

## U.S. ENDS PROJECT ON JAIL INMATES

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Program, Called START,  
Feared by the Prisoners—  
Victory for Reformers

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 6—In a significant victory for prison reformers, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has decided to dismantle its behavior modification project in Springfield, Mo.

In the project, prison guards and doctors tried to alter the conduct of troublesome inmates by first locking them in cells for hours and depriving them of all privileges, then rewarding them if they behaved properly by restoring their privileges.

The project known as START, had become an object of fear and hatred to inmates in Federal prisons across the country. Some inmates, hearing of START in the prison grapevine, staged hunger strikes against the program.

Inmates and former inmates wrote letters and tracts describing START—an acronym for Special Treatment And Rehabilitative Treatment—as “Pavlovian” and “Clockwork Orange.”

### Lawsuits Filed

On publication put out by former inmates reported that a prisoner had committed suicide rather than be put in START. Some inmates in the project filed lawsuits in Federal court, contending that it violated a host of civil liberties and was “cruel and unusual punishment.”

The decision to dismantle the program comes after a year of arguing against the inmates' charges in Federal court. The decision is to be announced in a letter this week to the judge in the case.

It also comes as the six New England Governors are about to meet in Boston to a proposal for a new regional prison in Portsmouth, N. H., to be run by Federal officials for especially troublesome inmates. The proposal, prepared as part of a federally funded study project, refers to START and suggests that behavior modification be attempted at the new prison.

Meanwhile, various members of Congress are voicing increasing concern over the bureau's plans for a behavioral research center in Butner, N. C.

### Extent of Experiments

Federal and state prison authorities have experimented with behavior modification projects or research before. But experts in the field contend that the extent of such programs, past or present, is still undocumented and thus unknown.

Tom Swift, an assistant to Norman Carlson, the director of the Bureau of Prisons, said that the decision to phase out START did not mean that the bureau was giving up on the concept of behavior modification. He said the decision was based on “economic” reasons—few inmates were involved in START and the ratio of staff to inmates was so high as to make it not “feasible” to continue.

But he added that the bureau did not foresee anymore “behavior modification as used in START.”

The National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation is representing the START inmates in the Federal litigation over the program, and its lawyers, hearing of the bureau decision, called it a “victory” and a “good precedent.”

Arpiar G. Saunders Jr., who, with Barbara M. Milstein, did much of the legal work in the case, had argued before Judge John Oliver of the United States District Court in Kansas City that the START program violated such rights as freedom of religion because it prevented inmates from attending religious services, due process and the right not to be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment.