Walkin' Steel

A NEWSLETTER DEVOTED TO THE ABOLITION OF CONTROL UNIT PRISONS
PUBLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN

Fall 1992 Vol. 2 No. 1

CEML GOES ON TOUR

This fall members of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown are hitting the road. Since 1985, CEML has sponsored fall programs in Chicago, focusing on various aspects of prisons and repression. The turnout has always been impressive, and we are pleased that so many people have come from around the country to attend. This year we decided to return the favor and reach out to those people who have traveled to Chicago in the past, and to people who wouldn't normally travel to Chicago.

With the help of our friends around the country, we have set up programs in many cities where we can talk about our work and the many struggles that are going on around other control unit prisons. It is our hope that discussions that take place during these trips will lead to a year-long strategy that will culminate in October, 1993, the tenth anniversary of the lockdown. In addition to shaping this year-long strategy, CEML intends to circulate petitions that call for the abolition of all control unit prisons.

By providing information to people who want to learn more about control unit prisons, we hope that many new people will join the fight against this growing cancer. We encourage any interested groups or individuals to contact us to set up a program or hook into an existing one. We look forward to strengthening the national network of groups fighting against control unit prisons that was set up at our last fall program.

CEML is planning several activities for the spring. We want to produce a broadside newspaper which explains our opposition to control unit prisons, distribute thousands of them to people on the streets of Chicago, and make it available to our friends around the country for mass distribution. We also hope to collect thousands of signatures on our petitions as we engage people in discussions. As usual, we will continue to provide educational forums about Marion, Florence, Westville, and other control unit prisons.

We want next fall, the 10th anniversary of the Marion lockdown, to be a special time for protest and resistance. Throughout the year we want to build toward an event that will commemorate this crime. We will look back on the last 10 years, analyze where we are at today, and discuss ways to build our resistance to the horror of control unit prisons. Many well-known speakers have been contacted for this event, and we will let you know more as more information becomes available. In addition, the 10th anniversary will mark the culmination of the national petition drive, and we will present the petitions to the powers that be in Washington.

We are still formulating the details of our plans. They will be consolidated as we speak to people in the course of our travels. The next issue of *Walkin' Steel* will contain more definite information. But one thing we know for sure, we will continue the fight. WE'RE NOT QUITTING UNTIL ALL CONTROL UNITS ARE ABOLISHED!

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PRISONERS AND SUPPORTERS RESIST BRUTALITY AT WESTVILLE MCC

In the spring 1992 issue of Walkin' Steel, we included an article about the conditions at the Westville Maximum Control Complex in Indiana and the prisoners' hunger strikes. Since then, a lot of pressure has been put on the Indiana Department of Correction to end the brutality, but the abuse continues and so does the outrage.

The Marion model — total physical and psychological control — has erupted and blistered into control units throughout the country. In May of 1991, what was quickly to become one of the worst control units in the country, the Maximum Control Complex in Westville, Indiana, opened and began a systematic strategy devoted to destroying those housed within its walls. But the twelve million dollar warehouse failed to sate the sadistic thirst of the Indiana Department of Corrections, which quickly instituted plans for a second control unit, twice the size of the MCC, in Sullivan County in southern Indiana. Strong, outspoken leaders from Indiana prisons such as Pendleton, Michigan City, and Westville were selected for transfer to the MCC. In the traditional spirit of the U.S. prison system, 85% of the prisoners at the MCC are Black.

Prisoners are caged in 8 by 10 foot closed door cells for 23 hours per day. Temperatures have been recorded at just above 50 degrees. Prisoners are often placed on "strip cell status" for weeks or months at a time — clad solely in boxer shorts, with bedding removed. Prisoners are firehosed in their cells with cold water while naked and shackled. The cells are not mopped.

Protesters at July 11th demonstration demanding that MCC Westville be shut down

Cell extractions - assaults by a group of guards on a prisoner in his cell- are frequent and violent. Prisoners report the rampant use of steel-tipped "rib-spreaders" and mace. Prisoners are strapped face down and naked to their concrete beds with five-way restraints for days at a time. Any time a prisoner leaves his cell, he is shackled hands, feet, and waist. The prisoner is held on a "dog chain" and is flanked by a minimum of three guards.

TVs and radios are forbidden, and pens are restricted. All of a prisoner's personal belongings (including legal materials) must fit in an 8 1/2 by 11 inch box or be forfeited. Nothing may be hung on the cell walls. There are no clocks or watches allowed, and guards are instructed to ignore a prisoner's request for the time. Books of any kind are forbidden, and only "mainstream" newspapers are allowed and may only be kept for twenty-four hours.

There are no educational programs whatsoever. Exercise at the MCC consists of a prisoner alone with a tennis ball in an enclosed area without tennis shoes. When a prisoner is transferred into the MCC, he is not allowed to have any visitors for ninety days. All later visits, including attorney visits, take place by phone in a tiny booth divided by glass, with the prisoner fully shackled. After these non-contact visits, prisoners are subject to a genital search.

Pre-arranged, pre-approved visits by both family, friends, and lawyers are frequently refused after the visitor has traveled (often at great expense) to the prison. Recently, after a two hour delay while prison officials attempted to deny a pre-approved visit by a prisoner's father, the father suffered a heart attack when his son was finally brought out, and he saw his son's deteriorated physical condition and observed his abusive treatment by MCC guards.

