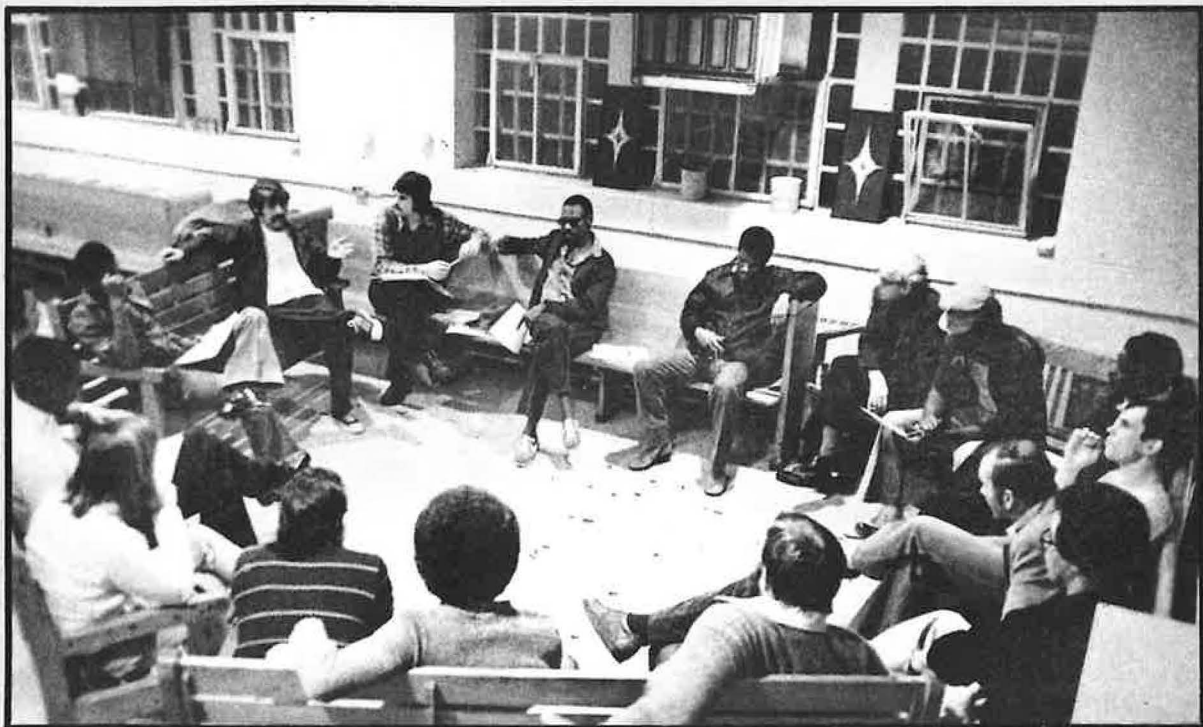


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Justice Fol-Up Panel/
Position Paper

PERSPECTIVES ON A.F.S.C. CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS:

*A Position Paper Adopted by the National Community
Relations Division Committee - December 9, 1977*



AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE
1501 Cherry Street
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The Basis of AFSC's Involvement in the Field of Criminal Justice

A. THE AFSC'S CONCERN ABOUT THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM:

The concern of the American Friends Service Committee with the treatment of persons convicted or accused of crimes in this society is rooted in the Quaker opposition to violence and injustice and the Quaker principle that there is that of God in every person. The AFSC views each individual as a person of worth and value who should be treated with dignity, respect, and humanity, regardless of his or her circumstances in life or how offensive his or her behavior to others. We seek through our actions to achieve meaningful communication with all persons—those who victimize others, those who are victims, those who oppress, those who are oppressed—in the expectation that the measure of goodness and truth in each individual seeks expression and can respond.

Our concern with abuses of the criminal justice system has been expressed most recently in the 1971 publication, *Struggle for Justice*¹, the AFSC 1976 *Report of the Task Force on Justice* of the National Community Relations Division Committee², the Minute of the AFSC Board of Directors in 1976 opposing the death penalty³, and is expressed daily in local AFSC programs.

