

Justice Matters

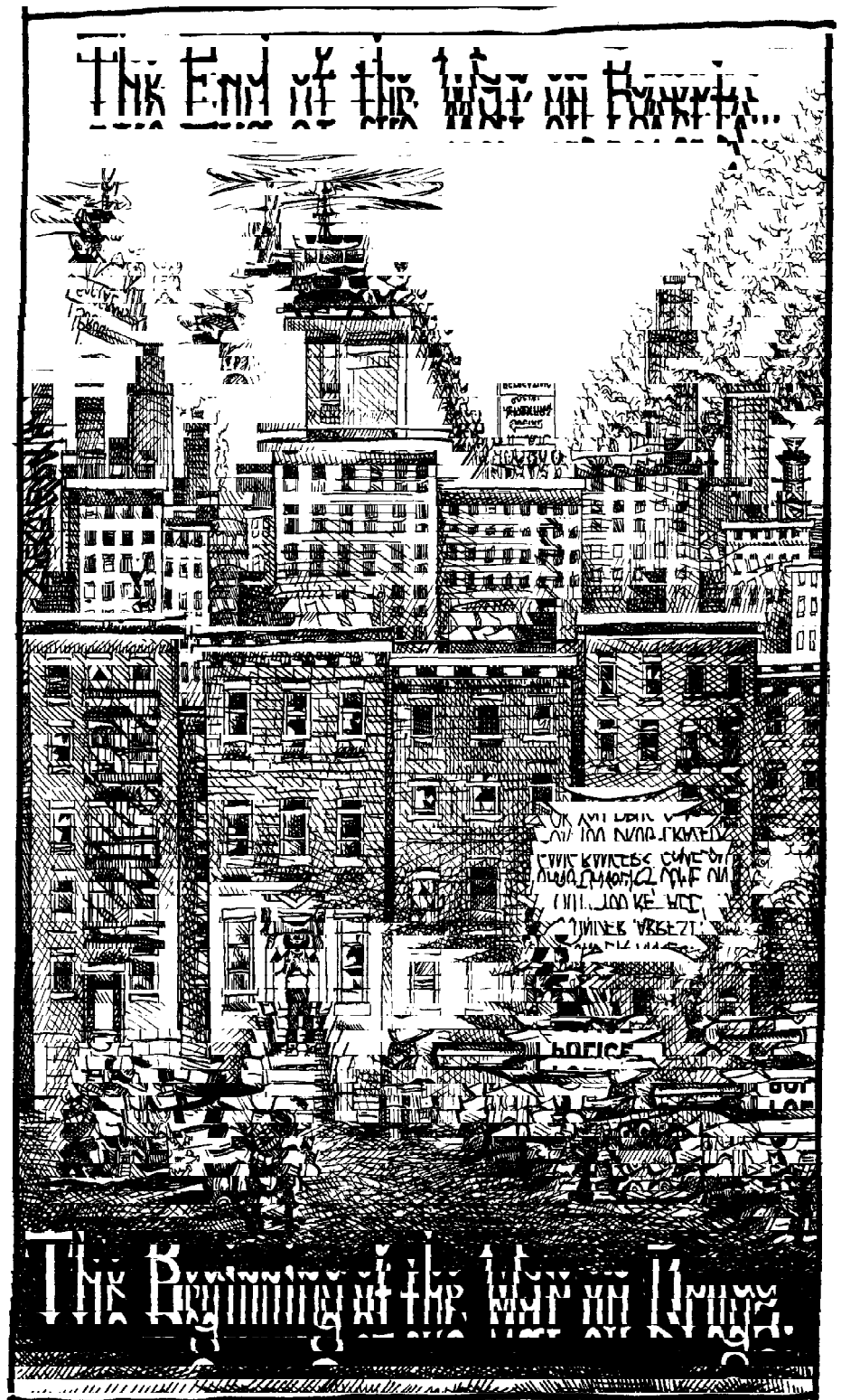
Newsletter of the Western Prison Project

Fall, 1999

Vol. 1, No. 1

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The Western Prison Project

THE WESTERN PRISON PROJECT

The Western Prison Project (WPP) exists to help coordinate a progressive response to the rapidly increasing prison-industrial complex, and to work toward progressive reforms in the criminal justice system in our region (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Nevada). As a non-profit organization, the WPP is committed to coordinating a three-part strategy of:

- Public education and advocacy that builds widespread support for reform of the criminal justice system;
- Community organizing campaigns to change specific injustices within the criminal justice system;
- Assistance in developing critically needed support services for prisoners and families of prisoners that are identified through our organizing work.

The Western Prison Project, as a regional resource for activism, will assist local, grassroots efforts to improve conditions for prisoners and confront injustice within the larger criminal justice system. For information about services available to prison activists, contact the WPP.

Why Prison Activism

Over the past two decades, the U.S. has been engaged in an unprecedented build-up of the prison industry. In collaboration with major corporations including defense industry contractors, investment houses, and multi-national communication companies, **America has built a prison-industrial complex that now incarcerates over 1.7 million people. The U.S. is**

second only to Russia in the number of people and proportion of its population that it locks up.

It wasn't always this way: from 1930 – 1980, the U.S. prison rate held steady at 110 per 100,000 U.S. residents. But from 1980 to 1990, the rate skyrocketed to 450 per 100,000 residents, and it continues to grow. A majority of this increase is a result of the disastrous "War on Drugs." **77% of people sentenced to prison today are non-violent offenders.**

In our region, one of the most sparsely populated in the country, we have over 40,000 prisoners incarcerated in state prisons. 35% of our prisoners are people of color – in a region where the total population of people of color is under 15%.

The U.S. criminal justice system is broken – locking up millions of Americans is not the answer. It's time to change the way we address issues of crime and justice, and start building a system that truly results in safer, healthier communities for all Americans.

Justice Matters is published quarterly by:

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Organizational affiliations listed for identification only, and are not intended as an endorsement of the Western Prison Project.

Brigette Sarabi, Director

Newsletter team: Brigette Sarabi, Jack, Scot Nakagawa, Jon Pollack and Sarah Stephens. Special thanks to Matt Wuerker for illustrations, and Scott Winn and Jessica Levy for articles.

The Western Prison Project is a project of the Western States Center, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Portland, OR.

Manuscript Submissions:

The WPP welcomes articles, artwork, and news briefs related to prison issues within our region. Each submission will be reviewed, but due to space constraints, no publication guarantee can be made. Writers and artists who wish their work returned must include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Topics for upcoming issues include: medical care for prisoners, youth prisons, prison labor.

Oregon's Crime Victims Measures: Big Wins, Big Losses

By Brigette Sarabi

In a vote by mail election that saw a low voter turnout of approximately 38%, Oregon voters gave mixed messages on a series of seven measures, all constitutional amendments, that were promoted under the guise of victims' rights. Voters approved four measures that vastly increase the power and advantage of prosecutors, and limit individual rights. At the same time, they voted down three measures that limit individual rights.

"I think the fact that the vote was split was encouraging," said Arwen Bird, a spokeswoman for the campaign against the measures. "Winning any of these measures is a victory." According to Jo Ann Bowman, State Representative for District 19, "Voters are beginning to see beyond the smokescreen put forward by proponents of these measures. I am so proud of the campaign that formed in opposition." Indeed, winning on any of the measures was no easy matter in a campaign where backers of the measure outspent the opposition by more than two to one. As of October 29th, reports list just nine individual contributors to the campaign. Not surprisingly, key contributors included Shiloh Inns owner Mark Hemstreet, and Loren Parks. On the other hand, the campaign against the measure attracted over 200 individual contributors, as well as the support of the ACLU. Following is a synopsis of the election results:

Measure 69—Approved. Enshrines in the state constitution crime victims' rights that are already Oregon law. The measure also gives prosecutors the right to decide who is a victim. In the final analysis, crime victims don't receive more rights since the measure is unenforceable: crime victims will not have the right to sue if they believe their rights were denied.

Measure 70—Defeated. This measure would have given prosecutors the right to demand a jury trial. This would have given a crucial right of the accused, the right to demand a jury trial, to prosecutors.

Measure 71—Approved. This measure limits the pretrial release of alleged violent felons. Prior to this election, Oregon's Bill of Rights guaranteed bail to anyone accused of a crime other than murder or treason. This is no longer the case.

Measure 72—Defeated. This measure would have allowed murder convictions by an 11-1 vote rather than the unanimous 12-0 verdict now required, and made it easier for prosecutors to obtain murder convictions.

Measure 73—Defeated. This measure would have undermined Oregon's Bill of Rights by limiting immunity and giving prosecutors the power to force people to testify against themselves and then the right to prosecute them.

Measure 74—Approved. This measure requires terms of imprisonment announced in court to be fully served. It takes away all power from jail and prison officials to determine when it is best to use work release, home detention and community service as alternatives to jail. Oregon already has mandatory minimum

sentences for a long list of crimes: this measure unreasonably prevents both corrections officials and the legislature from making adjustments in future criminal sentencing policies. It also will end up costing taxpayers millions for the added incarceration and prison costs.

Measure 75—Approved. Oregon law already prevented ex-felons from serving on juries for fifteen years. This Measure will prevent people convicted of a misdemeanor crime during the previous five years from serving on an Oregon jury. And this measure will require government background checks of everyone called for jury duty to make sure that people convicted of misdemeanors are eliminated from the jury pool.

Dr. Angela Browne to Speak
On the topic "Imprisoned
Survivors: The Nexus of Poverty,
Violence, & Incarceration for
Women"
Tuesday, November 30th, 1999 at
7:00 p.m.
Portland State University, Lincoln
Hall Auditorium
\$5—\$25 suggested donation,
students with ID are free, no one
turned away

Dr. Angela Browne is a Senior
Research Scientist at the Harvard
School of Public Health and the
author of When Battered Women
Kill.
Presented by Activists for Women in
Prison
For more information, call:
(503) 725-5672

State Report: Oregon

a Measure 11 crime, just as with any crime, is directly related to how good a defense one puts up in court. A good defense is often expensive. That means that if you can afford a good lawyer, you are less likely of being convicted and sentenced. The new law disproportionately affects those who are poor and who lack the financial resources to defend themselves effectively in court.

Efforts Underway to Repeal Measure 11

If you or someone you know is affected by Measure 11, or if you want to get involved in the effort to repeal this regressive law, there is something you can do! Two organizations have been created to help those affected by Measure 11, and to repeal the law and make way for more sensible measures to deal with crime.

The first group is PAC-UP, which stands for Parents Against Cruel and Unusual Punishment. PAC-UP started as a support group for people affected by the new law and their friends. It was founded by Cathi Lawler, whose son was a first time offender sentenced under the new law. The 3,500 members of PAC-UP are family members and friends of those currently serving Measure 11 sentences, and concerned citizens wanting to repeal the law. PAC-UP is concerned with 3 main issues: 1) juveniles in adult prison, 2) 1st time offenders being sentenced the same as repeat offenders, and 3) money being spent to build prisons instead of schools.