In response to these horrific conditions, the prisoners at Westville's MCC embarked on two of the longest and most courageous hunger strikes in U.S. prison history, the second of which lasted some fifty days. As the prisoners struggled on, public attention focused on reports coming out of the MCC and outcry mounted. Folks from Indiana and Illinois determined that the MCC should be shut down and committed to work toward that end.

A letter writing campaign resulted in a flood of letters to the Attorney General of Indiana, Linley Pearson, the then Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Correction, James Aiken, and the Deputy Commissioner, John Nunn, calling for an investigation into MCC practices. Amnesty International wrote a letter of inquiry and condemnation to the Indiana Department of Correction, citing extensive violations of the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. This marked the first time in history that Amnesty had protested a state prison. Activist groups and lawyers held several spirited press conferences challenging both the media and the local community to investigate and denounce the reign of terror at the MCC.

Protesters in Valparaiso, Indiana demonstrate against the control unit in nearby Westville, Indiana.

Finally, on July 11th, CEML co-sponsored an exhilirating demonstration to protest the barbarous conditions at the MCC. Over a hundred protesters from all over Indiana and Chicago joined forces to demand that the MCC be shut down. The demonstration began in Valparaiso, a small college town in northern Indiana, located just ten minutes from the MCC. The demonstrators immediately took the street and marched around the town square with huge colorful banners, chanting, "Fight Racism, Smash the MCC" and "Stop the Genocide in Indiana." An inspiring rally at the Valpo courthouse featured rousing speeches by members of the African National Prison Organization, CEML, the Indiana Human Rights Coalition, the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War, and the Chicago Co-Conspirators. Student activists from Valparaiso University joined us and spoke of the need for the local community to raise its voice in opposition to the torture ten miles away. Placards read, "Valpo Refuses to be Simi Valley." Following the rally, we piled back in our cars and drove the short distance to the prison.

Parking at the beginning of the mile long road to the gates of the prison, we assembled and began our trek to the MCC. As we marched, the police did their thing. Prison cops were joined by town police in an abject show of force. Rifles glinted in the distance as the Hoosier military was deployed to the adjacent fields. As we approached the gates of Westville, police cars nearly collided trying to block our entrance, but we successfully maneuvered into the drive. The crowd was militant, screaming, "Stop the Genocide" and "Shut It Down!" We were informed that the entire population of MCC had refused food that day. Statements of MCC prisoners were read as the protestors roared in solidarity.

We crossed the street for the conclusion of the rally. Family members of MCC prisoners joined us with rousing words of courage and undaunted devotion. Just before the rally ended, cops grabbed a protestor (a family member of a prisoner). Demonstrators fought back fast and hard, unarrested her, and formed a human tunnel back to her car. We marched back in the blazing sun to the rhythm of our hearts beating.

One week after the demonstration, amidst widespread media reports of abusive conditions at the MCC, James Aiken, Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Correction, resigned.

The day of the demonstration, July 11th, Westville Correctional Center, a lower security prison, and the prison at nearby Michigan City, Indiana were locked down. Michigan City remains on lockdown as of the time of this writing.

SUBSCRIBE TO PRISON LEGAL NEWS

One of the best prison newsletters in the country is Prison Legal News (PLN), edited by two prisoners from Washington state, Ed Mead and Paul Wright. PLN appears monthly, contains much legal news relevant to prisoners and a great deal of on target analysis of prison issues and issues beyond. Well worth its subscription price of $25 per year.

Write to: Prison Legal News, P.O. Box 1684, Lake Worth, FL 22460.

FLORENCE CONSTRUCTION MEETING
RESISTANCE IN COLORADO

On July 10th, 1992, 125 people gathered at the gates of the Florence Correctional Complex in Florence Colorado for **the first public protest of the building of this new federal control unit prison.** This successful rally was organized by the newly formed local group, the Pueblo Coalition Against Prison Repression. Speakers included Al Bear Ribs, a former prisoner in Colorado's control unit prison; Ann Roan, a public defender from Ft. Collins; Tomas Oso and Francisco Coca, members of Centro de Atzlán; Edelle Corrine from the Rocky Mountain Peace Center; Mitchell Kaufman, organizer for The Pueblo Coalition; representatives of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee; and spokespeople for the Walk Across America.

Demonstration outside Florence prison construction site on July 10th

Many of those at the rally were folks from the Walk Across America who stopped at the prison on their way to the Nevada Test Site on the land of the Shoshone Nation in protest of 500 years of genocide against the First People of this land. These walkers were from all over the US and Europe. Many committed to take the message of human rights abuses in US control unit prisons back to their home towns. According to the *Cañon City Daily Record*,

> Pol D'Huyvetter, co-founder of For Mother Earth's 'Walk Across America,' stated: 'The group hopes to draw attention not only to what it considers inhumane treatment of prisoners, but also protest the disproportionate number of blacks and American Indians in U.S. prisons, confinement of political prisoners, and 500 years of injustice toward Indians since Columbus' arrival on the continent.'

Groups or individuals are working against the Florence control unit in Denver, Greeley, Colorado Springs, Ft. Collins, Longmont, Alamosa, Pueblo, and Boulder. Currently, plans for resistance center on a statewide planning and strategy meeting called "Let's Get Together - Shut Down the Florence Control Unit" to be held Saturday, September 26th in Colorado Springs.

