

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

More of the Same

Jay Jones

Big Penology ... is the gag – the big-industry, heavy-money aspect of crime and imprisonment ... It's the most powerful thing in the world, a foolproof gimmick for employment and production and political power. It's even better than a war, because there is ... no danger of armistice or surrender to interrupt or stop the action. The public is nuts about it.

Best of all ... there's no limit to it and no end to it.

These words could have been issued by any number of contemporary critics of the prison industrial complex. But the sentiment comes from a 1950 interview with Old Mike, a 70-year-old U.S. prisoner who had spent the previous 26 years in prison (Frisco, 1953 [1950]:538). Old Mike said the growth of "scientific penology," which had emerged in the 1930s, stood to "fatten up Big Penology." Scientific penologists "throw it wide open":

They have shown the big-business boys about classification ... segregation ... analysis ... custody ... treatment ... training ... parole preparation ... surgery ... therapy ... school ... recreation ... time and motion study – the works. All that takes wardens, associate wardens, doctors, psychiatrists, sociologists, instructors, engineers, sanitarians, dieticians, instructors, athletic directors – and college-trained guards who understand practical psychology and judo. (539, ellipses in original)

Old Mike had keenly recognized the economics of imprisonment. Nearly a century earlier, Karl Marx made a similar observation regarding the productivity of the criminal:

The criminal produces not only crime but also the criminal law; he produces the professor who delivers lectures on this criminal law, and even the inevitable text-book in which the professor presents his lectures as a commodity for sale in the market ... Further, the criminal produces the whole apparatus of the police and criminal justice,

detectives, judges, executioners, juries, etc., and all of these different professions ... create new needs and new ways of satisfying them. (Marx, 1993 [1861–1863]:52–53)

Despite the implications for growth inherent in their assessments, it is unlikely that Old Mike or Karl Marx could have prophesied the vast expansion that has characterized imprisonment in the United States since the early 1970s. The U.S. incarceration rate has increased five-fold since 1972 (Garland, 2001); there are proposals for gigajails to house up to 20,000 prisoners each (Schlosser, 1998); “big-business boys” like Westinghouse, AT&T, American Express, and General Electric are getting in on the profits (Akpan-Patches, this volume); and private industry is vying for market share in the carceral economy (Barthelamy, 2002).

Almost as if they had read Old Mike’s observations as a plan for fuelling future imprisonment, several “wars” that are “even better than wars” have been promulgated by U.S. and other politicians. In an analysis of contemporary prisons, Morris (1998) notes that “wars on crime and wars on drugs are regularly declared in powerful rhetoric promising the enemy’s surrender. But success never attends these efforts; there is no victory and no armistice. Instead, “a new war is declared” (230). And a new war has indeed been declared – the war on terrorism. Like the other pseudo-wars, there will be no grand finale: no armistice, surrender, victory, or defeat.

Politicians and pundits repeatedly tell us that “the world has changed since 9/11.” Many of the authors featured in this volume of the *Journal* give currency to the adage that “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” One likely difference in the wake of 9/11 is that we are in for *more* of the same: more suspicion, more surveillance, more risk assessments, more profiling, more punishment, more control, more conservatism, and more of that Big Penology described by Old Mike.

The United States recently surpassed Russia to claim the world’s highest rate of imprisonment (Gardner, 2002). This suggests that things are indeed different and the same, and that Americans are in for more of the same. The U.S. victory in the “race to incarcerate” is coupled with a recent “uptake” in U.S. crime rates (FBI, 2002). This increase casts doubt on the conservative mentality that Currie (1999) has dubbed “The New Triumphalism,” which asserts that more incarceration equals more deterrence equals less crime. However, despite declining crime rates throughout most of the last decade,

there are some serious counting problems with the conservative triumph. Drawing an analogy between disease and criminality, Currie points out that no sensible society would hospitalize as great a portion of its population as the U.S. has incarcerated, and then claim the disease has been “cured” by mass hospitalization. The mass production of criminality seems rivalled only by the mass consumption of it via the mass media – a media implicated in producing the fear that fuels get-tough crime control policies (Mathiesen, 2001; Mauer, 2001). As Akpan-Patches implies in “Globalization: American Style” (this volume), the logic underlying these trends may have more to do with economies of scale than the internal pain-versus-gain logic of those who commit crime.

Economics is likewise implicated in the corporate scandals currently shaking Wall Street. “Accounting irregularities” (a popular term for corporate fraud) at Enron, WorldCom, Qwest, and Global Crossings (Romero & Gilpin, 2002), to name but a few of the recent revelations, beg us to redraw our image of “the criminal.” Indeed, as Martha Stewart – America’s heroine of homemaking – falls under suspicion of insider trading (Hays, 2002; Hays & McGeehan, 2002), we may realize that no makeover of “the criminal” will suffice. The great generators of criminality, as suggested by Currie (1999), are more likely to be found in the structure and culture of society than in the “subcultures” of deviant groups or the dispositions of individuals. In reference to the exponential increase in “accounting irregularities,” Lynn Turner (2002), former Chief Accountant for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, along with Maryland Senator Paul Sarbanes (2002), tell us that there are more than “a few bad apples.” In the 1800s, Marx insisted the barrel was rotten. Battle cries, cruise missiles and casualties in the war against Iraq have diverted our attention to other matters; truth, it is said, is the first casualty of war.

