THE New Plantation
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In the new world order, the ideological concerns that previously persuaded the capitalist ruling class to purchase social and labor peace with a comparatively generous social contract and high living standards no longer hold sway. The US ruling class will need to take drastic measures in order to maintain its hegemony in a rapidly changing socio-economic paradigm.

Capitalism is rampant globally and is seeking to eliminate the premium between the $21,000 per capita first world average annual income and the $1000 average in the rest of the world. Bringing the $1000 up to first world levels would entail an increase in the consumption of resources to such a degree that it cannot happen: social and technical considerations aside, we would all be killed by the attendant pollution before wage parity with first world levels was even close to being achieved. Hence, the $21,000 will have to be depressed. Absent revolution, it will not be reduced at the expense of the ruling class and its hench people.

The haves and have-nots will be further impoverished by structural and economic machinations. Verily, this decline has been in progress for the past two decades. People, of course, will resent and resist their impoverishment. Losing what one has is more likely to breed resistance than not getting what one wants. Thus, the ruling class will attempt to create a draconian apparatus of repression capable of preventing the emergence of insur-

Prevaling social attitudes and the availability of information will preclude traditional methods of torture and mass murder in the short-term — and they have rarely proven long-term effective in any event.

Prisons, therefore, will be the strategic center of this apparatus of repression. With them, the ruling class will seek to control absolutely the small percentage of the population crucial to igniting and sustaining a revolutionary movement. Prisons are and will be used to criminalize nascent resistance movements in an effort to forestall and limit their growth. At the same time, the ruling class will use prisons to portray its agencies of repression as fulfilling a social necessity in protecting the community from "criminals". Further, opposition organizations and plans that may have taken years to develop can be destroyed by even temporary removal of relatively few key people, especially to distant prisons where communication is limited, monitored and strictly controlled.

Imprisonment also serves as a threat that will deter a certain proportion of adherents to the theory of resistance from its practice. And in the closely controlled and monitored environment of prisons, the ruling class will seek to keep a finger on the pulse of its opposition movements as well as experiment on their intellectual and emotional underpinnings.
In short, imprisonment will be increasingly used as an instrument of social control, of counterinsurgency.

Within the prison function of the repressive apparatus, prisoncrats and their ideological masters have several particular interests. These can be substantially served through the utilization and manipulation of prison labor. One interest is defraying the costs of prison expansion and maintenance. At present, anti-crime, guns, drugs, terrorism hysteria whipped up by the media in its public opinion manufacturing role still allows financing the apparatus and its war on civil liberties from the public trough. That means of financing, however, is already showing signs of strain; its growth will be increasingly difficult to sustain as the competition for public money intensifies and people begin to perceive the apparatus as ineffective or operating contrary to their interests.

The use of prisoner labor has long reduced prison operational costs, and the prisonocracy will undoubtedly be compelled to rely more heavily on it in the future. Since day-to-day internal operations of most prisons are already handled extensively by prisoner labor, and prisoncrats are loathe to surrender too much direct control of their facilities to prisoners, expansion of industrial operations producing goods and services for external sale is the most likely way the burden of imprisonment costs will be shifted more onto prisoners.

The sale of prisoner labor to productive entities located beyond the confines of a prison will not likely proliferate due to security concerns, official desire for secrecy, and resistance by outside labor. The more likely means of cost-shifting will entail expansion of industrial or service oriented enterprises which operate within the security perimeter of prisons themselves.

The expansion of prisoner labor exploitation cannot continue to the point of making the apparatus profitable, though. If the current ratio of roughly $100 billion spent annually on "criminal justice" to about 1.6 million imprisoned holds, each prisoner would have to produce more than $60,000 in yearly profits - an impossibility.

Prison labor is predominantly unskilled, and even at prison wages faces competition from third world and domestic sweat shops. Thus, prison labor generally offers a low investment return, especially given the cost of maintaining even unpaid prisoners. Beyond that, many prisoners are incapable of participating in long-term industrial operations. Pre-trial detainees, mentally and physically incapable, aged, resistive, locked-down, internal operations workers (laundry, food service, etc.) and many county jail and juvenile prisoners will not make it into the profit-seeking prison work force. And capital expansion of secure prison factories will reach a point of diminishing returns before facilities start
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to (and maybe can) be built primarily to exploit incarcerated labor.