We know that this is a national struggle. Please let us know what you are doing in your area. We want and need to coordinate our efforts nationally and internationally. A Colorado bimonthly newsletter called "Shut Them Down" began in September. You can get it for the next year by sending $10.00 or what you can afford to Rocky Mountain Peace Center, PO Box 1156, Boulder, Colorado 80306-1156. If there is anything we can do to help in your work, please let us know. Together we will stop the abuse of isolation and inhumane treatment in control units. **We are exactly the people who can do it.** Let's get together!

Federal official videotapes demonstration against Florence construction.

ILLINOIS DEMONSTRATION TARGETS MARION AND TWO STATE PRISONS

On the morning of May 2 over 150 of us set out at 6am from Chicago in three buses, seven vans, and five cars. At Dwight prison for women, our first stop, we unfurled our banners and placards, cranked up our sound machines, and heard a message from Puerto Rican POW Alicia Rodriguez, imprisoned at Dwight, that was read by her mother, long-time independentista Josefina Rodriguez. We also heard a speech from Jana Schroeder who had come all the way from Dayton, Ohio to travel with us. Jana, who works for AFSC, delivered a wonderful talk about women in prison and finished with a passionate poem written by political prisoner Laura Whitehorn. We finished this rally with a riveting message from Wakirisana Ehehosi, from the Spear and Shield Collective.

Demonstraters march toward the gates of Marion Prison, last stop on 3 prison Illinois demo on May 2nd

Five hours later we arrived at the gates of Menard prison - and we do mean the gates, as we managed to stand just a few yards from the main entrance of the prison and a long line of guards. After a very loud and raucous demonstration we heard a message from Puerto Rican POW Luis Rosa, imprisoned at Menard. The message was read by his brother Felix Rosa, himself a former political prisoner who was transferred 23 times in 6 years in the Illinois prison system. We also heard from Steve Whitman, of CEML, who discussed the 114 year history of Menard and the racist nature of death row and imprisonment - in the US in general and in Illinois. This rally concluded with a brief religious service lead by Rev. Jose Torres, the husband of POW Alejandrina Torres, the father of POW Carlos Alberto Torres, and the father-in-law of political prisoner Haydeé Beltran.

Two hours later we arrived at the gates of Marion. Here, the energy was greater than it had been at any other time, despite twelve long hours of bus riding and two prior demonstrations. The only thing that mattered was that we were all where we wanted to be, and only that mattered. As we approached the gates, dozens of demonstrators went right to the fence and held up banners and placards, deliberately blocking the view of the guards and police on the other side who were attempting to videotape us all. After an extended picket, and interviews with two tv stations (both of which, we later learned, carried stories describing the demonstration), we heard solidarity messages from many of the organizations that had participated in the day: the Pledge of Resistance, Free Puerto Rico Committee, Queer Nation, Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, Students for a Better World at Columbia College, a Black student collective from Milwaukee, Latino Students from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana (who three days later would shut down the administration building on campus in protest of racism at the university), and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. Also speaking at the gates were Mariel Nanasi of CEML who earlier that day had visited many of the prisoners there and who brought back statements of determination from the prisoners. Fay Dowker, also from CEML, pointed out that it is from Marion and death row that the US rules - not from the white house - and that to the extent we can combat these evil institutions we can also combat the other evils of rule that emanate from the government. The final speaker of the day was Lourdes Lugo, a member of the National Committee and niece of Oscar López Rivera, a POW at Marion. Lourdes' determined speech sent us all home on a high note.

We finally arrived back in Chicago at about 5am, 22 hours after we left. We were all physically exhausted but politically exhilarated. No day could have been spent more productively - and we were all ready for more!

MAY 2ND NATIONWIDE ACTIVITIES AGAINST PROLIFERATION OF CONTROL UNITS AND IN SUPPORT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

In the last issue of *Walkin' Steel* we gave readers a general idea of what we expected would happen in different cities and states across the country during our national call to action on May 2nd. In the last several months we have received reports from many of those who organized the different activities.

NEW JERSEY HOLDS FORUM, TOWN MEETING AND SILENT VIGIL

On Saturday, May 2d, a number of activities took place in New Jersey. The Black Community News Service, the Black Panther Newspaper Committee, the Rutgers University Black Historical and Cultural Society, and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) sponsored a forum at Rutgers University in Newark . "Shut Down the Control Units", the video of the CEML, was shown, followed by a dynamic panel of speakers. Participants in the panel included Attica Brother Akil al-Jundi, ex-political prisoner Safiya Bukhari-Alston, and Bonnie Kerness of the AFSC.

That same day a Town Meeting was held at the Bethlehem Baptist Church about two blocks from the New Jersey State Prison. Sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, the meeting was attended by about 75 people.

People from both events then joined in a silent vigil, marching to the New Jersey State Prison in Trenton to protest the Management Control Unit there. Participants in the silent vigil carried a big banner with the faces of the men who are incarcerated there and the amount of time they have spent in these isolation units. Vigilers then returned to the church where several workshops were held.