In addition, people who have friends or relatives who are serving mandatory minimum sentences can get support from others in similar situations. One

can learn how to negotiate the complex and often confusing prison and criminal justice system, and get emotional support.

Citizens to Reform Measure 11—2000 is a group involved in political activities to repeal Measure 11. They have filed an initiative, called Initiative #43, and are now collecting signatures to place the initiative on the November 2000 ballot. The 100 volunteers and paid petitioners have collected 30,000 signatures so far. 65,000 valid signatures are needed to

make the ballot. Because they need valid signatures, they have set a goal of getting 80-85,000 signatures on petitions to provide a margin of safety. The petition deadline is July 2000, but the group hopes to get petitions in by May 2000 to allow for the possibility of getting more signatures if necessary.

According to Cathi Lawler, one of the chief petitioners, Initiative #43 calls for the total repeal of Measure 11. Initiative #43 is supported by a wide array of groups throughout the state including Families Against Mandatory Minimums, Citizen's United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), and the Western Prison Project. One of the chief petitioners is Representative Jo Ann Bowman.

60% of those sentenced under Measure 11 are first time offenders, and 219 of 2,511 (as of May 31, 1999) are under the age of 18 and housed in an adult prison.

What You Can Do:

If you or someone you know has been affected by Measure 11, consider joining PAC-UP. This organization is a great support to people affected by Oregon's mandatory minimums law, and is a leader in the effort to educate the public about the true effects of Measure 11. Anyone can join PAC-UP by calling 503-491-0611. You'll get information about the monthly meetings of groups in Salem, Portland, Eugene, Grants Pass, Medford, and Pendleton, and may leave a message to speak with one of the PAC-UP volunteers.

Citizens to Reform Measure 11—2000 needs the support of all Oregonians who want to end "one size fits all" justice. Volunteers and donations are both needed. They can be reached by mail at P.O. Box 301236, Portland, 97294.

The INS gets a piece of the action in the favorite U.S. solution to crime

Photo courtesy of WAIRJ.



Community demonstration held in support of INS "lifers" in front of the Federal District Court in Seattle Wa.

By Jessica Levy

"I came to this country at the age of 17...from Laos as a refugee...For my crime, which was possession of stolen property, I served ten hours in jail plus fines and restitution. At present I am being detained for my crime...which was committed in 1990. At present I feel cheated concerning the policy of life, liberty and justice for all mankind. The Crime was committed, justice was served, and I am still being punished." - letter from an INS detainee at Yakima County Jail, WA

Congress's passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) and the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty act of 1996 (AEDPA) greatly expanded the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) ability to detain and deport immigrants. As a result of these laws a conviction for relatively minor crimes like perjury and certain gambling offenses could mean detention and deportation for non-citizens, including legal permanent residents with U.S. citizen spouses and children.

Many immigrants are taken into INS custody after they have completed their criminal sen-

tences, subjecting them to a form of double jeopardy. Asylum-seekers who have committed no crimes may also spend years behind bars while in asylum proceedings. Current diplomatic relations prevent the INS from deporting nationals of many countries, who, as a result, may become long term INS detainees. While recent court decisions and INS policy changes may offer more opportunities for release of long-term detainees, the INS also has plans to turn long term detainees over to facilities of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), further abdicating its responsibility for these detainees.

INS detention capacity has ballooned from 6,259 beds in 1992 to over 16,000 today, with a projected capacity of 24,000 by 2001. A daily detention report from INS Western Region dated 8/7/98 shows 4,752 people in INS/Border Patrol custody. Nationally over half of INS detainees are held in local jails or BOP facilities where INS standards for their care are not necessarily applied, thus the conditions for INS detainees vary widely. Detainees often have difficulty retaining the services of an attorney,

since public defenders do not provide representation in immigration proceedings. Once in custody, detainees are frequently transferred between facilities with little notice to families and attorneys and are held with individuals serving criminal sentences.

The INS does not have enough of its own facilities to meet the demands of mandatory detention. Local jails provide space for immigration detainees and are paid by the INS up to twice as much per day as the jails receive to incarcerate those serving criminal sentences. The INS also contracts with private companies to run detention centers. For example, Seattle's INS detention facility is run by the Correctional Services Corporation.

The 1996 immigration laws disproportionately affect people of color. Immigrants, especially immigrants of color, are increasingly barred from citizenship and subjected to detention and deportation under unfair laws. In addition, INS detention is splitting up families causing both citizens

and non-citizens emotional and financial hardship. INS detention issues fit squarely within broader concerns surrounding the drive to lock up, shut out and ship off people of color in the U.S. under the guise of solving social problems like drug use and violence. The human rights concerns surrounding immigration detention must be considered within the broader struggle for racial justice and within the context of incarceration policies and practices in the U.S.

Many immigrants are taken into INS custody after they have completed their criminal sentences, subjecting them to a form of double jeopardy.

Jessica Levy worked for a year as a Project Coordinator with the Washington Alliance for Immigrant and Refugee Justice focusing on raising public awareness around the issue of immigration detention. WAIRJ is a coalition of individuals and organizations working collaboratively to uphold the human and civil rights of immigrants and refugees in Washington state.