Apparatus policy makers recognize these realities and so are not looking at prisoner labor as a potential vehicle to wring large-scale profits from the super-exploitation of prisoners. That potential lies more with outside workers.

The potential exists to use prison labor to depress wages and undermine labor organization in specific areas and industries. Prisoners can be used as strike breakers.

Prisoner labor can be made selectively available to pressure localities into relaxing workplace health and safety rules and environmental regulations and making other concessions to businesses.

Operating costs notwithstanding, prizoners have an additional interest in maintaining control of their gulags, which can be facilitated by the manipulation of prisoner pay, job assignments, and working conditions. Aside from the benefits of cheap janitorial, plumbing, electrical, culinary, laundry, etc. service jobs keep prisoners occupied. Prisoner hands and intellect absorbed in assigned tasks are not focused upon activities "threatening to the secure and orderly operation of the institution," at least while working.

For at least part of each day, prisoner movement
ways (like setting up or ratting on others) toward these ends.

The bennies are the carrot; the stick is possible assignment to an onerous job. Where work itself is scarce, these inducements are enhanced. Prisoncrats manipulate all of these factors to their full advantage in controlling the prison community. Furthermore, their use is continually refined through experimentation.

Manipulation of prisoner labor also contributes to the role of prisons as an instrument of control on the outside. Prison might not seem much of a threat to people for whom hunger, homelessness, victimization, disease, repression, and desperation are frequent realities.

People whose deteriorating communities and dim prospects for improvement make life a burdensome struggle are unlikely to be deterred from conscious or unconscious rebellion or revolutionary attitudes merely by the risk of imprisonment—a risk that may seem an opportunity in comparison to their legal lives. For this reason, the apparatus must insure that conditions of imprisonment regress in step with outside living standards. Forced labor under super-exploitative conditions—objective slavery—is one way to accomplish that.

The extent to which prisoncrat interests—cost control and prisoner control—predominate varies bet-
be foolish to assume the experimental possibilities/actualities would be limited to developing information for use against inside populations. Prison work related machinations were a large part of the mechanism by which the BOP and USP Marion administrations manufactured the conditions used to justify permanent lockdown of the entire prison.

Such changes in the nature and extent of exploitation can also serve other purposes; the generation of intelligence and techniques that can be translated to other prisons and to the community. Prisoncrats and their capitalist masters cannot hope to make prison labor pay the full cost of their repressive apparatus — or even incarceration alone. They can, however, increase their return by the experimental use of prisons in determining how best to exploit and control outside labor in the new world order paradigm. Assignment of prisoner workers by custody personnel to industrial jobs (i.e., objective slavery for alleged “security” reasons) taking precedence over profit motivated ones strongly suggest the value of this return.

Outside workers are being made more like prisoners in their attitudes toward work as the class contradiction in society becomes sharper, work relations become more adversarial, and worker power and rights decline. Worker identification with corporate entities and trade/professions is being eroded as management continues to attack labor’s gains of the last century and work becomes more casual. Exploiters will want to know how to keep people working and profitable while minimizing the costs of repression. They will want to know what levels of employment and total remuneration going into a community are sufficient to keep it pacified but not enough to make it strong enough to resist its exploitation and oppression successfully. The correct proportions of carrot and stick to avoid instability is valuable information.

The ruling class will also want to know how to precipitate worker actions, strikes, demos, riots, etc. prematurely or forestall them until the moment is gone so it can more easily disrupt labor resistance and reap political advantage. Failed experiments or attempts to acquire this information outside are more likely to expose the experimentation, burn political capital, and risk aggravating rather than quelling their target rebellion. Figuring out how prisoners — probably the most resistive labor force both because of the clarity of the contradiction between exploiter and exploited and a demonstrated inclination to buck an unsatisfactory situation — can be most cost-effectively exploited can go a long way in developing models for use on the outside.

The growing use of objective slavery and deterioration of prison conditions further reveals this experimental connection. Marion, for example, requires all prisoners to work for a time in a small UNICOR (federal prison industries) facility as a condition for transfer out of that lockdown prison. Some-
thing similar has been instituted at the new administrative maximum dungeon, ADX at Florence, CO. Considering the approximately $100 per day cost to imprison each Marion prisoner, and with only a small percentage of the prisoners working in the UNICOR jobs, the profitability of this work is not the issue. The issue is more how and how well these prisoners (and those similarly situated at Florence ADX), whom the BOP bills as “the worst of the worst,” can be pressured into performing UNICOR tasks.

