

“Aboveground, Underground, and Locked Down”

Radical Prison Newspapers in Washington, 1975–90

Adam Quinn

Introduction

The anti-prison movement of the late twentieth century was not an isolated struggle of prisoners whose politics were confined to their cells, but an integral part of broader, interconnected movements surrounding issues like racial justice, anti-colonialism, sexual violence, and anti-capitalism.¹ Radical social movements of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s cannot be fully understood unless prisoners’ activism is analyzed. Prisoners’ politics likewise cannot be adequately analyzed without situating them in their broader political and cultural milieus. One of the main ways in which late twentieth-century prison activists connected with mainstream activists, militant revolutionaries, and fellow prisoners (or, in their words, aboveground, underground, and locked-down struggles) was through newspapers published about or inside prisons. Despite prison officials’ attempts to silence these prison newspapers, they played a central role in joining prison politics on the inside with radical politics, social change, and movements for both reform and abolition on the outside. Influenced by a prison environment that exacerbated and illuminated systemic inequalities, radical prisoners used newspapers to create an ongoing space for news, theory, and conversation on a range of issues, including economic inequality, racism, and sexual violence.

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This article examines multiple radical prison newspapers in Washington State from 1975 to 1990. It begins with a discussion of the *Sunfighter*, an underground newspaper based in Seattle that covered both prison activism and the activities of the George Jackson Brigade. The George Jackson Brigade was a militant group that carried out prison breaks and bombings in the mid-1970s. Ed Mead, the founder of the Brigade, was later incarcerated for his involvement with it. Mead founded Men Against Sexism, a group of prisoners in Washington State Penitentiary who opposed homophobia and sexual violence. In 1978, in this climate of radical prisoner activism, Mead began publishing the *Red Dragon*, a Marxist-Leninist prison newspaper. Around the same time, Carl Harp (also involved with Men Against Sexism) and others began publishing *Anarchist Black Dragon*. With politics and trajectories that were intimately shaped by prison conditions, these two periodicals attempted to advocate against the carceral state and its context in interconnected systems of domination.

After Carl Harp died of an apparent (but debated) suicide in 1981, *Anarchist Black Dragon* gradually declined, while anarchists in general remained active in prisoner support and prison abolition movements. The *Red Dragon* similarly struggled to stay afloat and eventually stopped publishing, but Ed Mead continued his mission with several other prison newspapers. Notably, Mead later became a cofounder of *Prison Legal News* in 1990 along with fellow Marxist-Leninist Paul Wright, its current editor. *Prison Legal News* combined pragmatic legal news with critical political insights to become the longest-running independent prison periodical in US history and possibly the most widely read, with roughly sixty-three thousand readers per month as of 2018.²

This article uses the newspapers themselves, corresponding primary source materials such as memoirs, archived interviews, and letters by newspaper editors, and the author's own correspondence and oral history interviews with Ed Mead (editor of *Red Dragon*), Mark Cook (founder of Washington State Penitentiary's Black Panther Party chapter and contributor to both *Red Dragon* and *Anarchist Black Dragon*), and Paul Wright (coeditor with Mead for attempted revivals of *Red Dragon* in the late 1980s/early 1990s and cofounder with Mead of *Prison Legal News*). By examining these radical newspapers and the people behind them, this article builds on and expands the historiography of prison publishing, prisoners' politics, and the underground press.

The historiography of the underground press reveals a rich milieu of self-produced, subversive publications, from flyers to zines to newspapers, that fueled New Left radical social movements throughout the mid to late twentieth century. John McMillian's *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* argued that the underground press of the 1960s and 1970s, more than any single organization, was both the primary means of internal communication for the New Left and a tool for politicizing and educating youth communities throughout the country.³ *Smoking Typewriters* also mentioned that

underground newspaper editors, such as the editor of the anti-authoritarian *Fifth Estate*, often faced criminal investigation and incarceration, but it did not focus on newspapers published in and about prisons themselves.⁴ This article builds on this literature and broadens our understanding of the underground press to include prisoners and their politics.

Scholarship on serial prison publications like prison newspapers remains limited, with radical prison newspapers and their connection to social movements especially understudied. The seminal text on prison newspapers is James McGrath Morris's 1998 book *Jailhouse Journalism: The Fourth Estate behind Bars*. Morris's work is an expansive narrative that begins in the seventeenth century and culminates in the 1990s with *Prison Legal News*. Morris remarked on *Prison Legal News*' longevity, its appeal to people on the outside including the legal community, and its sizable list of paying subscribers (1,600 according to Morris's 1995 data).⁵ However, Morris did not address the radical precedents to *Prison Legal News*, such as *Red Dragon*. Moreover, besides *Prison Legal News* itself, Morris did not address any Washington prison newspapers in the late twentieth century.