Silent vigil protesting control unit at New Jersey State Prison on May 2nd

All but a few MCU inmates are Black — a fact that has led to a federal lawsuit accusing prison officials of discriminating against inmates who appear to adopt Black radical political beliefs. Audrey Bomse, a lawyer in the state Office of Inmate Advocacy claims that racist paranoia by prison internal affairs investigators is the real reason inmates are placed in the MCU. "They are afraid of any kind of consciousness being raised among Black prisoners," she states.

BOULDER SPONSORS 'CONTROL UNIT AWARENESS WEEK'

Folks in Colorado are busy educating themselves and the community about the new federal control unit prison being built in Florence. The Committee to Abolish Control Unit prisons was organized in Boulder last January. In May, the group sponsored two events for Control Unit Awareness Week, including a poetry reading, "The Caged Bird Sings", featuring poetry written by people on the inside of prison cells, many from Marion, and read by local poets. About 50 people came and were inspired by the courage and wisdom coming from prisoners in a place of such abuse. The next evening, local scholar and activist Ward Churchill, spoke on "Control Unit Prisons and Political Repression." About 100 people were privileged to hear a thoughtful analysis of the U.S. injustice system which incarcerates more of its citizens than any other nation in the world, and systematically locks down people of color in order to maintain racist, elitist privilege as the dominant law of the land. An enlightening dialogue about social change followed Dr. Churchill's presentation.

FORUM IN KANSAS CITY FOCUSES ON CONTROL UNITS AND MARION

On May 2, 1992 the Economic Wing of the 12th Street Coalition for Justice held a forum in solidarity with the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown. At the forum, the video "Shut Down the Control Units" was shown and an audio tape of a message of solidarity from some of the political prisoners/prisoners of war held at Leavenworth Federal penitentiary was played.

After the video and audio tapes were played, a speech was given by Shiriki Unganisha. Sista Shiriki's speech stated that these control units, and Marion in particular, are inhumane and degrading. Shiriki's plan of action is to first educate the people about political prisoners and prisoners of war and the prison system, and then organize the people for letter writing, protesting, and fundraising. With a national and international campaign, we can win the release of these political prisoners and close down Marion and other Koncentration Kamps like Marion.

IOWANS PROTEST LOCKDOWN AT IOWA STATE PENITENTIARY

Iowa State Penitentiary is located in the town of Fort Madison. On Saturday, May 2, 1992, dozens of Iowans went to the gates of the prison to protest the brutal conditions of the lockdown there. Charles Spencer, an ex-prisoner who was incarcerated for six years in Iowa, led a march to the front gate of ISP where guards snapped photographs of the demonstrators.

Also attending the rally was Jane Henderson, director of the Quixote Center's Equal Rights Project. Henderson, who traveled from Washington, D.C. to stand in solidarity with the demonstrators, noted that some ISP prisoners had spent up to seven consecutive years in isolation. Henderson called control unit prisons the "new high-tech approach to caging people" and linked prison brutality to police brutality. This was especially relevant since the demonstration at ISP took place during the rebellion in L.A. following the racist aquittal of the cops who beat Rodney King.

Bill Douglas, director of Criminal Justice Ministries, one of the main organizations sponsoring the event noted, "This is a significant first step in calling public attention to Iowa's attempt to create its first control unit prison."

Support for political prisoners was a major theme for anti-prison contingent in Minneapolis on May Day

ANTI-PRISON CONTINGENT MARCHES IN MINNEAPOLIS MAY DAY MARCH

As revolutionaries and opponents of prison rallied in 17 U.S. cities, some 70 Twin Cities anarchists roared through the annual May Day parade here to spread the word that prison is part of white supremacy and capitalism and must be smashed. They carried placards with giant photos of prisoners of war and political prisoners and handed out hundreds of leaflets denouncing control units and analyzing the new, high-tech dungeon at Florence, Colorado.

More than just a rite of spring, the May Day parade in Minneapolis is an act of defiance and a huge, joyous, multicultural party in the streets and the park. At least 3,000 Twin Citians marched and/or hung out at the parade, and greeted with enthusiasm demands that Mumia Abu-Jamal be spared execution, and that other revolutionaries be freed. The contingent also emphasized that prison is no answer to so-called common criminals. Leaflets urged opponents of prison to fight rape and male violence, confront all forms of racism, and overthrow a system based on power and social privilege.

The anti-prison contingent included members of the Twin Cities Anarchist Federation, Rage for Choice, the Anti-Racist Summer Project of St. Paul, Anti-Racist Action, the Eco-Anarchist Group AWOL, people from the Anarchist and Punk Rock Zine, *Profane Existence*, and supporters of the Anarchist newsmonthly *Love And Rage* .

MADISON FUSPPP HITS THE STREETS ON MAY 2ND

A fairly low-key approach toward the National Day of Action was planned in Madison, Wisconsin. With two large public gatherings already scheduled for May 2nd, FUSPPP (Free US Political Prisoners and P.O.W.s) saw some perfect opportunities for extensive outreach/education on the topic of control units and political prisoners.

In the late morning we set up an information table and a gigantic banner at a May Day picnic organized by local labor and other left groups. Since it was the first year for this event, it was not quite as well-attended as expected. Feeling that our energies could best be put to use elsewhere, the plucky FUSPPP folks hoisted the banner and trekked on over to the Mifflin Street block party, something of an institution in Madison and always a sure crowd.

