 'stolen') wealth in Australia. Today, the jails have not changed much, but British imperialism has been surpassed as the number one exploiter of Australia by US imperialism. The jails serve the same function; to maintain the domination of the profit-hungry imperialists and to quell anyone who opposes imperialism.

Inside the jails, we see the reality of capitalism, its essentially violent nature. The reality of capitalist class dictatorship is experienced daily in an uncamouflaged manner. The common characteristic of all capitalist jails is their over-riding principle of 'breaking' the prisoner and forcing the prisoner to bow to the discipline of the dictatorship of the capitalist class.

Most prisoners are in jail for committing crimes against capitalism. Most prisoners are members of the working class forced into a position where they either have to break capitalism's sacred laws concerning property or starve. Or they have fallen victim to the pressures and corrupt values which capitalism imposes upon them. Those prisoners who escape from jail should have our full support.

Capitalist jails are fascist institutions. Fascism is the open uncamouflaged dictatorship of the capitalist class. Prisoners are subjected to almost unrestrained violent repression most of the time. The ruling class would gladly and eagerly be prepared to administer the society at large on the same fascist basis as it administers the jails. We must never forget this fact.

Every time the imperialists infringe upon our hard-earned democratic liberties they are attempting to move closer towards the imposition of open violent dictatorship against the people. To the ruling class, jails represent a glimpse of things to come.

### CONDITIONS APPALLING

Prisoners are subjected to sadistic punishment, mental and physical. In this sense, jails may be likened to concentration camps.

The following statements from prisoners within Pentridge expose the bestial standards of living imposed upon the prisoner:

*“In Pentridge the conditions are deplorable, particularly those in ‘C’ Division. I was there for nine months and every morning as the old drunks walked past with their shit buckets and emptied them into a vat in the middle of the yard I felt like vomiting. Five minutes later a few yards away from this cesspool breakfast is served, one bun and a bowl of burgoo (porridge). During winter you have to put at least one blanket around the bottom of the door to stop the water coming in. In the summer the same thing is done to keep the rats out. Things are not much better in ‘D’ and ‘F’, but at the end of the day at least you can wash the filth and muck away. In ‘C’ Division the best you have got is one tin plate full of cold water, a shit bucket, and a plastic jar of water to drink.”*

## PRISONERS TORTURED

Another prisoner related his experiences in the maximum security division, 'H' Division:

"Two weeks after I was sentenced I was caught with a two dollar bill and sent to 'H' Division for 28 days. I think I was bashed on at least ten occasions during this time. The worst during that period was for having dust on my light globe. I was slapped around for a few minutes by Warder Dixon and Snooks and then the Senior Kerr, kicked me in the balls — Hard! I was pissing blood for about a week. A friend of mine called Loui was there at the same time. He wasn't prepared to cop all the marching shit or being battered for nothing so he told them the first one to lay a hand on him he would see when he got out. Loui was battered day and night for two weeks and as a result ended up in Ararat Mental Asylum."

"It lives up to its name", said yet another prisoner, " 'H' for 'Hell' ". "The unjustified beatings and most of all the mental torture are the main ingredients used for dealing with prisoners who have committed the terrible crime of having an extra ounce of tobacco, etc. Upon arrival you are made to strip and forced to bend over, pull your cheeks apart, whilst they spit at you or make smart remarks. The next step is to beat you a bit while you have no clothes on. After this you are dressed in 'H' garb — targets are placed over the heart back and front — and marched around the 'Mad Mile'. All the screws (i.e. warders) are armed with batons and try to make you march faster by hitting you across the head, legs, or body, anyplace that's uncovered. You are then put in your cell and as a rule given a bit of a serve to help you through the night. During the rest of the evening the screw bangs on your door and tells you what they are going to do the next day and always ask "Why don't you hang yourself?" During the last three years, three have taken that advice."

## LABOUR YARDS

He continued, "The next day you are taken out to the labour yards and given a 16 lb. hammer and in this 16 x 8 yard you spend 8 hours smashing rocks into pieces no larger than your thumbnail. God help you if you have a big thumb!"

## PRISON OFFICERS BASHERS

Amongst the main bashers in 'H' Division were Dixon, Snooks, Coleman, Phelps, Kerr, Curll, CPO Gardiner, Gemmel and Milte. Newer additions are Ackland, LeFeuvre, Chanter, Leonard, Self, Rogers, and Roy 'The Basher' Vodden. The prisoners are forced to address these animals as 'Sir'. It must not be forgotten that the Governor, Grindly, and the Minister for Social Welfare Ian Smith, are fully aware of the bashings and condone them. The bashers themselves are on orders from the more 'Senior' prison authorities. At the top of the chain of authority we find the ruling class, the U.S., Japanese, British, and local traitor, capitalists, who will stop at nothing to maintain their narrow and selfish 'Law and Order'.