Lisa Jorgenson's 2016 dissertation, "Criminal Diversions: Newspapers, Entertainment, Sport, and Physical Culture in New York Prisons, 1899–1920," also explored the relationship between prison newspapers and social change. Jorgenson argued that prison newspapers and other recreational activities were initially a tool to create an "alternative public sphere" (invoking Jürgen Habermas's idea of the bourgeois public sphere) that allowed prisoners to advocate for sometimes-radical reforms.⁶ The newspapers Jorgenson studied were mediated by prison authorities, with all writings approved by them.⁷ This obscured the brutal realities of prison life, as typically only positive coverage was allowed.⁸ This co-opted but approved prison press contrasts sharply with the radical, often contraband prison newspapers explored here. The alternative public sphere fomented by radical inmate and "outmate" activists has still been shaped by the possibility of censorship. But by subverting, evading, and defying prison authorities, the radicals studied here were often able to express more about prisons and politics than would have been possible in sanctioned newspapers.

The history of radical publishers in Washington prisons reveals unexplored, silenced people and writings that have contributed to an alternative public sphere from behind prison bars. Notably, these newspapers provide an unexpectedly radical beginning to what has become an unusually long-lasting and widely read prison publication. *Prison Legal News* grew out of a longer history of radical prison activism in Washington that was diverse in tactics, ideology, and identity. As part of this long tradition of radical prison activism, just a few editors, writers, and supporters on the inside and outside worked against considerable suppression to create prison newspapers. Even if they were short-lived in comparison to *Prison Legal News*, these radical prison newspapers helped define the prison movement of their times and connect it to broader countercultural milieus.

The *Sunfighter* and the George Jackson Brigade

In the illustration at the top of the July–August 1975 issue of *Sunfighter*, a Seattle-based newspaper “by and for convicts, ex-convicts, and all people involved in the criminal justice system,” a sun shines from outside prison bars, its beams illuminating mountain peaks resembling Washington’s Mt. Rainier.⁹ Below, in lieu of the city or publisher information that most newspapers would include, the newspaper just reads “25¢ / Free to Prisoners.” The bulk of the cover is occupied by a large and grotesque illustration. Starting from the right, it shows a group of armed, bipedal pigs marching below a factory labeled “Prison Industries.” Overseen by two pigs occupying guard towers and military jets in the sky, the armed pigs on the ground herd a mass of people toward a gargantuan man—in the center of the illustration—surrounded by money. The giant grips people with one hand and an oil well with the other, and as he chews people alive, several worms emerge from his body. The illustration is framed by a barbed wire border, crossed by the arms and hands of a desperate few attempting to escape.

This illustration captures the indignant mood and radical politics of the mid-1970s prisoners’ rights movement. President Richard Nixon had resigned from office in 1974, but in 1975 his War on Drugs was still fueling the carceral state under President Gerald Ford and the anti-drug, tough-on-crime vice president Nelson Rockefeller. The New Left connected this period of mass incarceration with their critiques of imperialist warfare (represented by the jets in the sky) and of American capitalism more broadly.

Unsurprisingly, these anti-prison, antiwar, and anti-capitalist perspectives were not always tolerated by prison officials. On the next page of this issue of the *Sunfighter*, a letter signed Jerry Brakebill #87736 (inmate numbers often described authorship in prison newspapers) explained that the prison he was incarcerated in determined that the newspaper contained “‘articles which are detrimental to the preservation of security, good order, and discipline within the Penitentiary.’”¹⁰ Brakebill said that he was “doing too much time” to risk challenging this ban of *Sunfighter*, and he described gruesome examples of abuse throughout his prison, including food poisoning, prisoners brutalized with bats and bean bag guns, and solitary confinement. Brakebill’s letter underscores the depth of prison censorship in terms of both outright bans on literature and fears of repercussions for readers and writers in the form of prolonged sentences, beatings, and isolation. Many prison newspaper publishers faced these risks as well as out-of-state prison transfers, substantive financial costs, and technical limitations to writing, printing, and distributing publications from behind bars.