We proceeded to set up shop on a front lawn and spent the balance of the afternoon disseminating information of various types (including vast amounts of the last *Walkin' Steel*) to the innumerable passers-by.

TORONTO HAS PROGRAM ON CONTROL UNIT PRISONS IN THE US AND CANADA

Twenty-five people attended a meeting in Toronto on control unit prisons in the US and Canada. Jim Groat spoke of his moving experience at Millbrook Institution. Plans were then made to collect information about control unit prisons in Canada.

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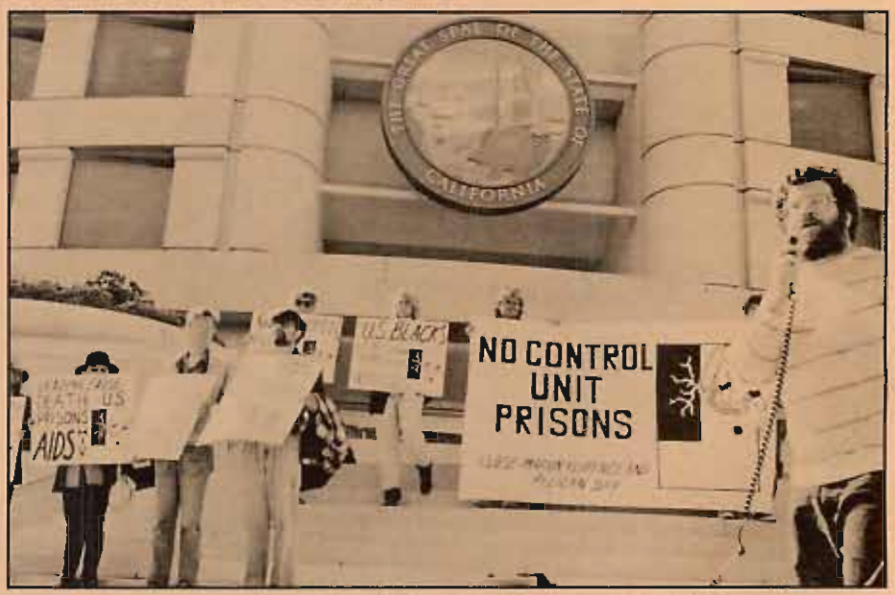
FORUM AND DEMONSTRATION HELD IN SAN FRANCISCO

On May 16, 1992 Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, San Francisco sponsored a forum on the Crisis in US Prisons, 1991. 150 people attended a reception and the program, providing an opportunity to meet the speakers and for networking among prison activists. Speakers discussed several topics: the recent rebellion in Los Angeles and the increasing incarceration rate in California and the US as mechanisms to control people of color, the proliferation of control unit prisons, and the death penalty. Many petitions condemning the Marion and Florence control units were signed and distributed. Also, $215 was raised for the legal defense of Black political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal, on death row in Pennsylvania.

Ten days later, on May 26, 1992, 60 activists demonstrated at the California State Building in San Francisco to protest against Pelican Bay SHU, California's control unit on the Oregon border. Pelican Bay is a flagship for other states in its incredible inhumanity and brutality. Prisoners there have filed a class-action federal lawsuit documenting over 150 complaints and have raised the following demands: to end human rights violations and the use of long-term solitary confinement in all California prisons; to provide rehabilation for prisoners held in the SHU; and to close Pelican Bay SHU.

This demonstration was sponsored by the Pelican Bay Information Project, Real Dragon Prison Project, and PFOC. Please contact us for continuing information and activities. (See Resource List on page 11.)



Demonstration on May 26th outside California State Building against Pelican Bay SHU

MARION GAINING NOTORIETY OVERSEAS

Judging from CEML's correspondence lately, the opposition to control units is spreading internationally. We recently received letters of support and offers of help from several anarchist groups in England, from a German organization that supports Native and Chicano prisoners in the US and Canada, from an Australian Senator and from many individuals all over the world. One supporter from Scotland, on his own initiative, printed up 200 copies of the 20 page CEML article "From Alacatraz to Marion to Florence: Control Unit Prisons in the US" and sold them, donating the proceeds to CEML.

Due to our correspondence with a supporter in Australia, he has started his own group to support political prisoners and to publicize their situation in the US and expose the brutality of control units to the Australian people. He is trying to arrange for a member of CEML to be interviewed on Australian National Radio and for a statement by a political prisoner to be read out in the Australian parliament.

Here is an interesting observation: in a newsletter published in Scotland by an independent collective opposed to "all injustice, oppression and exploitation," a new top-security prison in England was described as operating "Marion-style techno-repression." There was no explanation of the word "Marion". It seems that across the world, the word Marion is now synonymous with the worst brutality in prisons.

...various kinds of **state-sponsored torture and abuse** -of the kind ingeniously designed to cause pain but without a telltale 'signficant injury'... lashing prisoners with leather straps, whipping them with rubber hoses, beating them with naked fists, shocking them with electric currents, asphyxiating them short of death, intentionally exposing them to undue heat or cold, or forcibly injecting them with psychosis-inducing drugs..,techniques, **commonly thought to be practiced only outside this Nation's borders, are hardly unknown within this Nation's prisons.**

Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmum, Feb. 25, 1992

RECENT TRANSFERS EXPOSE "WORST OF THE WORST" LIE

Control unit prisons are supported by a two-headed monster — violence against those they cage and ideology directed at those of us on the outside. It seeks first our credence, then our support. Of all the aspects of control unit ideology, the most explicitly dishonest is the reprehensible lie that the purpose of control units is to incarcerate the "worst of the worst," those who could not be contained by any other prison.