Oregon **Big Brother is Watching: Video Visiting Proposed for Oregon Prisons**

The Oregon Department of Corrections' embrace of new technology could result in a loss of all contact visits between prisoners and their families. Instead of sitting face to face with an incarcerated loved one, visitors to the new Two Rivers Correctional Facility being built in Umatilla will drive several hours only to sit in a room and talk into a video camera, while their loved one sits in another part of the prison and does the same. Children visiting an incarcerated parent will thus only know them as a figure on a television screen.

The proposal for televideo visiting in Oregon's prison is an outrage, and we urge everyone to send letters of protest. Numerous studies have shown that maintaining supportive family contact is a key to prisoners' success upon release.

A pilot project has been approved

for the new Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla and the women's facility at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution in Pendleton. The project would link visitors, via video, from one remote site somewhere in the Willamette Valley. In addition, at TRCI in Umatilla, all basic visits (usually conducted with a glass barrier between the prisoner and visitor) will be conducted by televideo. The design of the new prison does not include the standard visiting booths found in most institutions.

It is possible that televideo visiting could be extended in the future to all

prisons in Oregon.

Let's stop this now! Video visiting breaks down family support systems for prisoners. It punishes prisoners' children and loved ones by removing what little physical contact they have left. It is cruel and inhumane. In

addition, it takes away any modicum of privacy between prisoners and their loved ones by allowing for monitoring and taping of all visits. After Seventeen Years is a grassroots group fighting televideo visiting in Oregon. They are circulating petitions to present to the DOC,

and currently have over 1,800 signatures.



INS Facts

- INS pays King County, Washington a fee of \$4,951.60 per day, or \$1,807,334 per year, to rent a maximum of 64 beds at the Regional Justice Center in Kent WA.
- The Seattle District INS spent \$7,166,922.51 in detention costs in Fiscal Year 1998.
- Just under 30% of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) population consists of non-U.S. citizens (Bureau of Prisons Quick Facts). On 7/29/99 the Federal Detention Center in Seatac, Washington, held 181 INS detainees while the privately run INS facility held 178. Solicitation for vendors is underway for the construction of a new 500-bed INS detention center near Seattle.
- According to the INS, the number of detainees released (not deported) by the INS Seattle District between 1/1/98 – 9/10/99 was 700. The total number of detainees deported by the INS Seattle District during the same time was 10,295.

What's happening in your INS district?

Unless otherwise noted, the above information was compiled from INS responses to Freedom of Information Act requests.

What You Can Do!

If you can help with signature gathering, or want to find out more about video visiting, contact:

Anne Rose Pierce at (503) 232-1798, or email: arp@teleport.com.

We encourage you to write a personal letter of protest to the following:

- David Cook, Director, Oregon Department of Corrections, 2575 Center Street N.E., Salem, OR 97310
- Randy Geer (in charge of the televideo visiting planning process), Oregon Department of Corrections, 2575 Center Street N.E., Salem, OR 97310 or email: Robert.R.Geer@state.or.us

The Corporate Connection



Eleven Necessary Measures for Curbing the Corporate Crime Wave

This list was written by Robert Waldrop. He is the director of the Archbishop Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House in Oklahoma City. Waldrop's Catholic Worker House feeds the poor, takes in people who are being evicted and generally helps those in need. Having worked with the poor, Waldrop has come to the conclusion that in this country "you get all of the justice that you can afford to pay for." That's why the prisons aren't overrun with the executives and shareholders of our major corporate felons.

Waldrop has concluded that we should begin treating corporate criminals the way we treat street criminals. So, he drew up this list of "Necessary Measures for Curbing the Corporate Crime Wave." Waldrop wrote the list "tongue in cheek," but he has gotten such a rave response to it that he believes that it might be the basis for a political movement to curb corporate crime. After all, why should a corporate felon, its owners and managers, be allowed to influence our elections when an individual is stripped of his or her right to vote? It is time to start thinking about how to level the playing field.

1. The stockholders and management of corporations convicted of felonies should lose their right to vote and run for public office.

2. A registry should be maintained in each area of criminal corporations,

and any corporation convicted of a felony should be required to register with the local police. A notice should be sent to all of their neighbors that a criminal corporation is taking up residence in their locality.

Criminal corporations should not be allowed to operate within 500 yards of a school, church or library.

3. Criminal corporations should lose all corporate welfare benefits and government contracts.

4. Criminal corporations should be required to make weekly visits to parole officers, and their stockholders and

management should be subject to random drug tests (either urine or hair).

5. Criminal corporations should not be allowed to operate within 500 yards of a school, church or library.

6. Criminal corporations should be required to place the phrase "A criminal corporation" on all advertising, signs and vehicles as a public warning.

7. If criminal corporations violate the terms of their parole, their stockholders and officers should go to jail.

8. In addition to the fine on the corporation, the personal assets of stockholders should be forfeited for their criminal negligence and lack of oversight.

9. The increasing number of lawless corporations calls for stricter penalties. Bring back the death penalty for corporations. In this context, the 'death penalty' is the closure of the corporation, the forfeiture of its assets

to its victims and/or the government and the winding up of its affairs by a court appointed receiver.

10. Stockholders and management should be required to wear monitoring bracelets for the duration of their parole, and may not travel outside of their jurisdiction without a written pass from their parole officer.

11. The stockholders and management of criminal corporations may not associate with the stockholders and management of other corporate felons, and are forbidden to keep and bear arms.

Show Us the Money: Corporations Benefit from the Prison Build-up

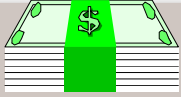
"Timber companies need trees; steel companies need iron. Prison companies use people as their raw material."

