

Walla Walla brothers claim behavior model

The Walla Walla Brothers had figured they'd seen just about everything in anti-human treatment during their years of militant struggle at the Walla Walla State Prison in eastern Washington. But that was before the establishment of the "mental health unit" (MHU) there two years ago to make Walla Walla a laboratory for behavior modification experiments.

Examples: Prisoners in MHU are forced to wear baby diapers, crawl on the floor and drink liquids from a baby bottle for weeks on end. They are handcuffed and chained to their beds for long periods of time and must defecate and urinate on themselves. "Co-operative" prisoners are bribed and threatened into forming gung squads to terrorize and beat their fellow prisoners.

The idea of MHU is to destroy any speck of human dignity in the prisoners, so they will be susceptible to the carrot-and-stick technique of attacking their personalities according to official specifications. MHU works on the principle that all problems, including inability to adapt to prison life, are the result of personal choices, and that these problems are more faked than real. Social realities such as poverty, unemployment and racism are ignored.

The stakes in MHU are very high. The large number of suicides there, many of them under very suspicious

circumstances, show the authorities mean business in their determination to put the lid on the Walla Walla Brothers — the organized prisoners' movement within the walls — and to terrorize the general prison population.

The MHU is designed for prisoners who are considered adjustment problems, and this includes those who are politically active. The first stage is confinement in the hole, for up to 23 hours a day, with no recreational or educational opportunities. Release from the hole depends on the prisoner signing a contract which signifies complete submission to the authorities; the prisoner "voluntarily" agrees to cut his hair, change his thoughts, restrict his associations, the prisoners directed their affairs in a model democratic manner — sharing out their food and work equitably, keeping the army troops on the perimeter at bay and carrying out delicate negotiations with prison authorities.

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It's a truly Orwellian world in which the prisoner is never sure of the bounds of correct behavior or what will land him in the MHU. Affection between prisoners is suspect, as is ordering and receiving the "wrong" kind of literature and writing to newspaper or legislators about prison conditions. One man was punished because of his association with a radical in the county jail.

A class system is created in MHU in which those prisoners who cooperate are rewarded by being placed on



Prisoners at the infamous British Columbia Penitentiary shattered a few myths — as well as a great deal of masonry and steelwork — last Fall when they took over an entire 200-unit cell-block for five days. While the insurrection lasted, the prisoners directed their affairs in a model democratic manner — sharing out their food and work equitably, keeping the army troops on the perimeter at bay and carrying out delicate negotiations with prison authorities.

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committees that decide on work assignments, and make progress reports on and mete-out punishment to their fellow prisoners. The case of Donald Snook illustrates how this operates: on his second day in prison, Snook was assigned to MHU for observation. As soon as he got

there, he was assaulted by the resident attendants (the "good" prisoners) while the guards watched. He was handcuffed to a radiator during group-sessions at which he was ridiculed by other prisoners; he was housed with cold water, tied between two mattresses

The insurrection, which included a hostage-taking, ended peacefully with a negotiated settlement over grievances involving living and working conditions in the Pen. In the past two years, there have been eight hostage-takings and a six-day non-violent strike at the Pen to draw attention to conditions there, and the Federal Court of

Canada has ruled the Pen's solitary confinement unit to be so barbaric as to constitute cruel and unusual punishment. But so far, there have been few significant improvements made.

The prisoners' movement at the B.C. Pen is being monitored by the Bruce-Lucas-Wilson Defense Committee, Box 758, Station A, Vancouver, B.C.

with rope, chained to a bed for 16 days, isolated in a strip cell, injected with massive doses of tranquilizer and maced. Legal calls were denied and his outgoing mail never left the unit.

The angel of the MHU is William Hunter. He was fired last June after public

outrage over his brutality, but taken on later as a "consultant." He says, "The administration should call all the convicts out into the big yard and all the toughs should be executed, one a week, until nobody wants to be tough."

The MHU was established as a desperate attempt by the authorities to put the lid on the Walla Walla Brothers. In 1971, after a long and bitterly-fought work strike, the Brothers won the right to defacto self-government and other progressive demands.

