

EDITORIAL

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Here we are again, actually on time with this latest issue of the new annual A.C.J. The three last issues reprinted the three sections of the Prisoners Action Group submission to the NSW Royal Commission into prisons. With this and future issues we hope to broaden the range of issues covered and deepen the analysis.

As subscribers are aware, the A.C.J. has now cut its material links with the P.A.G., it is no longer a P.A.G. publication. However, the journal will of course continue to champion the struggle of prisoners. The roots of radical criminology in Australia are strongly entwined in the upsurge of prison militancy and politicisation of the late 1960s and 1970s. It is thus not a case of 'turning our backs' on the prison struggle. Such a course is neither intended nor indeed possible.

Rather the task that lies before us is to broaden and generalise the combat, to forge ever stronger and wider alliances and networks, to infiltrate leftist practices, thought, and practitioners into every facet of daily life. The struggle cannot be isolated to the institutions and relations of the repressive state apparatus. Attention must be given to a wide range of issues, institutions and practices (e.g. the police, lawyers, the judiciary, legal issues, legal aid, psychiatry and psychology, the specific issues facing particular groups such as women, aborigines, migrants, children etc.). A diverse range of 'disciplines' are potentially involved - law, history, politics, political economy, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, semiotics, cultural studies, etc. Connections must be forged with a range of forces contesting bourgeois hegemony in general.

For in a period of economic crisis, crime, law, 'order', authority, become increasingly sensitive issues, increasingly prey to the evocations of discipline, punishment, moralism. Such notions provide a fertile terrain for those wishing to construct and strengthen a conservative, authoritarian consensus. It is vital then, that the left does not vacate these arenas, these forums, does not merely concede them to the forces of reaction. We must develop strategies of combat, strategies that are sufficiently sophisticated to enable us accurately to chart and analyse the real material

and social forces out of which conservatives construct such an authoritarian consensus. Such strategies must be sensitive to the ambiguous and contradictory meanings and explanations that can be attributed to crime, strategies sharp enough to differentiate, not to mechanically glorify or condemn but to probe and reconstruct. The tasks lie before us.

These tasks require different skills, attributes, actors; different levels and forms of resistance. Thus in this issue we open with some Struggle Notes: concrete, on-the-ground issues such as verbal, the Ananda Marga frame up, the Parramatta attack, the Bacon case and others. Some of these items are reprints from leaflets and publications put out by activists and those involved themselves. And then in the Articles section we publish two longer papers, on protest in Queensland and on welfare law and styles of authority, both written by law students for the Criminal Justice System course at UNSW. The latter article is illustrative of a more theoretical approach and discourse that we feel it is important to foster, alongside the accounts of concrete day-to-day struggle. This issue also has an international flavour with two articles from New Zealand, one by two detached youth workers in the field working with Maori gangs, New Zealand's current law and order bogey and a companion piece in which the background to these events is reviewed.

The difficulties in funding continue to make a glossier, more 'professional' production impossible. This issue has been produced on the proverbial shoe-string. We hope by 1982 to be on a more secure financial footing and perhaps to embark on a more polished format. Feedback on the content and style would be appreciated. Keep those subscriptions, and of course contributions rolling in.

David Brown

George Idenkowski

June, 1980

STRUGGLE NOTES

from JAILPRINT June, 1981

MULAWA MEDICINE

BY PAM BLACKER

In 1975 a group of ex-Mulawa prisoners and women sympathetic to the plight of women in prison got together and formed the Women Behind Bars. One of these women, Michelle House, a Mulawa prisoner had been kned in the stomach and assaulted by Mrs Kiernan, a Mulawa prison officer. Ms House gave evidence to the Nagle Royal Commission into prisons regarding the incident.

Needless to say no action was taken against Kiernan and it is an indictment of the system that today she is acting Deputy Superintendent at Mulawa, has been Acting Superintendent since the Royal Commission and is currently involved in a concerted campaign to become permanent Superintendent.

Conditions since the Royal Commission have become progressively worse. The existence of an internal and external system of razor wire fences (condemned by the Geneva Convention) makes it impossible for prisoners to move about even within the confines of the jail. The introduction of the pass system - where passes must be issued to move around the jail has added even further to the confinement and immobilisation of the women.

Organising classes or activities at Mulawa has always been a major problem. One of the most common reasons is the attitude of the screws which for the most part could be construed as outright sabotage. Educational programs, AA meetings and visits by the Leichhardt Women's Health Centre are all subject to the whim of screws. They now often deny the women an escort, yet the women have in the past walked the short distance there on their own.



Total obedience to the will of each and every screw is an essential prerequisite for any prisoner wanting to do any activity. Lack of communication is another common reason why programs never get off the ground. Whilst some prisoners are told about them, others are not and because groups of prisoners are isolated from each other by fences and pass systems. As a result, attendance at programs and activities is often low and this is then used as an excuse to terminate them. Video courses, legal rights courses, mechanics courses have at some time been available at Mulawa but they have always been abandoned even when they proved popular with the women because directly or indirectly they were sabotaged by the screws.

The control that Mulawa screws have over the women prisoners far exceeds that of the screws in the men's jails. The women feel they are far more downtrodden than the male crims and this is evident in many areas. The screws blame the increasing tension in Mulawa (it is higher than it has ever been) on the amount of drugs getting into the jail and this excuse seems to be readily accepted by the Department.

Drug use however can be seen as a red herring when other factors are taken into consideration e.g. increased security, fewer opportunities for communication between prisoners, lack of activities, little or no physical exercise, and lack of work opportunities.

The women previously worked at the