## REPRESSION BREEDS RESISTANCE

However, where there is repression there is resistance. When the right to strike is attacked by penal provisions, workers resist such repression. When students are jailed because they seek universities which will serve the people instead of the bosses, other students and people resist such repression. All oppressed sections of society — the workers, students, small farmers, the unemployed, the aborigines, the pensioners — have shown that they will resist any attempts at repression.

The prisoners, subject to the most overt type of repression, are no exception. Prisoners through their sit-ins, strikes, and other protests, have served as an inspiring example to all other democratic-minded people.

## 'REHABILITATION': A CLASS QUESTION

So it is clear that Pentridge, which is typical of all capitalist jails, can make no serious claim to be a 'rehabilitation' institution. It is purely and simply a weapon of the imperialists levelled to keep the workingpeople 'in line'.

But the notion of 'rehabilitation' itself is worthy of comment.

The notion of rehabilitation is put forward as an abstraction, as though it has some inherent intrinsic value. When reformists and revisionists unite to talk about the need for the 'rehabilitation' of prisoners, they are indicating support for the corrupt values and exploiting social system of capitalism. Under capitalism, to rehabilitate someone into society means to somehow make him or her conform to and accept that social system. In People's China, rehabilitation means rehabilitation, through education, into socialist society in which socially produced wealth is owned by the society as a whole. It means rehabilitation geared to acceptance of socialist values based on selflessness and devotion to serving the people. This type of rehabilitation is certainly worthwhile!

However, in capitalist society, rehabilitation means rehabilitating the so-called 'criminal' to accept the corrupt values based on exploitation and selfishness and to conform to the social system of capitalism based on the **private** appropriation of the society's wealth. This type of rehabilitation is clearly undesirable from a workingclass point of view.

The most 'rehabilitated' prisoners in our opinion are those who have been most active in the prisoner's rebellion, thereby proving that they are not selfish individuals but seek to do something to help improve conditions for others as well as themselves. They have been 'rehabilitated', through their bitter and cruel experiences as prisoners in capitalist jails, toward

socialism, not capitalism. Like everything else, rehabilitation is no neutral concept, it is a class question.

## INQUIRY A FRAUD

The Government Inquiry into allegations of brutality in Pentridge jail has a dual nature. On one hand, it is a result of the prisoners' struggles against their treatment and the conditions of the prison. On the other hand, the Inquiry is being used to attempt to 'fob off' the prisoners' rebellion. The ruling class hope that the prisoners will put all their faith in the Inquiry and forget about launching their own campaigns within the jail for better treatment and conditions.

Such wishful thinking on the part of the ruling class will never materialise beyond the realm of fantasy.

The prisoners in Pentridge have already staged a strike protesting against the severely restricted terms of reference of the Inquiry.

They have few illusions about the Inquiry. Prisoner witnesses for the Inquiry have been intimidated and prisoners' evidence confiscated by the prison authorities. The following statements from prisoners sum up the typical prisoners' attitude adequately:

"Personally I feel the Inquiry will attempt to justify the necessity for 'H' by showing the need for discipline within the prison. But how in the hell are they going to justify the day to day beatings that have been on for years and were an accepted part of the punishment there has got me beat. They will find two or three scapegoats such as Ackland and LeFeuvre and try to cover up the fact that it was condoned by the Chiefs and the Governor."

"The mere fact that they have allowed the beatings to go on since 1956 yet the terms of reference allow us to go back only two years is ludicrous. Why not start at the beginning?"

The Inquiry will not, indeed cannot, lead to any fundamental or essential changes within Pentridge. It is essentially a white-washing job.

### KEEP CORRECT PERSPECTIVE

We must fully support the demands of prisoners for improved conditions.

However, we must never lose sight of the fundamental fact that capitalism is the **cause** of the problems affecting prisoners (and society at large) and that only by eliminating the **cause** of a problem can it be remedied permanently. Merely demanding improved conditions within the jails is inadequate because the entire nature of the jails must be challenged. Their role under capitalism must be concertedly opposed. We should constantly point out that so long as capitalism remains jails will remain an essential part of the ruthless dictatorship of the capitalist class. The problem will not be solved until the imperialists are kicked out of Australia once and for all and our country is run to serve the people, not the bosses.



30328500422398