The struggle intensified after the authorities reneged on the agreement. Two years ago, the prisoners seized the hospital and other facilities and took hostages, but the insurrection was crushed by force, the prisoners' governing committee liquidated and most of the militants placed in isolation or transferred. Since then, the Walla Walla Brothers have petitioned, filed suit, gone on hunger strikes and appealed to the public to keep the pressure on.

Their immediate demand at present is that the authorities be made to conform to judicial and legislative rulings on prison routines. An outside support network, building a letter-writing and petition campaign to state legislators and planning a demonstration in the state capital of Olympia, is being coordinated through Billy Bourgeois, c/o Morning Dove, P.O. Box 22222, Seattle, Washington 98122.

Fighting at the point of consumption

Italy's "self-reduction" movement is a novel and effective way for ordinary people victimized by inflation to fight back at the point of consumption.

According to a recent article in *Radicale*, the Italian labor movement has been organizing in factories, neighborhoods, and housing projects for the specific purpose of refusing to pay prices for essential services like transportation, electricity, and rent.

In Pinerolo, a small city outside the northern industrial center of Turin, Italian workers head for the bus on a Monday morning only to find that fares have been raised 30 per cent. Like workers anywhere, they complain as they buy their tickets and ride to their jobs in Turin, wondering what the raise will do to already tight budgets.

But unlike workers in most other places, the Pinerolo workers decide to organize

resistance. The next Monday some of them have set up a table outside the bus terminal under signs saying, "Refuse the Fare Increase." They've printed their own tickets, which they sell at the old price, and demand that the bus company accept them. The company refuses. The workers do not go to work. After several days, workers in nearby areas organize similar actions until the regional government is forced to suspend the increases and issue lower price guidelines.

This is just one example of the "self-reduction" movement in action. In Italy, as elsewhere, workers' fights for higher wages have often been negated by higher prices in the market place and in other services. The "self-reduction" movement is a way to organize against this robbery outside the workplace. Moreover, there are large segments of the population who do not have a

"workplace" but are oppressed by the inflated prices. Just the same, a prime example are housewives, and it is these women who are often the backbone of the "self-reduction" movement, sometimes engaging in political activity for the first time.

Some of the oldest self-reduction fights involve tenants organizing to refuse rent increases. In Magliana, a working-class district of Rome, two thousand families cut their rent payments in half for over two years on their own initiative.

Electricity Rates

But the most significant, and potentially far-reaching, self-reduction struggle has occurred over electricity rates. In an effort to resist rapid increases, Italian workers developed new forms of local organization, created links between neighborhood and factory committees, and presented con-

siderable problems for the bureaucratic unions and Communist Party.

In Italy, electricity is provided by ENEL, a state-run corporation mired in perpetual scandal. When ENEL raised household consumption rates several years ago, workers in Turin and Milan became aroused. Their local factory councils agreed to endorse a protest, an important step since it meant the local factory council and union apparatus would be available to help organize the effort.

"In most cases," Bruno Ramirez writes in *Radicale America*, "the mobilization involved setting up 'self-reduction committees' whose task was to collect workers' electricity bills and issue substitute bills, often bearing the stamp of the unions. Workers would then enter the new amount, usually cut by 50 per cent and pay the bill."

The movement spread throughout the country.

Tens of thousands of bills were "self-reduced" in every city. ENEL workers aided the fight when many refused to obey orders to disconnect service. Further solidarity was created by the alliance of neighborhood committees, who were mobilizing their areas and resisting bill collectors.

The local initiative and spontaneous nature of the movement soon brought a familiar response. According to Ramirez, "the CP leadership did not take long to condemn this practice, calling it 'divisive' and a 'provocation.'" Under CP direction, the trade unions gradually entered into negotiations with the government. Their official maneuvers steadily superseded the activity of the factory councils and neighborhood committees.

In spite of this turn around, the "self-reduction" movement promises to turn up again.