About a year ago, a member of CEML was interviewed by CBS for a spot they were doing on Marion. Again and again the CEML representative stressed that it was crucial that CBS shouldn't fall for the lie that control units incarcerate the worst of the worst. At last, the CBS spokeswoman said that she herself believed that it was a lie but that she would nonetheless have to repeat it in her report since all other reports on Marion used this as their theme. This is a typical story.

The truth concerning the purpose of control units is otherwise, and now, in addition to the many existing pieces of evidence that demonstrate this lie, comes the voice and spirit of prisoners across the country. In the past months several stories of prisoners rebelling and their relationship to Marion and other control unit prisons have manifested themselves.

At Lompoc

A prisoner from the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) at Lompoc, California, who wishes not to be named, reports that in mid-May, prisoners there staged a work stoppage to protest poor working conditions, exposure to hazardous materials, and overcrowding. As a result, one was transferred to Marion, and several others were transferred to the FCI at Phoenix, Arizona. Shortly after they arrived at Phoenix, 60-80 prisoners peacefully celebrated Malcolm X's birthday on May 19 by walking around an exercise track. Apparently freaked out by the subject of the celebration and the fact that it occurred so close to the L.A. rebellions, the prisoncrats locked down "the Malcolm X 20" in the control unit section of the prison.

At Lexington

Political prisoner Laura Whitehorn reports that after continual racist and sexist harassment, the women at Lexington decided that they would no longer tolerate these assaults. At 4 pm on August 13, about 90 women stayed in the yard, refusing to return to their cells. Their main demand was that an especially brutal guard, who had beaten a Black woman the day before, be disciplined. When the prisoncrats refused to discipline the guard, the women refused to leave the yard. Finally, the women were forced back into their cells. The following day 12 of those perceived to be the leaders were transferred to Marianna prison in Florida, the highest level security prison for women in the United States. (Additional details of this incident may be obtained from the excellent newsletter, *Out of Time*, published by Out of Control—Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners, at Box 30, 3543 18th St, San Francisco, CA 94110. Send a contribution if you can.)

At Lewisburg

The most detailed transfer report concerns 22 prisoners who were recently transferred from the United States Penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania to Marion. The details are derived from a long letter CEML has received from Manna Musa Massi (aka Wayland Talley), one of the transferred men.

For two years, dating back to June 25, 1990, prisoners at Lewisburg were protesting barbaric work conditions. The last straw in this process was when prisoners were forced to make grill bars to imprison themselves. A long strike occurred in response. After a settlement, prisoners tried for two years to institute a process wherein their grievances would be heard and discussed. The prisoncrats refused.

Between April and June, 1992, prisoners at Lewisburg tried everything they knew to peacefully settle their grievances. On June 5, Warden Brennan received a copy of the population's concerns via certified mail. On June 11 he responded in an entirely unacceptable and inappropriate manner. Finally, on July 8 virtually none of the 1400 prisoners at Lewisburg (a prison, by the way, with a stated capacity of 1000 people) went to work. Rather than negotiate, the warden responded by transferring those he perceived as the leaders — the 22 who were sent to Marion.

As a postscript ,we must note that among the 22 men sent to Marion were political prisoners Tim Blunk and Kojo Bomani Sababu. Both Tim and Kojo had been sent to Marion on totally bogus charges several years ago, were recently transferred from Marion, and wound up in Lewisburg—only to be returned to Marion once again on still more bogus charges.

What Have We Learned from All This?

So, there we have it again - the "worst of the worst" who are transferred to control units — women who refuse to be subjected to racist and sexist attacks, people who refuse to build bars for their own cells, and those who walk around an athletic track in commemoration of Malcolm X's birthday. These events, which have only recently come to the attention of CEML, are typical of the BOP's response to the just concerns of prisoners. They also illustrate the use and "need" for Marion and other control unit prisons. The next time you hear one of the liars talking about the "worst of the worst," don't you believe it — unless they are talking about the BOP or the White House.