Eric Lotke, Multinational Monitor, November, 1996

- Defense industry giants like Westinghouse now market products intended for the military to corrections departments throughout the U.S. Products include "night enforcer" goggles, and "hot wire" fencing (advertised as the same as that used by NATO forces).

- Giant Wall Street firms like Goldman Sachs, Smith Barney Shearson and Merrill Lynch compete to underwrite prison construction with enormous bond issues. Prison construction budgets for the U.S. are close to \$7 billion per year.

- Communications giants like AT&T, MCI and Sprint make a killing running prison phone systems, charging rates up to six times free world rates.



The Corporate Connection

- Private prison medical services are now a \$3 billion industry, with most of that market cornered by Correctional Medical Services (CMS). CMS currently runs the medical program in Nevada's Ely prison, and is the same company that made the pages of the Journal of the American Medical Association for medical neglect after taking a 40 year old woman inmate in Nevada off insulin, which caused her death.
- Many private corporations use prison labor to produce their products. In Washington state, the following companies all use prison labor: Eddie Bauer, Starbucks, Microsoft, JanSport, US West, Costco, Redwood Outdoors and Elliott Bay Metal Fabrication. Private companies do not have to pay health benefits, vacation, workers compensation insurance or other benefits. Prisoners have no right to organize or to strike. While the companies pay minimum wage, prisoners receive only about 20% of that sum, resulting in an hourly wage of about \$1.00. Sources: Multinational Monitor, Prison Legal News



Stop the Telephone Tax to Prisoners' Families!

“Communication with ones family is a human right; it should not be restricted by the artificial gradations of a prison system.”
Nelson Mandela

Families of prisoners throughout the U.S. are singled out to pay the highest phone rates in the country.

The only type of call allowed in most state prisons is the collect call and phone companies charge prisoners an even higher rate than normal for this already expensive type of call. Monthly phone bills of \$300 to \$700 are not uncommon, and yet these calls are critical to maintaining a lifeline to prisoners. Why such exorbitant rates? As the old joke about Ma Bell had it: “We don't care. We don't have to.” The fact is that phone companies like AT&T, MCI and Sprint compete for contracts with individual state corrections departments. One of the most attractive offers they can make to states is a kick-back from profits on the prison phone systems. In Michigan this year, the state's share of these profits is estimated at \$16 million. Many states dump this money back into the general fund, or use it for additional prison construction.

Every call from prison has an automatic surcharge (or connect fee) of \$1.50 to \$3.00 or more. In addition to the surcharge, rates per minute are the highest in the country.

National CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants) is launching the Equitable Telephone Campaign (ETC), to demand an end to exorbitant surcharges and the introduction of prisoner phone debit cards (which would give prisoners an alternative to the high cost of calling collect.). The use of debit cards is already used within the Federal Prison System, and has been proven to be absolutely no additional security risk.

CURE is organizing in states throughout the country, and planning to begin the campaign in January and run it through August. Based on a pilot program developed by CURE and the American Friends Service Committee in Michigan last year, this campaign calls for monthly actions

such as letter writing campaigns and informational mailings to legislators, the media, and major phone company consumers. It builds up to a month-long boycott in August when prisoners' families are asked not to accept non-essential calls from their loved ones in prison. While CURE recognizes what a hardship the boycott is, in the long run it could end up saving prisoners' families millions of dollars. In Michigan, as a result of the campaign, there is now legislation pending to roll-back the surcharge and introduce debit cards.

What You Can Do !

This campaign needs the support of prisoners and prisoners' families. Prisoners can help by contacting CURE and letting them know who is on your phone list, so that CURE can send them information about the campaign. Families are encouraged to contact CURE directly. United, we can win on this one. The Western Prison Project is proud to be a co-sponsor of this campaign, and we urge prisoners and prisoners' families throughout our region to contact CURE and get involved.

Equitable Telephone Campaign
c/o Michigan CURE
P.O. Box 2736
Kalamazoo, MI 49003



Prison Activism Now

Throughout our region, there is a growing movement of grassroots prison activism. Each issue of Justice Matters will highlight some of the groups working on these issues. All of these groups depend on volunteers and community support. Get involved! If you read about a group that interests you, call or write them and see how you can help.

AWIP - Activists for Women in Prison

Activists for Women in Prison (AWIP) grew out of a class at Portland State University in May, 1999, titled "Women In Prison and on Probation and Parole". The class was taught by the organization Voices Set Free as part of its series called "Violence Against Women and Children".

AWIP brought people together in informal meetings on campus to discuss ways to help imprisoned women and their children. Projects are now being developed that can make a difference in the lives of women behind bars and women who have gone through the justice system as offenders. AWIP's first priority is to conduct a survey of women incarcerated in Oregon to determine their needs. AWIP plans to reach out to the faith community and encourage participation in helping women ex-offenders with housing and employment. AWIP would also like to develop a program to assist children in visiting their incarcerated mothers.

AWIP meets the first Wednesday of every month from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. in Room 229 of the Smith Memorial Center at Portland State University. The meetings are open to the public and new people are welcome!

Activists for Women in Prison
P.O. Box 1733
Portland, OR 97207-1733
(503) 402-8614

Oregon CURE - Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants.

Oregon CURE was formed in 1991 as an advocacy organization working for effective criminal justice policies, procedures and programs. CURE's primary goal is to reduce crime – since the majority of prisoners will someday return to society, CURE supports programs and treatment that enable prisoners to lead lives free from crime once they are released.