The forced labor at USP Leavenworth is another indication of this experimentation. Obviously, the profitability of such prisoners’ labor is less than that of those who consider such work a privilege. Contrary to old but standing policy, prison custody personnel make these job assignments over the objections of UNICOR personnel. Since custody has a variety of other ways to more securely control even the most problematic prisoners, and because factory work carries its own risks to security-minded custody, such as access to tools and materials this ascendency of custody in industry job assignment decisions supports the existence of ulterior motives of social experimentation in this brand of slavery.

Among other things the agencies of exploitation and oppression would like to know are the following: Can coerced workers (be they prisoners, probationers, subjects of electronic monitoring or labor requirement regulations, or even the economically coerced, like debtors, payers of fines and res-

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titution, tax protesters, or just poor) be integrated into a consensual work force? Is there a critical number of “rabble rousers” that must be present to destabilize control or productivity? Will coerced workers be socialized by the consensual into similar work patterns or vice versa? What percentage of coerced workers will actively “buck,” and will they subvert others? How will the presence of slaves affect the dynamics of the workplace, both among and between management and labor? Can subjection to the rigors of the workplace diminish objectionable behavior beyond the workplace and to what extent? Can coerced workers be bought? The answers to these and similar questions and their permutations relative to prisoners will not only facilitate the use of inside labor, they can also translate to outside workers.

The foregoing is not intended to suggest any grand conspiracy theory or even an oligarchy of lesser ones. The absence of such a conspiracy does not mean elements of the apparatus — with or without direction of their ruling class masters, who may act synergistically, tacitly, coincidentally, or deliberately in concert — do not collude in furtherance of their interests, just that the collusion is more accidental, incidental, or ad-hoc than strategic. Instead of a conspiracy or conspiracies, the connivance of the various elements of the apparatus — indeed the behavior of the ruling class generally — is part of the dynamic of late capitalism.
Conditions drive individual members of the capitalistic ruling class to conscious and unconscious actions that will preserve their individual and collective positions and power as the unfolding of a natural law of social dynamics—like all actions have reactions. Prevailing conditions will virtually rule out some class choices and greatly increase the probability of others. The use of prisoner labor—verily, the totality of prisons generally—as an experimental laboratory is an adaptive choice from the ruling class perspective. This occurs more often, and more consciously, in some jurisdictions than in others, reflecting conditions confronting resources available to, and sophistication of local elites. In North Dakota, for example, the social contradictions are not nearly so sharply drawn as in, say, Washington, DC. The 1995 incarceration rate in North Dakota was 85 per 100,000 population versus 1,650 in DC, and the vertical development of the prisonocracy is much greater in the latter.

The growing exploitation of prison labor, particularly through objective slavery, demands responses which utilize many of the same tactics street labor employed in times past and needs to resurrect. In a sense, all work for the apparatus of repression by prisoners is collaboration. At present, virtually all prisoner labor is applied to operating prisons and defraying the costs of the apparatus and providing it information. Part of that apparatus is the police armies of occupation maintained in poor and oppressed communities to wage class war by def-

At present, the best response to objective slavery is to be a bad slave. "Laying down" in segregation on the theory that prison work or some aspect thereof (like factory work as opposed to the kitchen) is always inappropriate is an abdication of the responsibility to struggle within the community in which one finds oneself. Better than laying down for whatever illusory statement value it might have is to make pressing prisoners into industrial operations unprofitable by any and all means available.

The ruling class will increasingly rely on imprisonment to maintain its hegemony in society at large. Manipulation of prisoner labor fulfills several important functions in making prisons valuable instruments of social control. It defrays the costs of incarceration by shifting them more onto the incarcerated. It helps control prisoners by illegitimate means. It de-
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teriorates prison conditions toward making prison a greater threat to the potentially rebellious population on the outside. And it provides experimental data that can be useful in exploiting and controlling outside communities.

All these results are anti-democratic. None of them are consistent with the goal of reducing crime in a free society. Artificially depressing the cost of incarceration makes it likely to be overused at the expense of more effective and humane alternatives. Making prison labor a political blackjack diminishes the extent to which it can resocialize prisoners who need it. Making labor a Machiavellian competition for personal advantage is de-socializing. Using labor conditions as a threat is socially counterproductive and alienating to the threatened. And nothing needs to be said about a system that uses institutions intended to serve the people to enslave them. Something needs to be done about it.