

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## El Salvador turns right

President Reagan put himself in a trick bag when he force elections in El Salvador. Because the people, who never had the opportunity to vote during fifty years of U.S. supported dictatorships, went to the polls in great numbers the Reagan administration is calling it a great victory over the guerrilla forces.

Mr. Reagan should take another look. President Duarte—front-man for the military rulers and Reagan's hope for a "reform" government—is on his way out. The five minor parties that are even further to the right than Duarte's party are attempting to get together to form a coalition government. If they are successful the new president will undoubtedly be ex-Major Roberto d'Aubuisson, leader of death squads and suspected engineer of the murder of Archbishop Romero. To add to U.S. embarrassment is the fact that the man who could become president was barred from entering the U.S. by the Carter administration because he threatened the life of a U.S. official.

For the Reagan administration this will be a problem. Will Congress and the American people continue to provide military and economic

support to a butcher? Will the administration allow the El Salvador election to take its course or will it intervene to force a more moderate result?

For the people of El Salvador the situation must get worse. The guerrilla forces—barred from participation in the election—will continue to try to free the country from the grip of the military dictatorship. Repression, torture and murder of innocent civilians by government will increase. Thousands more will die.

The election was a farce no matter how it is analysed. Only the right-wing parties were allowed to participate. The elections were carried out in the midst of a blood bath. The people had more to fear from the army if they refused to vote than from the guerrillas who asked them not to vote.

The election did not deal with the basic causes of the revolution: poverty, oppression, hopelessness. Those who fight for liberation have every reason to continue their struggle.

The people of El Salvador and of the United States would have benefited more from a negotiated settlement sought by the guerrilla forces.

## Time for negotiation

Monday night the Black United Front exercised its right to protest and closed down the School Board meeting. Perhaps those who say the BUF should have used the channels provided to influence Board decisions do not realize the hours, months and years that have been spent attempting to open those channels. The desires and recommendations of Black parents and Black organizations have fallen on deaf ears—or on uncaring ears.

Perhaps the demonstration Monday night has opened some ears. Perhaps the message has finally been heard.

Dr. Matthew Prophet has a unique oppor-

tunity to provide channels of communication—to bring some humanity, justice and equity to Board decisions. It has been said that communication between the Board and the community is a two-way street. We believe those who hold the power should reach out to the community—take the first step.

An honest, open re-evaluation of the Tubman siting and a pledge on the part of Board members to put aside old enmities and consider the needs of neighborhood children would do much to quell the conflicts that lie ahead. The board should change its decision or convince the community that it is right.

## Corporations find profits in Black consumer

by Manning Marable

In recent months there have been numerous articles published which advocate different strategies and programs which are termed "prison reform." Many of these proposals include the expansion of existing penal facilities, and the building of new prisons throughout the country. Few if any of these programs include a critical evaluation of exactly who is behind bars, and why.

In 1982, over 500,000 men, women and youths were incarcerated in more than 6500 penal institutions of various types. Despite the growing recognition of scholars and some corrections officials that mass imprisonments had not lowered the U.S. crime rate, many conservative white Americans pressed their elected officials and courts for increased jail terms for persons convicted of violent crime. A desire "to inflict severe punishment and to seek revenge and retribution," combined with the tradition of racism, sent the number of state prisoners soaring in the 1970s and 1980s. Between 1972 and 1978, for example, Florida almost doubled its state prison population. In the same six year period, Delaware's prison population increased by 260 per cent. Critics noted, without avail, that one fourth of all persons imprisoned were alcoholics. One half million American youths every year spent some time locked away in a state reformatory or prison. Annually another 600,000 mentally ill persons are arrested and imprisoned for periods of months or even years, and few receive any psychiatric care. By the early 1980s the annual national incarceration rate of 250 per hundred thousand was the third highest in the world. Not surprisingly, the leader was South Africa, with 400; but projections for U.S. prison growth could exceed that figure within a single decade.

Like fascist South Africa, the

American prison profile reflects the brutal realities of class exploitation and racism inherent in a modern racist/capitalist state. Almost half of all prisoners in the U.S., at any given time, are Black. 51 per cent of the entire prison population is 29 years old or less; and 30 per cent is between the ages of 20 and 24; several thousand convicts are not even old enough to vote. 56 per cent of all prisoners never completed high school, and over one quarter have an eighth grade education or less. The great majority of prisoners are from the working class: craftsmen (23 per cent), operatives (29 per cent), service workers (11 per cent) nonfarm laborers (17 per cent), and clerical employees (4 per cent). Almost one third of these men and women (31 per cent) were unemployed during the four weeks prior to their arrest. Most inmates had difficulty finding steady employment, with 46 per cent working at their last job for less than six months tenure. Only 14 per cent of all prisoners had earned \$10,000 or more annual incomes, while 60 per cent earned under \$6,000. Such a large pool of "idle" workers did not escape the notice of many corporations and politicians, who put forward a prison "reform" program of "rehabilitative work" in the early 1960s. Prisoners would be hired to work at manufacturing jobs while still serving their sentences behind bars. Businesses would produce commodities at lower than normal wage rates, thereby saving money. Chief Justice Warren Burger, among others, endorsed the program to convert prisons into "factories with fences."