These prisoner-activists were also deeply engaged with politics on the “outside.” Next to Brakebill’s letter was a poem, “6 O’clock News,” by Robert H. Wilson, which warned of the “conditioned thoughts, captive mind” caused by “Language a control device / 6 O’clock News . . . just crooked dice.”¹¹ Wilson’s poem was

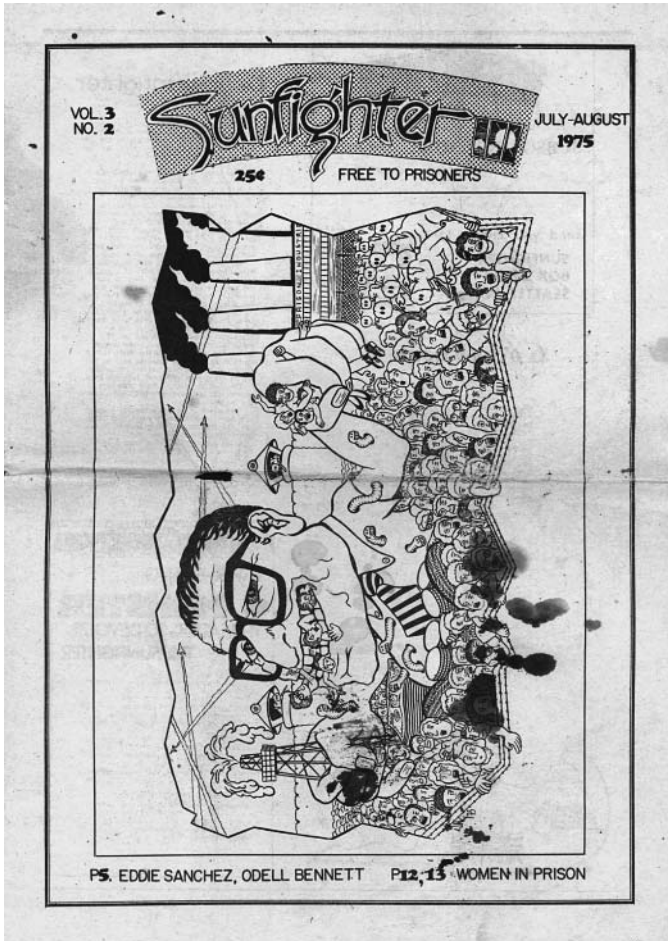


Figure 1. *Sunfighter*, July–August 1975. University of Washington Libraries, Washington Prison History Project.

concerned with how mass media weighted public opinion in favor of nationalism, jingoism, and capitalism. The prison newspaper, then, was a way of exposing injustices both behind bars and on the outside. The rest of this *Sunfighter* issue followed suit. The following page, for example, critiqued the prison system and Ford and Rockefeller's policies of criminalization and imperialism, while the bottom of the page listed prisoners' contact info to keep "lines of communication open between 'inmates' and 'outmates' . . . not only for the prisoner who is eager to know what's happening on the streets, but also for the 'free' folks, to find out what's going on in the belly of the beast."¹² In short, radical prison newspaper publishers sought to break the inside news of the prison to the outside, connect radicals on the inside and outside of prison walls, and challenge the outside news' viewpoints on both prisons and politics more broadly. However, this would be the last time these subjects were explored under the *Sunfighter* banner.

This was the final issue of the *Sunfighter*. Like many underground and prison newspapers, it was “devoured” by the “paper-eating monster” of “inflation, recession, and unemployment” that the publishers saw as “characteristic of the capitalist system.”¹³ The last page of this final issue featured a communique on a more physical assault on the prison system: the 1975 bombing of the Washington State Department of Corrections office in Olympia. This was the first action by the George Jackson Brigade, a revolutionary group founded by Ed Mead when he found no progressive support for a protest in favor of the demands of protesting Washington prisoners. Bruce Seidel joined prior to the Olympia bombing, and the Brigade grew to include several others, including Mark Cook, John Sherman, Rita D. Brown, and Therese Coupez. The George Jackson Brigade was a multiracial group of both straight and LGBTQ communists, socialists, and anarchists who opposed the prison system, racism, and capitalism. Most of their bombings, including Olympia, targeted empty buildings, though some actions resulted in deadly shootouts. From its outset with the Olympia bombing, to other actions that critiqued media coverage of prisoner issues, the Brigade sought to bring more public attention to long-ignored prisoners’ struggles.