Oregon CURE is actively involved in advocating for improved administrative rules and guidelines within the Department of Corrections, and its work has resulted in the creation of the Visitors Handbook. CURE hosts an annual community meeting, and publishes a newsletter for members which provides information on current issues in criminal justice reform.

CURE also publishes many self-help pamphlets for inmates and their loved ones, including: "Getting Through the Oregon Parole Process," "Health Care While in Prison," "Thoughts on Getting Out," and "Keeping Love Alive (While You're Away)." Oregon CURE also has listings of transition services for ex-offenders in each county in Oregon. These publications are available free of charge.

To become a member, order publications, or find out more contact::

Oregon CURE
P.O. Box 4712
Salem, OR 97302
(503) 287-9258

S.A.F.E.S. – Survivors Advocating for an Effective System

The goal of S.A.F.E.S is to focus the criminal justice debate on policies that work instead of political posturing that diverts us from the real issue: reducing crime. S.A.F.E.S. was formed by survivors of crime who are concerned that the criminal justice system is heading in the wrong direction. In S.A.F.E.S.' view, the current system is more about vengeance and retribution than victims' rights and restitution.

Members of S.A.F.E.S. have been leaders in the opposition to Measures 69-75 on the Oregon Ballot this November. S.A.F.E.S.' perspective on the measures is that they are an effort to gut Oregon's Bill of Rights and will do little or nothing to reduce crime.

S.A.F.E.S. is a new organization that seeks to build a strong membership of crime survivors that can speak with a strong voice to advocate for services that will produce an effective criminal justice system. S.A.F.E.S is looking for crime survivors who share its commitment to a justice system based on prevention, rehabilitation and restitution. S.A.F.E.S. invites people to get involved and share their stories with the media, legislators and voters, with the goal of shaping policy at the legislative level.

To become a member or find out more, contact::

S.A.F.E.S.
P.O. Box 42133
Portland, OR 97242
(503) 274-2139
safes_society@hotmail.com

Prison Activism Now

Washington Prison Project

The Washington Prison Project, formerly Seattle Critical Resistance, was formed by Seattle area activists after several people attended the conference Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex, in September of 1998. The Washington Prison Project is working to abolish the U.S. prison system as we currently know it: a system where prison officials are no longer discussing rehabilitation; punishment is the rule.

Currently almost 14,000 people are in prison in Washington State (*Editor's note: 44% of prisoners in Washington prisons are people of color; this is one of the highest percentages in the region*). The Washington prison system is so full that 150 prisoners have been shipped to Colorado in the past year. Next year, a new 2,000 bed prison will open in Aberdeen, and it is expected to fill up quickly.

In the fall of 1998, the King County (Seattle) budget called for an increase of \$25 million for criminal justice, including a new wing at the Kent jail. At the same time it cut county-provided basic human services by \$2 million.

The Washington Prison Project has testified at the King County budget hearings, linking the increase in the criminal justice budget with the decrease in funding for social services. It has held community actions against Starbucks and Eddie Bauer for their exploitation of prison labor. It has made numerous community presentations, and is currently working to set up prison visitations in Washington state prisons for community members. Washington Prison Project is also raising funds for Washington state political prisoner Mark Cook (a member of the George Jackson

Brigade) to help support him as he returns to the community after 23 years of imprisonment.

To get involved with the Washington Prison Project, call (206) 324-8165, or email: bf985@scn.org.

CURE Western Leaders Conference Brings Regional Activists Together

On October 24th and 25th, national CURE and Idaho CURE held their Western Leaders Conference in Boise, Idaho. CURE activists from Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Nevada and Colorado attended, as well as representatives from the Idaho ACLU and the Western Prison Project, to talk about strategies for criminal justice reform and the CURE national phone campaign (See related article in this issue).

The conference began with a presentation by Jack Van Valkenberg, Executive Director of Idaho ACLU, on prison issues in Idaho. National ACLU has been engaged for the past several years in a court case against the Idaho Department of Corrections for the DOC's practice of denying inmates access to legal materials (the Idaho Department of Corrections closed all prison law libraries a couple of years ago).

In addition, the Idaho ACLU receives daily mail from Idaho inmates protesting the lack of adequate medical treatment in the prisons. One Idaho activist suggested a clear pattern

of medical neglect toward prisoners needing surgery and other major treatment when those prisoners are scheduled to be released within a year. While this may save the DOC money in the short term, it results in unnecessary pain and suffering on the part of prisoners who have no recourse to private medical treatment.

The main focus of the Western Leaders Conference was to plan for regional involvement in CURE's national Campaign to Promote Equitable Prison Telephone Policies –

also known as the ETC campaign. In addition, Charlie Sullivan, Executive Director of National CURE, gave an in-depth presentation on recent developments in the U.S. Congress. "Every year since the crime bill was passed, the U.S. has given half a billion dollars for prison

construction to states who have passed "Truth in Sentencing" legislation," said Sullivan. "This is the central issue – we've got to stop building prisons and put some of this money into drug treatment and other effective alternatives to incarceration."

Idaho CURE
P.O. Box 596
Boise, ID 83701.

"...we've got to stop building prisons and put some of this money into drug treatment and other effective alternatives to incarceration."

