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STRONG ROOM

# OVERT-RESPONSE

FOR BUDDING PSYCHOTICS

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(People's New Service (ANS) - Winter Soldier, organ of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organisation, 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 astute 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 authority". (The quotes are taken from the outline of Project START, a behaviour modification project of the Springfield, Missouri, Federal Prison.)

The basic philosophy guiding these behavioural projects is well expressed by Dr. Edgar Schein (associate professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) 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 whom 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 "spying on the men and reporting back private material; "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 natural 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 prisons 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, McAlester, 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 (Updike, Squibb and Lederle 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. Proloxin is a more powerful counterpart of Thorazine and is a 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, impotency, 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 Anectine, a derivation of the South American

arrow-tip poison, curare. When Anectine is injected into a person in a conscious state, it slows heartbeat, causes respiratory arrest and will make the subject believe if he/she is dying. Dr. Arthur Nugent, chief psychiatrist at Vacaville prison, says that Anectine induces "sensations of suffocation and drowning". The subject experiences feelings of deep horror and terror, "as though he were on the brink of death". Nugent 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 prison "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 scolded for their behaviour 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 behaviour conditioning.

Another method of behaviour conditioning which has been consistently used in prisons and mental hospitals is aversive conditioning. This method gives negative reinforcement for behaviour which is to be changed, including the use of electric shock and emetic drugs. By the use of electric shock, prison psychiatrists have attempted to "cure" homosexuals by showing the individual "homosexual movies" while his penis is wired. When the prisoner becomes sexually excited, his penis is shocked. Emetics (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 violently 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 behaviour" 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 behaviour" and characteristics which do not conform to prison life.

The above described techniques used in behaviour modification are becoming increasingly common practice. They have been used in prisons in Morgantown and Alderson, West Virginia; Clinton, New York; Forth Worth and Seagoville, Texas; Terre Haute, Indiana; McNeil Island in Washington; Lompoc Terminal Island and Vacaville; Patuxent etc. All of these programmes 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 moulded into the submissive beings demanded by prison officials). Resistance has taken the form of hunger-strikes, work stoppages, and court litigation on the part of the prisoners. This has been successful to the extent that the START (Special Training and Rehabilitative Treatment) programme at Springfield has been cancelled. The administration at Springfield and the Department of Corrections have cited 'economic reasons' as responsible for the termination of the START project, but in reality its closure was due to public pressure and the resistance of the brothers on the inside.

But even though START has been defeated, the largest fear in the field of behaviour modification projects is still to come. Sometime this spring, a special \$14,000,000 facility will be completed in Butner, North Carolina. The 200-bed institution has stated its purpose of using its inmates for experimentation and research in behaviour modification. The objective of the project is to set up a small microcosm of the outside world; the prisoners will be taught to "get along" in that world and 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.