The *Sunfighter* and the prison activism documented in its pages helped create the George Jackson Brigade. Bruce Seidel was a *Sunfighter* cofounder, and almost all eventual George Jackson Brigade members were listed in the *Sunfighter* as staff or financial supporters at some point before the Brigade.¹⁴ As Mark Cook explained in a 2005 interview, all of the Brigade’s members were prisoners or prison activists before the Brigade, which Cook noted, was also the case for other militant left-wing groups of the time like the Symbionese Liberation Army and the New World Liberation Front.¹⁵ Some members, such as Mark Cook and Ed Mead, were first exposed to radical politics through earlier experiences of incarceration, when they were not only alienated by prison conditions but also met political prisoners.

From 1976 to 1978, George Jackson Brigade members were either killed or captured and (re)incarcerated for their guerrilla activities. The incarceration of the George Jackson Brigade throughout the mid-to-late 1970s brings us back to that final *Sunfighter* issue in 1975. At the bottom of the last page is one more illustration to conclude the issue, and the *Sunfighter* itself. In this final illustration, the line art of a pig features a head on the top left that resembles the shape of Washington State. From the pig’s egg-shaped belly, a dragon hatches. With the benefit of historical retrospect, this symbolic graphic has taken on new meaning. After George Jackson Brigade members were incarcerated and sent to the “belly of the beast,” many turned to prison activism. As the *Sunfighter*’s hatching dragon illustration foretold, some George Jackson Brigade members later became involved in the publication of the communist prison newsletter *Red Dragon*.

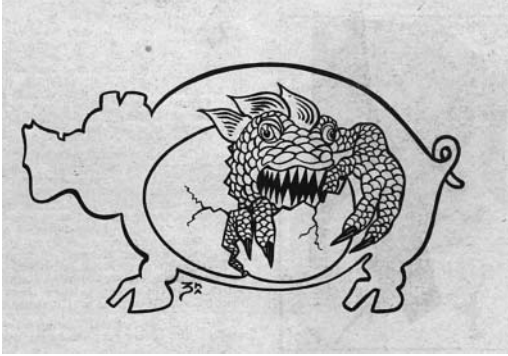


Figure 2. *Sunfighter*, July–August 1975. University of Washington Libraries, Washington Prison History Project.

Red Dragon

Red Dragon was founded in Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla in 1978. It built on a longer history of repression and resistance in the prison. Earlier, in November 1970, in response to protests Washington State Penitentiary introduced several reforms including increased prisoners' self-governance through the establishment of the Resident Government Council (RGC). However, corrections officers resisted the new policies and refused to implement them. In response, 1,345 Washington State Penitentiary prisoners went on strike in late 1970 and early 1971. The 1970s saw push and pull over these issues. In 1974, the warden attempted to disband the RGC, replacing its self-governance functions with the self-policing functions of the white supremacist Washington Prison Motorcycle Association. This sparked protests, negotiations, and, eventually, a takeover of a prison wing and the prison hospital, during which multiple staff members were taken hostage. Carl Harp, who would later publish *Anarchist Black Dragon*, was a part of the protests and takeover. Washington State Penitentiary's population nearly doubled between 1974 and 1979, and among its rapidly expanding population were radical political prisoners. Overcrowding and decreased decision-making power for prisoners exacerbated poor conditions, abuses, and civil liberties issues in the prison, sparking violent conflicts including another hostage situation in 1979 during which prisoners (including Harp again) took multiple staff hostage and the June 1979 murders of Native American prisoners and a corrections officer.¹⁶ In this embattled context, many prisoners were radicalized, and their grievances, often ignored by mass media outlets, were expressed through their own press.

George Jackson Brigade members were no small part of this history of Washington State Penitentiary resistance politics. Before the George Jackson Brigade existed, Mark Cook cofounded Washington State Penitentiary's Black Panther Party chapter (the first prison chapter) during a previous sentence in 1968 and served as its lieutenant of information. Cook was also a part of late-1960s Washington State Penitentiary organizing and strike activity that culminated in the founding

of the RGC. In support of this organizing, Cook, along with two white Canadians, two white Americans, and a Chicano, anonymously published the *Bomb*, comprising “articles about corrupt administration and staff practices to create common opposition to the prison staff.” Through its anonymity and focus on “complaints common to all prisoners,” the *Bomb* also sought to “overcome racial antagonisms.”¹⁷ As is the case with countless prison newspapers, no copies seem to have survived. Before the George Jackson Brigade, from a halfway house, Cook also started CONvention (a convention for prison activists), which future Brigade member Bruce Seidel became the press agent for. On the outside, Ed Mead founded the George Jackson Brigade in response to the 1974 protests and takeover at Washington State Penitentiary. (*Sunfighter’s* Olympia bombing communique expressed support for the prisoners’ demands.) After the Brigade’s members were incarcerated throughout the mid-to-late 1970s, some began new political and publishing projects from within Washington prisons. For example, after he was incarcerated in 1976, Mead met multiple participants in the earlier 1974 takeover (including Harp), and they became close political collaborators. In 1977, Mead’s cohort participated in a forty-seven-day strike. From within the prison this group published articles in support of the strike, while remaining George Jackson Brigade members on the outside bombed a Rainier Bank to demand mass media cover the strike from prisoners’ perspectives.

Soon after, Mead, Harp, and other Washington State Penitentiary prisoners began Men Against Sexism, a group dedicated to rooting out rape, internalized misogyny, and homophobia in prisons. Their activities included speaking out against a homophobic preacher in the prison chapel, screening anti-war and anti-sexist documentaries, and confronting sexually violent gangs in the prison.¹⁸ Playing off the name of Cook’s *Bomb* newsletter, Men Against Sexism founded a monthly newspaper called the *Lady Finger*, an intentionally gendered reference to a brand of firecracker. Though no copies of the *Lady Finger* seem to be extant, two larger publications were eventually founded by Men Against Sexism members: *Red Dragon* and *Anarchist Black Dragon*.

Red Dragon was published quarterly (when possible) throughout the late 1970s and 1980s. While many people were involved in editing, writing, publishing, and distributing *Red Dragon*, Ed Mead, a white, queer Marxist-Leninist, was the most involved. Fellow George Jackson Brigade member Therese Coupez served as guest editor on one or two issues while incarcerated at Washington Corrections Center for Women at Purdy.¹⁹ *Red Dragon’s* first issue has not survived, but it appears to have started sometime in 1978 during Mead’s incarceration in Washington State Penitentiary.²⁰ Though many issues of the *Red Dragon* have been lost, several from the 1980–82 period, along with parts of an unpublished 1989 issue, have survived.

Mead explained the *Red Dragon’s* title, recalling that the dragon had been a symbol for prisoners since Ho Chi Minh’s poem that read, “When the prison gates

open, the real dragons will fly out," and the dragon was "red, of course, because I'm a commie."²¹ *Red Dragon* was situated in an earlier context of publishing in support of revolutionary, anti-imperialist, and prisoner support movements, much of which was similarly dragon themed. Before *Red Dragon*, the first issue of a similar newspaper, *Dragon*, was published in California's Bay Area. In red, handwritten ink, the second page of *Dragon* explained that the illustration of the red dragon on the cover was inspired by the Red Dragon printing company that the Weather Underground Organization founded in 1973, pointing to a longer history of dragon symbolism within the militant American left. *Dragon's* statement of purpose explained that "the aboveground, underground, and locked down are three facets of the same struggle."²² In other words, *Dragon* saw mainstream or legal activism, militant or underground activities, and prisoners' struggles as part of one united movement. *Dragon's* goal, then, was to "break down the barriers" between these three categories "through support and criticism."²³ Founded in 1974 at a rally for the Symbionese Liberation Army, *Dragon* played a publishing role for California-based revolutionary groups, as *Sunfighter* did for the George Jackson Brigade. *Red Dragon*, like *Sunfighter*, *Dragon*, and many others before it, also sought to unite the aboveground, underground, and locked-down left.

Red Dragon was made by typewriter, correction fluid, and glue behind prison bars. It relied heavily on outside support for funding and distribution, though this was not always straightforward. Mead recalled how "one issue was going to be printed and mailed by a Seattle-based group," the Washington Coalition Against Prisons, but "when they saw the name of the publication they refused to print it unless I changed the name, so that issue was named *Dernogard*—*Red Dragon* backwards."²⁴ This highlights how prison publications were not only shaped by censorship by prison officials (what historians call "direct censorship") but also by self-censorship to avoid transgressing censors, readers, and outside supporters ("social censorship").²⁵ A third category, "regulatory censorship," in which financial and time constraints limit the ability to publish, was particularly restrictive for prison publications.²⁶ *Red Dragon* was made on a shoestring budget. In the April–June 1982 issue (after the newspaper had already gained a following), Mead noted that it cost two hundred dollars to print and mail five hundred copies, with no one on the inside paying for a subscription.²⁷ Despite the many limitations the publication faced, its ability to mail several hundred copies for many issues attracted a sizable and engaged audience, with readers writing in from prisons across the country.