REGIONAL NEWS

Regional News Briefs

IIdaho: Attorney General's Office Breaks Attorney-Client Privilege

In September, U.S. Magistrate Larry Boyle ruled against the Idaho Attorney General's office, and sanctioned Deputy Attorney General Stephanie Altig and her supervisor, Tim McNeese for violating professional ethics. Over a period of eight months in 1997, Altig received more than a dozen documents written to inmates by ACLU lawyer Stephen Pevar, who has a lawsuit against the Idaho DOC. Altig told a Corrections Department employee to copy letters from Pevar that inmates filed in their law library. According to Boyle, the actions of the Attorney General's staff "...manifests an attitude of complete disregard for the judicial process." Idaho Attorney General Al Lance is reportedly considering an appeal of the ruling to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Washington: See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil

The inmate co-founders of Prison Legal News, Paul Wright and Dan Pens, in conjunction with the Seattle Weekly, have filed a lawsuit against the Washington Department of Corrections for violating their constitutional rights when the DOC banned the May edition of Prison Legal News. The issue included an article by Jennifer Vogel that contended that the Corrections Department tolerates racism. The DOC said that the article contained some accurate information and some inaccurate information, and that the issue was banned from Washington prisons because of its potential to

incite violence. Vogel disagreed that her article contained any inaccuracies, noting that all information was a matter of public record. The story was based on a 390-page Washington State Patrol report and a lawsuit filed against the state by several African American guards. The story documented white guards at several Washington prisons bragging of membership in racist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, as well as allegations that the state has done little to stop harassment of black African Americans.

Montana: First Private Prison Opens

Montana's first private prison, The Crossroads Correctional Center, has opened in Shelby. The prison is operated by Corrections Corporation of America, the country's largest private prison operator. CCA, which saw its stock rise steadily through the mid-90s, has come under increasing attack around the country for unsafe and abusive conditions within several of its prisons. The 1997 Montana Legislature approved the private prison to ease overcrowding at the state prison in Deer Lodge. But now it seems there aren't enough prisoners to go around, and the new prison, along with three new regional Department of Corrections facilities, will not be filled in the near future. Still, the state has a contract to house 250 prisoners at the 512-bed Shelby prison, and Senator B.F. Christiaens (D-Great Falls) has said that the state overbuilt and predicts that the private prison will cost taxpayers money. That's because those beds must be filled before the state fills the 440 beds among the regional prisons in

Glendive, Great Falls and Missoula. Because the regional facilities were bonded and approved by counties, taxpayers will have to pay for any losses caused by low prisoner populations. CCA spokesmen and the Montana Department of Corrections do not seem concerned about the shortage of prisoners, and anticipate a rise in Montana's prison population. The Montana paper, The Missoulian, reports that Senator Christiaens said sarcastically that the state's attitude is: "You build them, you will fill them." The new prison in Shelby will employ 175 people in a depressed agricultural community. Corrections Corporation of America stands to make \$4 million the first year the prison is open.

Utah: Plans for Private Prison Put on Hold

A downturn in the rate of Utah's inmate growth has stalled Utah's prison privatization plans and left Cornell Corrections, the Houston-based company selected to build the state's first private prison, on hold. While the state and Cornell Corrections agreed four months ago on a written proposal to build a 500-bed private prison in Tooele County, the state has not delivered a contract and there are no immediate plans to negotiate one. These contractual delays give opponents another window of opportunity to reverse poor decision-making. However, Governor Mike Leavitt and Utah lawmakers remain overwhelmingly behind the concept of prison privatization. Officials in Tooele County continue to assure residents the prison is coming someday, along with 150 jobs and a boost to property tax coffers.

Regional News

Oregon: Life for a Life Campaign Launched to Abolish the Death Penalty

The Life for a Life Campaign has been launched in Oregon to abolish the death penalty in 2000. The campaign, supported by the Oregon Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and former senator Mark Hatfield, is proposing a constitutional amendment to abolish the death penalty and replace it with mandatory life imprisonment without parole. The ballot title is currently being reviewed. Upon its acceptance later this fall, the campaign will launch a petition drive to gather enough signatures to place a measure on the November, 2000 ballot.

Under current Oregon law, a jury determines whether someone convicted of aggravated murder is punished by death, life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, or life imprisonment with the possibility of parole after 30 years. Under the proposed measure, those convicted of aggravated murder must be sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of release or parole, and the death penalty would be abolished. In addition, those convicted of aggravated murder would be required to work in the prison work program, and all earnings from that work must be paid to the state of Oregon to cover part of the cost of incarceration, or to the victim's family.

At this time, it looks like Oregon may be the only state in the country launching a campaign to abolish the death penalty. The campaign is putting together a statewide education program and implementing a speakers bureau. It is also organizing within

congregations and recruiting a contact for each congregation who will help with fundraising and signature gathering.

What You Can Do!

Call 249-1556 to sign-up to work on the campaign.
Make a contribution to the Life for a Life Act, P.O. Box 14262, Portland, OR 97293

Death Penalty Quick Facts

Total Executions in the U.S., 1930—1996: 4,217
African Americans as percent of total executed, 1930—1996: 52%
Prisoners Under Sentence of Death as of 4/99:
U.S. total = 3,565
(42.5% African American)
Idaho = 22
Montana = 6
Nevada = 86
Oregon = 26
Utah = 11
Washington = 17
Wyoming = 2

Get Involved!



The Fire Inside: Prison-Based Activism

Each issue of Justice Matters will focus on one or more organizations working within the prisons of our region to improve conditions for prisoners. In this issue, we focus on the Chicano Culture Club, which is based in the Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem, Oregon.