B. A COMMITMENT TO POSITIVE ACTION ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM:

It is timely that now, in the evolution of these concerns, the AFSC commits itself to a vigorous program of action to eliminate the evils perpetuated by the criminal justice system. There is a pressing need to give this problem specific attention across the country. A position of the AFSC Board of Directors on the criminal justice system would give national support to AFSC programs which are consistent with the principles contained herein. AFSC regions which have no justice programs will be assisted and encouraged in developing them.

C. AN AFSC FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF CRIME:

The AFSC does not always accept the common usage of the term "crime." Viewed from our perspective of the sanctity of human life and human rights, crime is not seen solely as the violation of legal codes but encompasses behavior which violates that sanctity. On the other hand, some legal codes include acts which do not harm the life and rights of others and need not be classified as crimes. There is also a Quaker tradition of nonviolent civil disobedience in which laws might be openly disobeyed in an effort to oppose "crimes."

Within this context, AFSC opposes crime in the same manner that it opposes all forms of violence or deprivation of human rights. This broader interpretation includes the systematic denial of economic and social justice to the poor, minorities, and disenfranchised; the destruction of the environment; the abuse of public office; and war.

The AFSC rejects the concept of criminality that supports the myth of a criminal type. We recognize that this concept grows, in part, out of the ignorance and fears rooted in biases and prejudices. The concept of criminality represents a gross distortion of the nature of those who are caught up in the criminal justice system and provides a simplistic explanation of a highly complex social problem. This explanation tends to

1. American Friends Service Committee, *Struggle for Justice: A Report on Crime and Punishment in America* (New York, Hill and Wang, 1971).

2. *Report of the Justice Task Force*, American Friends Service Committee, February, 1976.

3. *Minutes of the Board of Directors*, American Friends Service Committee, November, 1976.

project distinctive images of "good people" as opposed to "bad people," "victims" vs. "villains," etc. The fact that most people tend to identify themselves with the innocent reinforces the belief that there are characteristic as opposed to circumstantial distinctions between those caught up in the criminal justice system and those outside. These misunderstandings result in the perpetuation of the "criminal" stereotype while the reality that "criminal behavior" permeates all levels and groups of this society goes almost without acknowledgement.

We are opposed to the use of punishment because inherent in punishment is retribution, which runs contrary to the basic beliefs of Friends. We recognize that imposing any sanction for violation of laws may be viewed as punishment by the recipient, regardless of society's motives. Friends and others of good conscience are deeply divided on what are just and humane societal responses to behavior having a destructive impact on human life and rights. There is need, therefore, for AFSC to examine these issues, mindful of constitutional and humane considerations.

Criminal acts, from any perspective, need not be condoned, but neither do such acts justify violence against the individuals who commit them nor the deprivation of their human and constitutional rights.

D. THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE LARGER SOCIAL ORDER

The problems of the criminal justice system cannot be understood apart from the problems of the larger social order. The AFSC recognizes that crime has many roots, some of them based in peculiar individual experiences and mental disorders and some reflecting the social and economic problems of our larger society. All of these problems are complex and deserve attention, but the AFSC, given its general approach to social and economic problems, chooses to focus its concerns and activities on those causes rooted in our social systems. As stated in the goal of the AFSC National Community Relations Division:

AFSC programs seek to root out those causes of violence in our society which lie in poverty, exclusion, and denial of rights.⁴

This focus does not preclude AFSC's providing services which meet individual needs but it does require that attention be given to making the necessary systemic changes which would make the social systems either meet those needs or eliminate the problems which cause them. Racism, sexism, poverty, exploitation of people and discrimination, while not inevitably leading persons to illegal behavior, may act as catalysts to such behavior. Regrettably, a majority of the American public continues to consent to these injustices or to accept them as inevitable.

Our criminal justice system reinforces these injustices and discrimination by dealing most harshly with those who are victimized by basic social, economic, and political injustices. While criminal behavior permeates all levels of our society, wealthy and middle-class persons who engage in criminal activity tend to receive little or no penalty while Third World people, the poor, minorities, and other exploited persons engaged in similar activities are given harsh sentences. The Criminal justice system too easily becomes the repressive arm which reinforces the oppression of the exploited. Instead of mitigating the problems it is intended to relieve, the justice system itself in many ways has become a monstrous crime against humanity.

Because the criminal justice system reflects the larger social order, a full solution to its problems cannot occur apart from changes in the larger society. Yet, measures can be taken to restructure the criminal justice system and alleviate its unjust effects even within the context of our society. It is both those measures and the larger social problems directly impinging on the criminal justice system to which the AFSC criminal justice programs address themselves.