CONGRESS SILENT ABOUT HEARINGS ON FLORENCE

Hear No Evil, See No Evil --- Allow All Evil

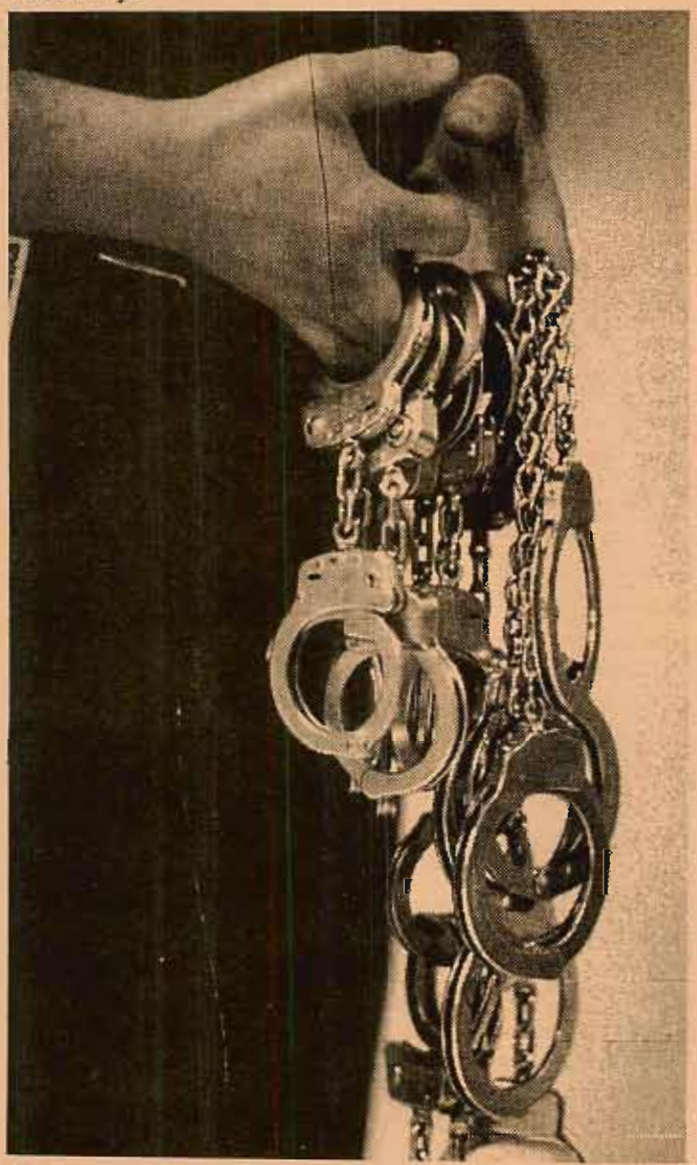
In 1984 and 1985, Congressional hearings were held on the lockdown at Marion. From the reports published on these hearings CEML learned a lot about the machinations of the lockdown. For example, we learned from the Congressional oversight subcommittee's own consultants that 80 percent of Marion's prisoners in 1984 did not have the security rating appropriate for them to be incarcerated there, despite the Bureau of Prison's (BOP) persistent claim that Marion only holds the "worst of the worst".

Because of the benefits of such hearings, CEML decided to launch a campaign requesting the Congressional subcommittee that oversees the BOP to hold similar hearings on the proposed control unit prison being built in Florence, Colorado. At a minimum such hearings would provide us with valuable information on what could become the most brutal prison in the history of the USA. More optimistically we also thought that as a result of such hearings, some of the oppressive details of the prison might be eliminated.

The campaign was launched by sending every member of the subcommittee a detailed letter backed up with much literature explaining out opposition to the gross human rights violations that occur in control units. Since Florence, planned as the successor of Marion, is to be the first federal prison ever specifically constructed as a control unit prison, we argued that this qualitative step by the BOP should be examined with even more thoroughness. This was followed up by telephoning each Congressperson's aide and discussing the issue personally. The most important phase of the campaign was getting our friends and supporters to write letters and send telegrams to Congress supporting our request. Over 100 telegrams alone were sent to Congressman William Hughes, the chairman of the Congressional Subcommittee on Intellectual Property and Judicial Administration. We also had the support of many human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch, American Friends Service Committee, the ACLU National Prison Project and many others who wrote very strong supporting letters.

So, after six months what's the response from Congress? Virtually non-existent. Initially, nearly every member of the subcommittee denied even receiving the letters. Pat Schroeder (one member) went so far as to deny still being on the subcommittee, although a subcommittee staff member confirmed that she was. We have only one reply from the 12 Congresspeople even acknowledging they received the letters; it said, in part, that he was in favour of control units but that hearings might be an "appealing idea". At first we thought that this staggering lack of response could be because only a very small percentage of the campaign came from the politicians' constituencies. But what would this mean? That only this tiny minority of people in the USA can have any say in how Congressional subcommittees run, subcommittees that are delegated not elected? Hardly democratic. It appears more that the current status of democracy in this country is such that Congress doesn't even have to pretend to be accountable to public interest on issues that don't serve their interests.

We are often criticized for not trying to change things through the "correct channels". Well, here we have been trying very hard and what happens? The silence is deafening. Let's just say that the BOP and Congress haven't heard the last about Florence from us and many other outraged people across the country.



THE FIGHT AGAINST CONTROL UNIT PRISONS: PEOPLE TO CONTACT

This is a list of organizations and individuals who are doing work to stop the proliferation of control unit prisons. Some are working on state prisons and some are working on Florence or Marion. If you are interested in learning more about this work, we urge you to contact one or more of the following:

Pelican Bay Information Project
(Corey Weinstein, M.D.)
Prisoners Rights Union
1960 Sixth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 441-4214

Bulldozer
Box 5052 Stn A
Toronto, Ontario MSW 1W4
Canada

Dan Kromer
P.O. Box 32761
Detroit, MI 48232

Edna Silvestri
P.O. Box 29041
St. Louis, MO 63112

Committee to End
the Marion Lockdown
P.O. Box 578172
Chicago, IL 60657-8172
(312) 235-0070