The American criminal justice system operates effectively as the conduit for enlarging the non-white prison population. Every year, over 8 per cent of all Afro-Americans are arrested. As Lennox S. Hinds, former National Director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, has observed, "someone Black and poor tried for stealing a

few hundred dollars has a 90 per cent likelihood of being convicted of robbery with a sentence averaging between 94 to 138 months. A white business executive who has embezzled hundreds of thousands of dollars has only a 20 per cent likelihood of conviction with a sentence averaging about 20 to 48 months." Blacks comprise over 25 per cent of all Americans arrested in a given year. Although whites are charged with about 72 per cent of all criminal offenses, the criminal justice system tends to "punish" them for certain less serious crimes more so than Blacks and other national minorities. For example, in 1975 whites constituted 87.8 of all persons arrested as runaway youths, 84 per cent of all charged for driving while under the influence of alcohol, 88.6 per cent of those who violated state liquor laws, and 83.3 per cent of all vandals. Blacks comprised more than half of all Americans charged with murder and nonnegligent homicide (54.4 per cent), prostitution (53.6 per cent), robbery (58.8 per cent) and gambling (72 per cent). Blacks also accounted for 45.4 per cent of all Americans arrested for forcible rape, 39.5 per cent of all aggravated assaults, and 41.4 per cent of those carrying and/or receiving illegal weapons. The pattern of American "justice" that emerges is obvious: white Americans are arrested generally for relatively minor property crimes, whereas Blacks are arrested for violent crimes which carry substantial penitentiary sentences.

In a racist society, the penal system is only one of several institutions which perpetuate Black exploitation in both political and economic relations. Until we understand that the American penal system is one of "Criminal Injustice," piecemeal attempts at prison reform only make an intolerable condition worse.

From The Grassroots, © 1982

## Letters to the Editor

### Klan activities shock and anger

To the editor:

We are shocked and angered by the recent evidence of racism in our Most Livable City; I am referring to the Ku Klux Klan action of dumping a dead chicken at a Northeast Burger Barn Restaurant.

The owners of Burger Barn were told in a related call that "next time dynamite would be thrown" at their establishment.

It is appalling that such a hateful incident can occur without some strong public response and outcry. This can hardly be termed a prank

and ignored; the threat of violence is too great to go unheeded.

Wherever they have surfaced in North America, Ku Klux Klansmen have proven themselves to be terrorists—in the real and most hideous sense of that word. They have historically used murder, rape and psychological violence to oppress those people they deem undesirable, particularly Blacks.

As white people committed to an end to racist injustice, we demand an investigation of this incident, not only to protect the owners and patrons of Burger Barn, but also to ex-

pose Ku Klux Klan members and their tactics. This occurrence is all too reminiscent of last year's possum-throwing activity. Could there possibly be complicity between the KKK and the police force?

Justice must be done in this case for, unchecked, the level of racist violence will escalate. Portland will become a place where not only chickens and possums, but also guns and bombs, are used to intimidate and eliminate Black citizens.

Name withheld by request

## Low income housing in trouble

(Continued from page 1 column 6)

units at "3.8 million units by 1985."

In addition, he said, approximately \$3 million will be spent over the next two years to develop an 85-unit mid-rise complex in Southwest Portland, and approximately \$2 million will be spent for an additional building (15 duplexes) at Unthank Plaza. The construction, to begin in mid-May, should be ready for occupancy the first of 1983.

During March of this year, Hunter said, two HUD representatives from Washington, D.C. were in Portland collecting information about "cost of project and management approach" to various housing authorities and what types of changes the Portland Housing Authority thought would bring about a better program.

The Portland Housing Authority, he said, believes "...that we are at Unthank Plaza. The construction we can cut any more people and

produce a product in accordance with federal requirements."

He said the housing authority submitted an eight-page document to the federal government that pointed out "restraints" by federal regulations. The document cited 14 areas in the Section 8 program and in one instance said, "Besides the sheer volume of paper work for the Section 8 program, the Housing Authority is required to reimburse the landlord for unpaid tenant rent, damages, and vacancy loss [24 CFR 882.112]. In the private market, the tenant and the landlord deal with these disputes on their own, and any third party involvement is at their request and/or expense."

The Portland Housing Authority recommendations called for: "Allow housing authorities to impose a minimum rent; modify the income adjustments that tenants are allowed; eliminate credit or negative rents; modify Davis-Bacon [Act]

and prevailing wage requirements [40 USC 276a et. seq. directs housing authorities and contractors doing business with them to pay the prevailing union wages as determined by the Secretary of Labor]; streamline and tighten up Section 8 administrative process; eliminate the federally-mandated grievance process for conventional programs."

## Guatemala

(Continued from page 1 column 6)

homes burned. In a widely reported massacre of February 15h, 43 to 53 Indian campesinos were tortured and decapitated.

Amid this brutality, the Reagan government announced on February 28th that it is moving to restore military aid to Guatemala based on its assessment that its human rights record has improved. Reagan is asking Congress for \$251,000 for training the Guatemala armed forces.



"...and, to set the mood for our new crime fighting program, Chief Still is modeling the new police officers' uniform that he and I have designed."

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