⁴ *Scope, Goals, Principles, Operating Practices, Basis*, Community Relations Division, American Friends Service Committee, September, 1977.

E. RACISM:

The criminal justice system reflects society's prejudices and aggravates their effects. The prevailing racism, classism, and sexism of our society create injustices in the justice system which, in turn, compounds them. The judges and others of power in the justice system tend to be middle class white men who bring their biases to bear on the lives of the poor, Third World people, and women.

Racism is deeply imbedded in the criminal justice system. While it is not peculiar to criminal justice, racism operates in this field with a cruel frequency and destructiveness. For example, a study by William Nagel of the relationships between crime rates and incarceration rates discovered that:

States with large black populations, even those with low crime rates, have large prison population. . .

There is no significant correlation between a state's racial composition and its crime rate but there is a very great positive relationship between its racial composition and its incarceration rate.⁵

Similarly, Hugo Bedau's studies revealed that the high incidence of executions of blacks since 1930 (54% of all executions and 90% of the executions for rape) had little to do with a high murder rate among blacks. He noted that:

The race of the victim, as well as the offender, is a significant factor. Crimes against whites are disproportionately more likely to receive a death sentence. Though blacks constitute 54% of murder victims, only 13% of the people on death row had black victims, while 87% had white victims.⁶

The extraordinarily high rates of imprisonment and executions among blacks is only symptomatic of a malignant pattern of racism which pervades our criminal justice system. The total impact of this pattern on Third World individuals, families, and people can arguably be called genocidal, acting like an insidious deadly disease on those communities. *Struggle for Justice* took note of the historical racist function of the justice system in this country:

The justice system functions to maintain a racist relationship between the white majority and the black, brown, red, and yellow minorities in America. The Command-obedience structure of racism has existed in the criminal justice system since the settlement of the country.⁷

F. CLASSISM:

The poor are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system as defendants and as prisoners, both pre-trial and post conviction. They are dependent on the often limited resources of public defender services which are themselves overworked and understaffed. This dependency of the poor defendant deprives him or her of the amount of attention and quality of services purchased by more affluent people. While imprisoned they must function as slave labor. This insures keeping them and their communities poor. The criminal justice system creates a separate class, those who have been caught up in it. The criminal record, even an arrest without conviction, is a formidable barrier to constructive reentry and to positive participation in the community. Once branded, one becomes a permanent part of this disadvantaged class.

5. William G. Nagel, *A Statement on Behalf of a Moratorium on Prison Construction* (Philadelphia, Pa.: The American Foundation, Inc., 1976), pp. 14 and 15.

6. Hugo A. Bedau, *The Case Against the Death Penalty* (New York: American Civil Liberties Union, 1977), p. 13.

7. *Struggle*, supra note 1, p. 107.

G. SEXISM

Sexism causes unfair application of laws against women and is reflected in the treatment of women in prison. Central to an understanding of this problem is the recognition that the laws which directly affect women are generally formulated and applied by men and reflect the expectations and limitations of traditional sexual roles.

Our society has defined a woman's role as primarily that of mothering children, serving a man's physical needs and maintaining households for others. Women who assert themselves strongly or otherwise rebel against traditional roles are often punished from an early age in an effort to enforce conformity. The criminal justice system is too frequently a part of this enforcement effort. Most of the young women held by the juvenile justice system have entered it for "status" offenses, such as running away from home or truancy, rather than "criminal" offenses. As teenagers, girls are more likely than boys to be institutionalized for assertive behavior that does not involve crime. Many women are sent to mental hospitals for such behavior, while others, often of low-income or minority backgrounds, are sent to the criminal justice system.

One noticeable difference between men's and women's prisons is that women are treated more as children, rewarded for dependent and passive behavior and punished for self-assertion. The maintenance or development of leadership and decision-making skills needed by women to function in the outside world is often systematically undermined. Many women leave prison caught in a web of dependency that is almost impossible to break. This dependency is fostered by women guards, many of whom genuinely feel that a woman's behavior should be passive and that assertive action, however constructive, is unbecoming to women.