In other news, Canada has its first megajail. In fact, consistent with the principles underlying economies of scale, the new 1550-bed facility is the first of *three* Ontario “jumbo jails” to be constructed (Tyler, 2000). Canadians also have their first privately operated jail, an Ontario provincial “experiment” intended to cut the costs of incarceration (Ibid.). Despite these unsettling trends toward the U.S. model, a recent Ekos survey found that most Canadians feel there are better solutions to crime than police crackdowns and imprisonment (Cobb, 2001). There has also been considerable opposition to prison privatization in Canada (Cairns, 2000; Harris, 2000; Tyler, 2000), suggesting Canadians may not be easily sold on the economics or ethics of industrial crime and punishment. In an insightful analysis of the expansion and extension of “correctional”

practices in late modern society, Stanley Cohen (1985) tells us “good intentions are taken entirely at their face value and are radically separated from their outcomes.” (18). Unfortunately, the usual solution has been increased intervention. For Cohen, “[a] guide to future policy might be ‘do less harm’ rather than ‘do more good’, or anyway, ‘do less altogether’ rather than ‘do more of the same’,” (21).

In the opening article of this volume of the *Journal*, Peter Brock takes us back to some of the roots of the prison writing tradition. “Prison Samizdat of British Conscientious Objectors in the First World War” examines the art of “jailhouse journalism” in a time when success depended on invisibility and distribution networks included the lavatory reading room. We thank Brock for continuing this fine tradition and for researching and tracing some of its historical lines. In “Persecution to Prosecution of a Prison Activist,” Jon Marc Taylor reveals how tenacity in seeking criminal justice reforms can be both rewarded and punished. Although Taylor remarks that “[s]ome days it just does not pay to put pen to paper” (this volume), his commitment to prisoner education and ability to reach a wide audience comprise a force for legislators to reckon with; kudos to Jon Marc.

Drawing on domestic and international case law, United Nations conventions and correctional policy, two Australian writers launch compelling critiques of prison practice. In “Strip-Searching: Stop the State’s Sexual Assault of Women in Prison,” Debbie Kilroy uses case examples to contextualize strip-searching and illustrate how the practice violates numerous elements of convention and law. Emphasizing the continuum of abuse suffered by many women in and out of prison, Kilroy asserts that the state’s use of strip-searches to humiliate and control constitutes sexual assault. Despite the rhetoric of prison officials, Kilroy argues that strip-searching continues “because it is a highly effective way to control women, not because it keeps the drugs out of prison” (this volume). In “Human Rights and Life as an Attraction in a Correctional Theme Park,” Craig W.J. Minogue argues against “prison tourism” in Australia. Minogue illustrates the inherent dehumanization of being displayed for any number of visitors (students, teachers, civic clubs, etc.) who frequent the prison. Through examples drawn from first-hand experience, Minogue demonstrates that this modern-day sideshow contravenes human rights conventions, prison policy, and common law. As a student and instructor who has been on prison “field trips,” Minogue’s critique prompts changes in thought and practice.

Extending the concept of a prison theme park replete with tourists, Joe Miceli suggests a prison-media merger in "Prison Violence: How Society Can Profit from Videotaping Attacks Behind the Walls." Taking the public's media-induced appetite for violence and the current boom in "reality television" to their logical extremes, Miceli proposes that criminal justice agents generate income by turning prisons into post-modern Coliseums and prisoners into gladiators. By comparison, says Miceli, current tough-man competitions would look like Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Although satirical, Miceli's article has a disturbing air of authenticity.

Two vignettes, one by James Gates and the other by William Van Poyck, testify to the reality of prison violence. In "The Arizona Easter Stabbing," Gates offers a graphic account of how prison presents a mundane and repetitive existence punctuated by episodes of extreme violence. In "My Turn," William Van Poyck cites cases of murder in prison, wrongful confessions/convictions, and the state's reluctance to consider exculpatory evidence post-conviction. Striking a lighter note in "Guilty," James Blau confesses that he is guilty of feeling guilty. James Bauhaus, on the other hand, asserts his innocence via an account of his arrest and conviction in "Law School, Prison Style." Bauhaus's misadventures are not unique, and the post-911 emphasis on safety and security is likely to produce similar disruptions in the lives of citizens everywhere. James V. Allridge III posts a tribute to his father in "From Where My Strength Cometh."

In "Superpower Reflections," Charles Huckelbury presents a quadrilogy of prison prose. The first two reflect personal experience, the third is a well-researched and compelling critique of U.S. government hypocrisy, and the fourth is a cogent essay on freedom. Huckelbury's eloquent style, keen observation, and trenchant analyses raise fundamental questions about the current state of punishment and control in the United States. In "Globalization: American Style," Karamoko Akpan-Patches offers an historical and socio-economic account of current U.S. expansionism, linking corporate and political interests to the growth of the military and prison industrial complexes of our time. Robert Taliaferro, Jr., explores the damaging effects of the interplay between racism and imprisonment in "People of Colour and the Prison Industrial Complex." Calling for more assertive black leadership, Taliaferro notes "[i]t is easier to dominate a section of society if that element is already alienated, depersonalized and subjected to deculturalization from within." Zolo Agona Azania provides further commentary on an ailing society in "Political Prisoners

in the U.S. Valley of Death,” a critique of how quickly youth and truth are sacrificed to profit and politics.

One of our Prisoners’ Struggles comes from Yraida Guanipa, an imprisoned mother of two young boys. Guanipa’s ongoing efforts to be a mother from prison are a testament to the strength and importance of family and to the systemic denial of prisoners as family members. Guanipa’s experiences exemplify Chambliss’s (1999) and Taliaferro’s (this volume) observations that black women and families are increasingly and disproportionately targeted by the U.S. war on drugs. Our second Prisoners’ Struggles instalment comes from James Ray Howard, who launches a challenge to a “No Internet Access” rule applied to prisoners in Colorado and invites readers to take up the challenge with him.

As a newcomer to the Editorial Board of the *Journal*, I appreciate the opportunity to help give prisoners a voice and a forum in which to speak their hearts and minds. There is no substitute for experience.

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