Free U.S. Political Prisoners & P.O.W.s
P.O. Box 565
Madison, WI 53701

Bonnie Kerness
American Friends Service Committee
972 Broad Street, 6th floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102
(201) 643-3079

Malcolm X Grassroots Movement
P.O. Box 11464
Atlanta, GA 30310-0464
(404) 621-5019

Malcolm X Grassroots Movement
5356 South Crenshaw Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90043
(215) 299-4412

Rita Martinez
716 West 16th Street
Pueblo, CO 81003

Saxifrage
P.O. Box 18717
Denver, CO 80218

Sundiata Acoli Freedom Campaign
P.O. Box 5538
Manhattanville Station
Harlem, N.Y. 10027

Edelle Corrine
Rocky Mountain Peace Center
P.O. Box 1156
Boulder, CO 80306-1156
(303) 447-2291

NY3 Freedom Campaign
2170 Broadway, Suite 2234
New York, N.Y. 10024

Equal Justice U.S.A. / Quixote Center
P.O. Box 5206
Hyattsville, MD 20782
(301) 699-0042

PEACE DIVIDEND?

A recent news item ("U.S. May Convert Fort Dix Into A Prison", Chicago Tribune, 8/30/92) reported that the BOP and the Pentagon are near an agreement to convert the army's Fort Dix in New Jersey into the largest prison in the federal system. According to the plan, five "barracks" would be converted by early 1994 into a low-security complex for 3,200 "drug offenders and white collar criminals." In post-1984 United States, "drug offender" is of course synonomous with "young Black male." This conversion is nothing more than a reallocation of military resources to an escalation of the war at home against Black people.

CORRECTION

In "Human Rights Group Condemns Control Unit Prisons" in *Walkin' Steel*, Vol. 1 #3, we incorrectly stated that U.S. Blacks are incarcerated at a rate three times higher than Palestinians in Israeli-occupied West Bank. In fact, the U.S. Black imprisonment rate (1,500 per 100,000) is 1.5 times the West Bank Palestinian rate (1,000 per 100,000). The statistic remains stunning: Black people in the U.S. are subjected to more prison repression than even the Palestinian people, who have sustained five years of continuous rebellion against military occupation.

CAN'T JAIL THE SPIRIT IS BACK IN PRINT

The third edition of *Can't Jail the Spirit*, a collection of biographies of political prisoners in the US, is now available. The first two editions sold out almost immediately, and for many months people have been asking the whereabouts of the book. Now, here it is, back on the block - a new, fully revised edition. The 200-page book can be ordered from Editorial El Coqui, 1671 N. Claremont Avenue, Chicago,

WHO WE ARE

This is the fourth issue of Walkin' Steel, a publication of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML). The United States Penitentiary at Marion was opened in 1963 to replace the infamous Alcatraz prison which closed that same year. Since then, Marion has become an increasingly inhumane institution. In 1972, the year after the rebellion at Attica Prison, one wing of Marion was turned into a control unit. In 1983, the entire prison was locked down and turned into one huge control unit. CEML was founded in 1985, with three main purposes: to fight against the brutality of the prison; to work against the spread of control unit prisons throughout the U.S.; and to expose the white supremacist nature of the prison system.

In early 1990, the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) announced that the "mission of Marion" would be moved to a new prison to be constructed in Florence, Colorado. CEML decided that, despite our small size, we felt compelled to fight against the opening of this "administrative maximum" prison. Fortunately, we are but one part of a movement launched in November 1990 when people across the country responded to a call to gather and strategize against Florence.

The lockdown at Marion begins its 10th year, and control units have proliferated in state prison systems all over the country. Many organizations and individuals have done massive amounts of good work to oppose these torture chambers, but much more help is needed. If you are not yet involved in the struggle to abolish control units, there is much that you can do to help.

ACTION ITEM

CIRCULATE PETITIONS

With this issue of *Walkin' Steel*, we are initiating this new Action Item Feature to encourage opposition to control units. For about a year CEML and other activists across the country, and activists in many other countries as well, have been circulating a petition calling for the abolition of control unit prisons. Thus far, we have accumulated thousands of signatures. Now, the petition drive must be moved into even higher gear. As the article on page 1 mentions, we want to present the Bureau of Prisons with thousands of signatures in October of 1993, the tenth anniversary of the lockdown. We feel that this would have a significant impact on our efforts to halt the planned control unit prison in Florence and to discourage other control unit prisons from opening across the country. But is clear that such an ambitious goal can only be reached if each and every one of us work at it. Please, reproduce the enclosed petition many times, have them all signed, and return them to CEML. TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

MOVING?
Please inform us of your new address so that we can continue to keep you informed of the struggle against control units.

CUT THIS COUPON AND MAIL IT TO CEML AT THE ADDRESS BELOW

Yes! I want to help CEML produce more issues of this newsletter and continue its work to stop control unit prisons.

o I would like CEML to come and do a program at my school, union hall, religious organization.

o I would like to write an article or know someone who might write one. Please contact me.

o I would like to help distribute this issue. Enclosed please find $_____ for _____ copies ($1.00 per copy).

o Enclosed is my financial contribution to the newsletter:
_____$100 _____$75 _____$50 _____$25 _____ Other

o I would like to learn more. Please send me a Resource List.

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____

COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN
P.O. BOX 578172 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60657-8172