Many people are unaware of the special problems which women face in prisons, and prison change efforts often bypass women's institutions. In part this may stem from the small size of many women's prisons or the fact that they are often less organized for change than men's prisons. In part, most people do not realize that women have special problems beyond those common to all prisoners. AFSC programs should include women's prisons in efforts to change abuses affecting all prisoners, and support women prisoners in their effort to define and affect problems specific to women prisoners.

Sexism also has a major impact on men in prison. The sexist roles prescribed for men in our society support patterns of dominance which lead to an exaggerated *macho* image in prison. Both racism and this form of sexism are often used to promote factionalism among prisoners hampering efforts to work together for change. This perverted view of masculinity fosters violence against and abuse of those men who do not fulfill the accepted male image. Guards are permitted to behave in a sadistic manner and encouraged to ignore the abuses of prisoners against one another. This, in turn, becomes additional cruel and unusual punishment for those prisoners who do not conform to traditional sexual models. Carried over to life outside, this pattern supports the perversion of family and community life into struggles for sexual dominance.

The Objectives of AFSC Activities in the Field of Criminal Justice

The objectives of the AFSC in the field of criminal justice are based in the scope and goals of AFSC community relations programs:

The Community Relations Program of the AFSC addresses itself to the problems of poverty, exclusion, and denial of equal rights in the United States. . . Our diversity of program is unified by a common vision: a society which recognizes the equal and infinite worth of each human being and in which uniform legal rights and just and human social and economic systems bring all men and women the opportunity to participate in the major decisions affecting their lives. . . Our work begins with the principle that basic change is needed.⁸

In relation to the criminal justice system, AFSC programs seek to eliminate the unjust elements that have perverted that system into a means of denying human rights and preserving existing social injustices. We also desire to free our society of the burdens of ineffective approaches to the administration of justice. We oppose those practices which undermine positive concepts of justice (e.g., concepts of fairness, due process, innocence unless proven otherwise, and equal access to all parts of the justice system), while we promote the exploration of new concepts which focus more on the roots of destructive behavior than on after-the-fact findings of guilt or innocence.

A. ABOLITION OF PRISONS AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT:

The AFSC opposes the use of death as a sanction against behavior which may be considered criminal or imprisonment as such a sanction or a means of rehabilitation. The primary reliance of our penal system on those forms of punishment has created horrendous conditions which aggravate the very problems they are claimed to resolve.

Capital punishment is the ultimate form of injustice carried out in the name of justice and is an offense to human decency. As stated by the AFSC Board of Directors:

. . . the death penalty restores no victim to life and only compounds the wrong committed in the first place. We affirm that there is no justification for taking the life of any man or woman for any reason.⁹

Our social policy of imprisonment has become a national disgrace with nightmarish institutions routinely depriving people of both their freedom and their dignity. Individual rights and personalities are violated when persons are subjected to degrading experiments in behavior modification and other forms of control. Persons are released from these institutions in worse condition than they entered, having lost years from their lives and whatever social or economic support they once had. These same persons are then told that they must lead normal lives. Thus, our prisons have the effect of increasing the same crime rates and social problems that they are purportedly designed to reduce. As stated in *Struggle for Justice*:

If the choice were between prisons as they now are and no prisons at all, we would promptly choose the latter. We are convinced that it would be far better to tear down all jails now than to perpetuate the inhumanity and horror being carried on in society's name behind prison walls. Prisons as they exist are more of a burden and disgrace to our society than they are a protection or a solution to the problem of crime.¹⁰

8. *Scope*, supra note 4.

9. *Minutes*, supra note 3.

10. *Struggle*, supra note 1, p. 23.

The AFSC is committed to the abolition of prisons.¹¹ The first step toward this goal is a moratorium on prison construction.

The AFSC also calls for the end of all forms of slavery and involuntary servitude within the United States and its jurisdictions. Therefore, we support efforts to amend the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution which now reads:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, EXCEPT AS A PUNISHMENT FOR CRIME WHEREOF THE PARTY SHALL HAVE BEEN DULY CONVICTED, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

The exception clause should be deleted so that the Thirteenth Amendment would prohibit all slavery and involuntary servitude within the U.S. and its jurisdictions.

B. DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE MEANS OF COPING WITH DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR:

AFSC is committed to helping communities find non-violent ways of coping with their fears of "crime."

