

Why the prison fight is our fight too

Unless you are a relative or friend of one of the Brothers on trial, you may wonder, "Why should I be concerned about this trial of Atmore and Holman prisoners in Brewton, Alabama?"

Of course, if you have a friend, relative, or loved one in prison, you would naturally be concerned about this case. Because the real issue in this trial is whether or not the prisoners have the right to organize to change their horrible living conditions, without being punished further or murdered by prison officials.

But what about those of us who might not know someone in prison? Why should we care?

Suppose someday you were in a hurry, and accidentally hit and killed a pedestrian with your car. Or suppose you were out of work (as more of us are every day) and, faced with the power company's threat to shut off your heat or the landlord's threat to evict you if you miss a rent payment, you write a bad check or steal some money or groceries to keep your family alive. Or suppose a cop is harassing you; you talk back and he hits you. Even if you don't fight back, he's going to charge you with assault to explain why he hit you. And if you stand up and fight back, he might charge you with "assault on an officer with intent to kill" (which happened recently to 12 young people in Houston who were attacked by policemen while peacefully picketing against the U.S. aggression in the Middle East). Or suppose you come close enough to the description of someone else who commits a rape or robbery and the victim is convinced it's you.

For any of the above, and a thousand other things, you could end up in prison. That is if you are a working person, or poor, or Black. Of course, if you rob millions of dollars from the taxpayers, cause hundreds of miners to die in unsafe mines, or "steal" an



election with illegal "dirty tricks," the worst "punishment" you would get is to be asked to retire, maybe to a big estate like San Clemente, paid for by the taxes of working people. The rich and powerful seldom end up in jail for their crimes, and they never face the death penalty which is being faced right now by nearly 200 people on death row in U.S. prisons, all of them poor and most of them Black.

With just a handful of exceptions, it's just the poor and working class people that go to prison. And a large majority of prisoners in the U.S. are Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, American Indian or Asian, who suffer extra oppression and discrimination in society at large, and are the hardest hit by an economic crunch like the one we are in now. In Alabama, for instance, Black people make up 65 percent of the prison population even though they are only 26 percent of the State's population.

Perhaps neither you nor anyone you know may ever have to be in prison or jail, we hope not. But to understand how the people feel who have been unfortunate enough to land there, look at it this way:

Imagine stepping out of your factory, workplace, or office at the end of the day and finding it surrounded by barbed wire fences, a heavy steel, locked gate, and armed guards on watchtowers. Management calls a meeting and announces that because of the economic crisis, your wages are hereby reduced to 25 cents a week, and to save on gasoline, you cannot go home, but instead must sleep on the floor at your work station. Your "food" will be served cold and you'll have to compete with the rats and roaches for the scraps you get.

Sounds incredible, doesn't it? But that is just the situation most Alabama prisoners find themselves in, day in, day out. At the Atmore prison "plantation" farm, they are marched like slaves back and forth to the fields, driven by armed overseers on horseback. They are denied the basic necessities of living a human existence.

If any of us found our working and living conditions reduced to this level, what would we do? Many thousands of workers across this country have organized to try to maintain a living wage and improve their living and working conditions. Faced with the inhuman treatment and barbaric conditions which Alabama prisoners face, we would all probably try to bring these conditions to public light and organize for a decent and humane

treatment.

That is what the prisoners have done throughout the Alabama and national prison system. Prison officials

have responded by allowing or ordering the murder of leaders of the inmates' organization. It's the same as if your union or association was in the middle of negotiations, or a strike, and the company just decided to break off the talks and murder the rank-and-file leadership of the union.

In fact, if the uniformed bosses of Alabama's penal system can stop the organization of prisoners, who are workers in a slave labor system, what will keep the civilian bosses from trying to reduce us all to slave labor conditions? If they get away with murder and repression of people's organizations behind the bars, what will keep them from using the same methods on the outside against all working and poor people's organizations?

Whether we are working and living

on the inside or outside of prison, we must all defend the efforts and the right of prisoners to organize for a better life. Only if working and poor people have the power of organization and build a strong people's movement will we ever be able to rid society of prisons, or "concentration camps for the poor." Only the people united can build a society which won't have prisons filled with people who are forced to commit crimes of survival.

But in order to build such a movement and such a society, we must defend any and all of our Brothers and Sisters against repression from the top. We must go by the most basic rule of people's unity—AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL! Defend the Inmates for Action! Stop the Frameup of the Atmore-Holman Brothers Now!



SUPPORT THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

**MARCH AND
RALLY TO END
REPRESSION AND
RACIST MURDERS
IN ALABAMA'S
PRISONS AND
COMMUNITIES**

**FEBRUARY 8, 1975
BIRMINGHAM, ALA**

12 NOON

**ASSEMBLE AT
MARTIN LUTHER
KING PARK
[KELLY INGRAM]**



RALLY AT 3:00 P.M.

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH 15th ST. & 6th AVE. N