Red Dragon was an openly communist, Marxist-Leninist publication. The serialized nature of the quarterly newspaper allowed it to publish continuous coverage of news on political prisoners, legal proceedings, prison policies, administrative actions, and prisoners' movements. It had a strong focus on Washington prison news but also included news from prisons and movements across the globe. *Red*

Dragon also featured an abundance of polemic and revolutionary theory, distinguishing itself through its focus on themes such as Marxist theory, sexism and rape in prisons, and movements against racism and imperialism.

Red Dragon covered the relationship between the prison system and racism in depth. For example, an article by Mark Cook provided a primer on race and its relationship with prisons and the prisoner support movement. Cook argued that the Northwest prisoner support movement “must fully understand the magnitude of the system of racism before planning actions” and must “direct their energies at changing the cultural influences which are at the root of racism.”²⁸ To that end, the article laid out fundamental components of racism: race supremacy, race superiority, racial economic exploitation, and racial xenophobia. The language was plain enough to be accessible, while also getting at key concepts in the complex issue of systemic racism. Then, the article discussed how prisoner support groups acted as vital counterpressure against racism, especially since “liberal counter-pressures are barred from these institutions.”²⁹

In addition to racism, *Red Dragon* was deeply interested in anti-imperialism. This was following an ethic of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism that the *Red Dragon* explained “has always recognized the obligation of the working class in the imperialist, oppressing country, to support unconditionally the struggle of the oppressed peoples against imperialism.”³⁰ These movements were also a source of inspiration; in 1981 Therese Coupez wrote that she was encouraged by the victory of Irish Republican Army hunger strikers, remarking that the use of hunger strikes as a tactic in US prisons grew out of a longer Irish tradition.³¹

Red Dragon was noted for its perspective on causes that Mead had sought to address through Men Against Sexism: homophobia, rape, and prisoners’ sexuality. Mead’s perspective on these issues challenged not just homophobic and violent prisoners but also homophobic tendencies among leftists and prison activists. In response to one statement that suggested increased conjugal visits would reduce homosexuality and rape, Mead challenged the implication that there was something wrong with homosexuality and instead argued that rape was an act of violence rather than sex. Rather than prisoners requiring more “normal” outlets for sex, Mead asserted that prisoners needed to challenge what we might characterize as rape culture and toxic masculinity in contemporary terms, writing that “we will defeat rape through the struggle against sexism . . . [including] the ‘macho-man’ male role, the guys who are so insecure in their sexual identity that they have to rape their fellow prisoners.”³²

Red Dragon drew explicit connections between different identities and political causes. For example, in a special issue on International Women’s Day and imperialism, a guest editor (presumably Coupez) wrote that the “same class system that locks up its mainly Third World, poor and unemployed [people], that oppresses us as women in this country, stands on the domination of oppressed nations and people of

color throughout the world and in the US.”³³ The contents of the issue included poetry on women’s resistance to incarceration by Rita D. Brown of the George Jackson Brigade, as well as articles on American Indian women exposing sterilization programs, “cultural colonization” (or the spread of capitalist propaganda through mass media), news on the 1981 women’s march on the Pentagon, and support for Irish, Puerto Rican, Chicano, South African, and Black movements. In support of these struggles, the special issue called for a range of responses, from buying one-dollar pins to raise money for a Vietnam Women’s Union to open support for armed revolt. Notably (and this may be why the guest editor was not publicly named), the issue called for unwavering defense of the Black Liberation Army, which was being denounced by “much of the white left and white women’s press” for a botched, deadly robbery of an armored car. The guest editor pleaded, “Let there be no misunderstanding: the comb[a]tants are our own; the state is our enemy.”³⁴

To *Red Dragon*, the common thread uniting these subjects was both a Marxist class analysis and a critique of the rights-violating capitalist state. As Mead put it, the mission of *Red Dragon* had “always been the same, make social prisoners rights conscious and rights conscious prisoners class conscious.”³⁵ Raising class consciousness is a classic goal of Marxist propaganda, but Mead’s interest in rights consciousness—especially concerning prisoners’ rights, gay rights, and civil rights—was not always a priority among many other Marxist groups. Mead noted that his perspective on these issues was influenced by an interconnected, “dialectical relationship between my political goals and my environment—they influenced each other.”³⁶