Oregon Chicano Culture Club

The Chicano Culture Club was founded in 1970 at the Oregon State Penitentiary. The Club emphasizes cultural identity among Spanish speaking prisoners, assists non-English speaking inmates in becoming acclimated to the prison environment, and provides support and information to all Chicano inmates. The Club currently has an agenda to reduce recidivism, discrimination, and criminal activity through Hispanic inmate advocacy and community outreach programs.

The Chicano Culture Club has a highly acclaimed youth intervention program called Los Hermanos, which was recently featured on national

television (PBS). The Los Hermanos program enrolls 30 youth at a time for a ten-session program. During the program, youths come face to face with men who live daily with the consequences of making choices which resulted in their incarceration. Issues addressed include gang involvement, drug and alcohol abuse, and criminal activity. Members of the Club do their best to give youths the benefit of their experiences so that they may be better equipped to make responsible choices. Community sponsors assist the youths in understanding and assimilating the information they receive. The Los Hermanos program has proven to be an effective program for reducing the threat of criminal and gang involvement among youths who participate.

A major issue for the Club right now is an effort to reform the Oregon Department of Corrections' use of culturally insensitive psychological evaluations. Parole release dates, particularly for minority prisoners, are being postponed based on results of

standardized psychological evaluations. National studies have clearly demonstrated that standardized psychological tests can not be used on minority prisoners, because the design is culturally biased and results in misdiagnosis.

The Chicano Culture Club can be contacted at:

Activities Section – Chicano Culture Club
Oregon State Penitentiary
2605 State Street
Salem, OR 97310-0505

- Hispanics are one of the largest groups of prisoners in our region.
- There are over 5,500 Hispanic prisoners in the region, including a thousand or more in the states of Nevada, Oregon and Washington.
- Overall, Hispanics make up 13% of our prison population, while they are only 6.5% of the population. Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau

Thank you from the Western Prison Project

The Western Prison Project thanks the following for all their help:

The Angelica Foundation, staff and board of the Western States Center, Bryan Potter Design, Chip Shields and Better People, Activists for Women in Prison, Jessica Levy and the Washington Alliance for Immigrant and Refugee Justice, Marcy Westerling and all the activists of the Rural Organizing Project, Jack, Thalia Zepatos, Sarah Stephens, Matt Wuerker, Owen Wuerker, Sandy Polishuk, K. Rennee DeLapp, Scot Nakagawa, Jon Pollack, Kathleen Pequeno, Sandi Meyer, Dana Anderson, Bree Carlson and the

Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, Pat Hines and Nevada CURE, Debby Detering and Idaho CURE, Scott Winn and the Washington Prison Project, Dorothy and Dana Ackerman, Suzanne Pharr, Jo Ann Bowman, John Castro and members of the Chicano Culture Club, Gina, Maddy, Deb Ross, Kay Sohl, Sue Rhodes, Anne Rose-Pierce, Prison Activist Resource Center, Glenn Harris, Missy Stewart, Arwen Bird & S.A.F.E.S., Portland Free Mumia Coalition, Pac-Up, Cliff Jones, Ken Margolis, Nancy Harris-Campbell, Nancy Becker, Tina and Laird, Coyote Days and Virginia Lindley.



Community Resources

Better People Holds 2nd Graduation Ceremony

There is a new resource for former offenders seeking good jobs. Formed by Chip Shields in 1998 in Portland, Oregon, Better People is an employment and counseling program solely dedicated to helping former offenders find, keep and excel in good paying jobs with fair, decent employers. Better People only accepts job orders from companies that pay a minimum of \$8 per hour plus health benefits. Their counseling approach has helped thousands of former offenders across the country. The Better People Alumni Club supports participants down the road, and Better People staff stay in the picture after job placement to make sure participants excel in their new jobs and are treated fairly.

On September 30th, Better People graduated its second class in a standing room only ceremony at Lutheran Inner City Ministries, in Portland. Contact: Better People, 4839 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. #9, Portland, OR 97211. Phone: (503) 281-2663.



Join the Western Prison Project

Join the fight for justice in our region by becoming a member of the Western Prison Project. Members will receive Justice Matters, our quarterly newsletter, as well as periodic action alerts.

Yes, I want to be a member of the Western Prison Project!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

\$15 basic membership \$7 prisoner membership (can be paid in stamps)
(Memberships are not tax-deductible at this time.)

I'd like to make a donation of \$_____ to the Western Prison Project. (Donations of \$100 or more are eligible for a tax-deduction as a charitable gift. Please make checks payable to WSC/Western Prison Project).

The Western Prison Project depends upon memberships and donations to operate. Thank you for your support! Send memberships and contributions to: Western Prison Project, P.O. Box 40085, Portland, OR 97240-0085.

Justice Matters **Take Action: Five Things You Can Do**

1. **Fight mandatory minimums by getting involved in Oregon's Measure 11 repeal effort (see page 4)**
2. **Maintain real visits between prisoners and families: protest televideo visiting (see page 7)**
3. **Support the national effort to end telephone price gouging in the prison systems (see page 9)**
4. **Become a volunteer prison activist (see page 10)**
5. **Get informed!**

Recent Books:

Criminal Injustice: Confronting the Prison Crisis, edited by Elihu Rosenblatt, South End Press, 1996
Lockdown America: Police & Prisons in the Age of Crisis, by Christian Parenti, Verso, 1999

Selected Internet Sites of Interest:

Amnesty International – Rights for All U.S. Campaign: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/rightsforall/police/index.html>

Prison Activist Resource Center: <http://www.prisonactivist.org>

Families Against Mandatory Minimums: <http://www.famm.org>

Justice Policy Institute: <http://www.cjci.org/jpi/>

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