1. Alternatives to Imprisonment:

In recent years many options have been developed and tried. Some alternatives to imprisonment have come into fairly constant use, such as release on personal recognizance instead of bail, while others are still experimental. We encourage the continued exploration and development of such options and the application of far more financial resources to this process.

2. Decriminalization:

We believe that there can be substantial depopulation of the jails by removing the criminal penalties from "crimes" in which the sole direct victim, if any, is the "offender" him/herself. This category includes personal use of narcotics, homosexuality, prostitution, and gambling.

3. Support for Ex-prisoners:

Despite the harsh conditions of incarceration, an appreciable number of men and women return to our communities willing to assume productive roles only to find class discrimination in area of occupational licensing and employment, leaving them very little choice but to survive through the means of crime. They are pushed back into the self perpetuating cycle of recidivism. We see special employment efforts to assist ex-prisoners in their reentry, transition, and adjustment as important means of breaking this cycle. The AFSC is committed to supporting the efforts of ex-prisoners to cope with this problem.

4. Community Dispute Resolution:

In identifying alternatives, the role of the community is crucial. We would call particular attention to the need to expand, whenever possible, the use of the community-based mediation or arbitration centers for the settlement of all levels of conflict as an alternative to the more formal judicial systems. We see these centers, based on principles of human dignity and community participation in problem-solving, as a testing ground for developing a new justice system which is both humane and effective.

5. Institutional Change:

In addition, we call for changes in our social institutions, such as schools, which now channel people into the criminal justice system instead of adequately serving the needs of individuals and communities. This

11. "Prisons" includes jails, juvenile halls, and other penal facilities.

approach reaches beyond justice programs per se and involves the interrelationship of all AFSC programs which address social institutions. We recognize that most of the underlying causes of crime originate in the economic, political and social ills of our society and we shall continue to work to eliminate those injustices.

C. OPPOSITION TO ABUSE OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM:

Another AFSC objective is to eliminate the use of the criminal justice system as a tool for harassment and violation of basic human rights. We are opposed to the use of unnecessary force by law enforcement officials in fulfilling their responsibilities. We also oppose such frequent practices as intimidation, withholding of information, holding persons incommunicado, and illegal frisks, searches, or seizures.

We believe that political activities ought to carry a presumption of legitimacy in a free society, and more rigid standards ought therefore be set to protect people from government infiltrators and informers and abuse by grand juries. Covert surveillance should not be permitted for political purposes or for harassment. In criminal investigations, covert police surveillance should only be permitted under strict constitutional safeguards.

We affirm the right to citizen access to criminal justice institutions. We work for the opening of jails and prisons to community involvement so that there is widespread awareness of the practices within those institutions, concern for the well-being of those within them, and accountability of prison officials to the public. It is essential that prisoners be in close contact with people and events outside the institutions in order to be better able to survive upon their release and to function productively within their communities.

We have noted earlier AFSC's recognition of the racism, sexism, and classism which pervades our criminal justice system. AFSC is committed to focussed efforts to combat these evils. AFSC has become increasingly aware of the way the justice system abuses the rights of juveniles, gay persons, and mentally disturbed and disabled persons. Recognizing the special needs of these people, we look to them for identification of problems and will work with them as they seek solutions.

The Operating Practices Common to AFSC Programs in the Field of Criminal Justice

AFSC work in the criminal justice field, as in other areas, is designed to make an impact on critical economic, social and political problems. We try to develop and support work which places people in new relationship to the institutions which influence their lives. We seek ways to enlarge the opportunities of people to gain control over their own lives.

Central to any effective strategy for change is finding ways to deal with the powerlessness of the victims of the criminal justice system. It is no accident that the justice system is most abusive toward those who are least powerful, in economic, political and social terms. Characteristically, it is those subject to the greatest injustices by other social institutions who are most victimized by the justice system.

The present bankrupt system renders justice to no one, not to those caught up in the criminal justice system as offenders, those who are victimized by crime nor those who support the system and rely on its ability to protect them and to administer justice. Those populations in the community most vulnerable to crime not only suffer constant threats to their security and lack adequate redress, but are impelled to support solutions which actually compound their jeopardy. All these groups should be helped to see their common stake in a more humane and social order.

