COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
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(People's New Service (ANS) - Winter Soldier, organ of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization, reports in its latest issue on
the increasing use of behaviour modification techniques in US prisons. It
introduces the article with the words of Professor James McConnell of the Mental
Health Research at the University of Michigan: "The day has come when we can
combine sensory deprivation with the use of drugs, hypnosis and the subtle
manipulation of reward and punishment to gain almost absolute control over an
individual's behaviour." The following are extracts from the article.

Since the early sixties, federal and state corrections departments have been
investigating ways to modify the behaviour of prisoners who present any sort of
threat to the order of prison life. As prisoners have become increasingly
politically aware and developed a history of resistance to the oppression which
stifles them every day, prison authorities have found it "necessary" to provide
facilities for "aggressive and manipulative prisoners who are resistant to
some of the programmes" (the only uses taken from modifying behaviour project of the Springfield,
Oregon, Missouri, Federal Prison.)

The basic philosophy guiding these behavioural projects is well expressed by
Dr. Edgar Schein (associate professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Tech-
nology) and a behaviour modification enthusiast. Schein explains: "My basic
argument is this: in order to produce marked change of behavioural and/or
attitude, it is necessary to weaken, undermine, or remove the supports to the
old patterns of behaviour and the old attitudes". This may be done "either by
removing the individual physically and preventing any communication with those
who he cares about, or by proving to him that those whom he respects are not
worthy of it and, indeed, should be actively mistrusted."

Some of the techniques which Schein suggests for the prisons of this country
include: "social disorganisation and the creation of mutual mistrust" achieved by
"saying on the men and reporting back private materials; 'tricking men into
written statements" which are then shown to others with the object being "to
convince most men they could trust no one", "undermining ties to home by the
systematic withholding of mail" plus the segregation of national leaders, and
the physical removal of prisoners to isolated areas so as to break or weaken
close emotional ties.

The standard procedure previously used in prison to break a prisoner's spirit
has been physical brutality. However, this approach has recently been proved
unsuccessful and prisoners have continued to resist such treatment as can be
seen in the uprisings at Attica, Leavenworth, Mclester, etc.

Of the new "sophisticated" techniques of dealing with "troublesome" prisoners
one of the most widely used methods of modifying behaviour and breaking the
prisoner's spirit has been "drug assaults". Prison officials, with the help of
psychiatrists and drug companies (UpIdke, Squibb and Lederer Labs) have been
experimenting for several years to find ways to modify behaviour through the
use of powerful and dangerous drugs. One such powerful drug is Prolixin, a
drug which has been used in prisons such as Vacaville, California, Patuxent,
Maryland and the Illinois Security Hospital for several years. Prolixin is a
more powerful counterpart of Thorazine and is much depressant which lingers in
effect for two weeks. According to its manufacturer, E.R. Squibb, Prolixin is a
"highly potent behaviour modifier with a markedly extended duration of effect." "Side effects include: "the induction of a "catatonic-like state", nausea, loss
of appetite, headache, constipation, blurred vision, glaucoma, bladder paralysis,
impotence, liver damage, hypotension severe enough to cause fatal cardiac
arrest". It can also lead to a persistent palsy-like disorder. On top of this,
the symptoms persist after drug withdrawal, and in some patients appear to be
irreversible."

An even more frightening drug is Amincine, a derivative of the South American
Amnesty is extended because it leaves the subject... if he/she is dying. Dr. Arthur Negretti, chief psychiatrist at Vacaville prison, says that hormones induce "sensations of suffocation and drowning." The subject experiences feelings of deep horror and terror, "as though he were on the brink of death." Negretti claims, "even the toughest inmates have come to fear and hate the drug. I don't blame them. I wouldn't have one treatment for the world!"

Both of these drugs (two of many such drugs used in prisons, 'experimentation') reduce the prisoners to vegetables and make them unable to think clearly or react with emotion. Because of the vulnerable frame of mind that the prisoners are placed in while under such treatment, they are accorded for their behavior and told to shape up or they will be given further doses of the drugs. The spirit of the prisoner is so drastically broken that the prison psychiatrist then is able to control a person who will be more readily amenable to behavior conditioning.

Another method of behavior conditioning which has been consistently used in prisons and mental hospitals is aversive conditioning. This method gives negative reinforcement for behavior which is to be changed. Including the use of electric shock and electric shocks. By the use of electric shock, prison psychiatrists have attempted to "create" homosexuals by shocking the individual with behaviorism while his penis is wired. Then the prisoner becomes sexually excited, his penis is shocked. Electrostim (drugs which induce nausea) are used in the same manner as shock treatment.

A prisoner will be shown a movie of a bank robbery and injected with the drug which makes him/her rigidly sick. If this procedure is repeated often, the prisoner will become nauseous at the very thought of robbing banks.

Perhaps the most frightening method of 'modifying behavior' is the use of lobotomy and electro-shock to the brain. Lobotomies leave people in a totally passive state - a human robot - who will perform tasks with no emotional response. Lobotomies may also be performed by implanting radio-active radium seeds in the brain. By using electrodes, a lobotomist can destroy the brain cells gradually and can stimulate areas of the brain in order to cause pleasure, pain and reflex actions in the prisoner. The purpose of psycho-surgery is to stop "aggressive behavior" and characteristics which do not conform to prison life.

The above-described techniques used in behavior modification are becoming increasingly common practice. They have been used in prisons in Margaretown and Anderson, West Virginia; Clinton, New York; Pohr North and Surpriseville, Texas; Terre Haute, Indiana; McNeil Island in Washington; Bronx (New York) and Vacaville; Rikers, etc. All of these programs have met with courageous resistance by those people who have been considered as "candidates" for them (those brothers and sisters who have refused to be coaxed into the submissive beings demanded by prison officials). Resistance has taken the form of hunger-strike, work stoppage, and court litigation on the part of the prisoners. This has been successful to the extent that the STAIR (special training and rehabilitative treatment) program at Springfield has been canceled. The administration at Springfield and the Department of Corrections have cited "economic reasons" as responsible for the termination of the STAIR project, but in reality it is due to public pressure and the resistance of the brothers on the inside.

But even though STAIR has been defeated, the largest step in the field of behavior modification projects is still to come. Sometimes this spring, a special $4,000,000 facility will be completed in Bates, North Carolina. The 200-bed institution has stated its purpose of using its inmates for experimentation and research in behavior modification. The objective of the project is to set up a small microcosm of the outside world the inmates will be taught to live in that world to conform to everything in it. This objective is a complete denial of all human and legal rights of the people who will be selected to participate.