Addressing the question of powerlessness is one of the fundamental principles of AFSC community relations work:

On the basis of our experience we are clear that one major potential for change lies in the determination of the poor and excluded, those presently denied opportunity and equal rights, to control the direction of their lives. We therefore work with those who suffer social, political and economic injustice to develop skills, knowledge, organization and economic resources.¹²

Empowerment of those caught up in the justice system benefits the total society by leading to more enlightened administration of justice and ultimately to a more orderly, humane and healthy society. The abolition of slavery emancipates master as well as slave. The liberation of women frees men as well.

In 1971, the AFSC publication, *Struggle for Justice*, declared:

Central to our framework for action is the concept of empowerment. As a basis for social change, start with the people who suffer most grievously under the present system. Actions that shift power relationships, that place power in the hands of the heretofore powerless, have the potential for creating basic change. Such actions place people in new relationships to institutions. This is our primary criterion for evaluating present or future action.¹³

The AFSC *Report of the Justice Task Force*, in 1976, reiterated this theme:

We conclude, therefore, that the central strategy for change in the criminal justice system is empowerment of the affected community, with our primary attention directed to those groups subject, or potentially subject, to the justice system, such as prisoners and the poor and minority communities from which these groups tend to come.¹⁴

In this context, by "empowerment" we mean increasing the influence of people over the institutions and forces which control their lives. Empowerment must be understood in its political context; ordinarily this means power exercised by people working together in groups. While informing a person of available services might be construed as adding to that person's power (e.g. command over resources), programs which did only that would not be considered as empowering according to this definition.

Power is not given, it is exercised. Thus, AFSC cannot empower people; it helps provide the tools, skills and opportunities which will enable them to exercise power. Neither can AFSC control the outcome of changes in power which its efforts may set in motion. This fact should not deter us from working toward the empowerment of the victims of the criminal justice system. Yet oppression of any kind can never be the basis for a humane and just social order and is repugnant to our basic values. Thus, the AFSC must remain aware of the potential for the emergence of new oppressors from the formerly oppressed and must be active in minimizing or avoiding that phenomenon.

Empowerment involves communication and coordinated action with many groups and individuals in the community. In seeking change in the criminal justice system AFSC may at times ally itself with groups with which it has basic disagreement in other areas. In such instances it is essential that AFSC act and express itself in a manner consistent with its basic values. We are committed to assuring that our views are informed by the insights and experiences of the oppressed.

In engaging in programs in the criminal justice area, AFSC should remain constantly sensitive to ways of

12. *Scope*, *supra* note 4.

13. *Struggle*, *supra* note 1, p. 158.

14. *Report*, *supra* note 2, p. 10.

involving prisoners more directly in program policy setting and operations. Avoiding tokenism, care should be taken to hire prisoners, ex-prisoners and others from the oppressed community in justice program positions. Prisoners and ex-prisoners should serve on AFSC justice committees. Beyond our justice programs, we should look for opportunities to hire ex-prisoners in other AFSC jobs and act affirmatively to inform them of job openings within AFSC and encourage other organizations to do likewise. Our justice programs should also remain alert to combatting the subtle forms of racism and sexism which may influence their operations and cooperate fully with the AFSC's Affirmative Action Program.

Empowerment can be expressed in many forms. Programs providing direct services, for example, should share with the victimized the resources and skills to conduct the programs themselves. Programs of public education and political action should directly involve victims speaking for themselves or in concert with their allies. Both are forms of empowerment.

We realize that there are limits to the amount of power that can be exercised by those who are imprisoned. To believe that prisoners will attain absolute power is very simplistic. Even a take-over by prisoners is not taking power, for the real power is out in our society, and any insurrection of prisoners can be easily suppressed, as proven in Attica. But all power is relative, and it is possible for prisoners to increase their control over their environment within certain limits. Even this limited increase is empowerment and should be encouraged.

A program of social services designed or operated by ex-prisoners may be a first step in their recognition of their power to affect the conditions around them. Empowerment may change a reform effort from an end in itself, perhaps perpetuating the present justice system, into a means toward a progressive shift in basic power relationships. The *Report of the Justice Task Force* spoke of how the theme of empowerment can cut across program types:

A strategy for change based on empowerment gives us a meaningful way in which to view our various program approaches. When we tried to divide them by service vs. institutional change, we kept running into binds. We would comfortably generalize that service by itself was not an adequate goal for AFSC programs, because it wouldn't change anything. But that generalization short changed, for example, prisoner-run service programs, or Chicano community organizations which add important justice information resources to communities. Self-determination in previously totally powerless communities is change. Likewise a service vs. change breakdown might give too much "change" credit, to, say, some types of public education, which might be mere exhortation.¹⁵

When we speak of empowerment as a common theme for AFSC justice programs, as with other community relations programs, we are not suggesting uniformity of programs but a diversity of approaches toward our common objectives, with all of them involving the oppressed in a meaningful way.

15. *Report, supra* note 2, p. 10.

SUMMARY

The concern of the AFSC in the field of criminal justice is rooted in the Quaker opposition to violence and injustice. We are committed to action to eliminate the evils perpetuated by the criminal justice system.

The AFSC views "crime" not solely as violation of legal codes but also as behavior which violates the sanctity of human life. We would not classify acts which do not harm the life and rights of others as crimes.

Recognizing that crime has many roots, AFSC chooses to focus its activities on those causes rooted in our social systems. The criminal justice system tends to reinforce our society's injustices and discrimination by dealing most harshly with those who are victimized by basic social, economic, and political injustices. AFSC criminal justice programs address measures which can be taken to restructure the criminal justice system and alleviate its unjust effects. The problems of racism, classism, and sexism are all reflected in our criminal justice system and reinforce its abuse.

AFSC justice programs seek to eliminate the unjust elements of the justice system. We oppose the death penalty. We call for the abolition of prisons. The first step toward this goal is a moratorium on prison construction. We also call for revision of the XIII Amendment to the U.S. Constitution so as to bring to an end all penal slavery and involuntary servitude. We are committed to helping communities find non-violent ways of coping with their fears of crime through the exploration and development of options other than imprisonment. We support use of community-based mediation or arbitration centers for the settlement of all levels of conflicts.

We seek to eliminate the use of the criminal justice system as a tool for harassment and violation of basic human rights. We oppose covert police surveillance for political purposes and would permit it in criminal investigations only under strict constitutional safeguards. We work for opening of jails and prisons to community involvement, and we support keeping prisoners in close contact with people and events on the outside.

Using a diversity of approaches, our criminal justice programs should seek to alter the powerlessness of the oppressed in relation to our criminal justice institutions. We try to develop and support work which places people in a relationship to institutions so as to enlarge their opportunities to gain control over their own lives. AFSC cannot empower people; it helps provide the tools, skills and opportunities which will enable them to exercise power. Neither can AFSC control the outcome of changes in power which its efforts may set in motion. This fact should not deter us from working toward the empowerment of the victims of the criminal justice system. In engaging in programs in the criminal justice area, AFSC should remain constantly sensitive to ways of involving prisoners and ex-prisoners more directly in program policy setting and operations. AFSC may at all times ally itself with groups with which it has basic disagreement in other areas, but in such instances it is essential that AFSC act and express itself in a manner consistent with its basic values. Empowerment is a common theme for AFSC justice programs in a diversity of approaches toward our common objectives.

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

MINUTES ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

ADOPTED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS, JANUARY 27-28, 1978.

AFSC'S APPROACH TO PRISON CONSTRUCTION MORATORIUM

The American Friends Service Committee, believing prisons to be dehumanizing and destructive institutions, commits itself to support a moratorium on the construction of jails and prisons in order to prevent the expansion of the capacity of our country to hold people behind bars. It also commits itself to working for humane and socially constructive alternatives to prisons.

ABOLITION OF IMPRISONMENT

The American Friends Service Committee rejects imprisonment as punishment for those whose behavior may be considered criminal. Constructive and creative means of addressing criminal behavior should be employed. This stand is based on our belief in the dignity of all human beings. It does not address issues regarding other forms of restraint as a response to destructive behavior. We are aware that the abolition of prisons cannot be immediately realized but commit ourselves to working toward this goal.

REVISION OF THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT

The American Friends Service Committee totally rejects the concept of slavery and involuntary servitude. Therefore, we support amendment of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution which now reads:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, EXCEPT AS A PUNISHMENT FOR CRIME WHEREOF THE PARTY SHALL HAVE BEEN DULY CONVICTED, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

The exception clause should be deleted so that the Thirteenth Amendment would prohibit all slavery and involuntary servitude within the U.S. and its jurisdictions.

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