The *Red Dragon* sought to not only raise readers’ consciousness of class and rights, but also to coordinate organized action. For example, the January–February 1981 issue called for a statewide prison protest movement on January 20, including demands such as expelling police and guard unions from the AFL-CIO, stopping the punishment of gay and lesbian prisoners for their sexual affairs, and ending the use of corporal punishment against Native American prisoners.³⁷ Mead helped organize actions of the Washington State Penitentiary’s prisoners’ union and other, less formally organized actions throughout the *Red Dragon*’s pages.

These calls for action were not met favorably by authorities. The April–June 1982 issue of *Red Dragon* (the last issue until Mead and Wright attempted to revive it years later) begins with an article by Mead titled “Threat of Censorship Grows.” Mead noted a pattern of prisoner communication censorship, including the denial of inter-institutional phone calls, restrictions on mail between facilities, and prison publications being routinely censored or rejected. On the latter point, Mead’s article remarked that *Red Dragon* and other publications had recently been rejected in Washington prisons.³⁸ In response, Mead explained that *Red Dragon* was “not about riots or killings or other things that do not serve the interests of prisoners. It is

about the struggle to extend our democratic rights, to increase the power we have over our lives and futures. It's about freedom and dignity. If we want the right to vote, to jobs, to peace, and to justice, the right to communicate will first have to be secured."³⁹

This point about the need for prisoners' more basic rights shaped the direction of Mead's publications in the 1980s. *Red Dragon* had long called for the formation of a statewide prisoners' union to address these many interconnected issues, from racism to censorship. However, by the April–June 1982 issue it was remarked that “for the benefit of the censors, it should be noted that such a course is no longer advocated.”⁴⁰ Mead lamented that the class consciousness for a union did not exist, and he felt too many prisoners wanted to “beat the system” rather than replace it and were too reliant on explaining the world through luck and human nature. Mead instead organized with the Committee to Safeguard Prisoners' Rights, what he called “a very meek and mild alternative.”⁴¹ Mead became involved in several organizations focusing on both a radical perspective and prisoners' rights over the years, even after his 1993 release, creating a markedly different legacy than that of *Anarchist Black Dragon*.

Anarchist Black Dragon

In 1978, around the same time as the *Red Dragon*, an anarchist newspaper also started in Washington State Penitentiary, similarly titled the *Anarchist Black Dragon* after the Ho Chi Minh quote and earlier dragon-themed publications.⁴² Collective member Carl Harp explained that *Anarchist Black Dragon* came out of and around struggles in Men Against Sexism and other Washington State Penitentiary protests.⁴³ *Anarchist Black Dragon* was primarily produced by the Anarchist Black Dragon Collective (ABDC), whose most active members were Carl Harp and John Bosch, but also included pseudonymous authors such as Sean Fain, Captain Midnight, and Captain Killjoy.⁴⁴ The ABDC published ten issues and two self-published edited collections of their writings from 1978 to 1984, not including the first issue, which was lost in the publishing process. Much of *Anarchist Black Dragon*'s content was similar to other radical prison publications and included prison news, calls to action for prisoners, and stories about political prisoners, though it also contained anarchist polemics, poetry, and comics.

Anarchist Black Dragon shared many positions with *Red Dragon*, including anti-capitalism, gay liberation, and opposition to the prison system, but there were some important differences. *Red Dragon* specifically opposed the capitalist police and court systems but ultimately sought to seize state power and have the proletariat erect “a new state power.”⁴⁵ *Anarchist Black Dragon* was critical of even socialist states, writing that “the institution known as the State . . . [is] nothing but a pile of shit, sitting on top of it will change nothing,” and arguing instead for the abolition of both the state and private property.⁴⁶ Harp critiqued the George Jackson Brigade

in particular for its advocacy of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Considering Marxist-Leninists' supposed goal of a "'classless, stateless society'" Harp questioned why there exists "such a division in Communist countries and Communist organisations between 'the people' and the power mongers?"⁴⁷ Harp was also critical of the police along with the state; to Harp police were "the most visible and oppressive arm of the ruling class" and intrinsically loyal to the system they were paid to defend.⁴⁸

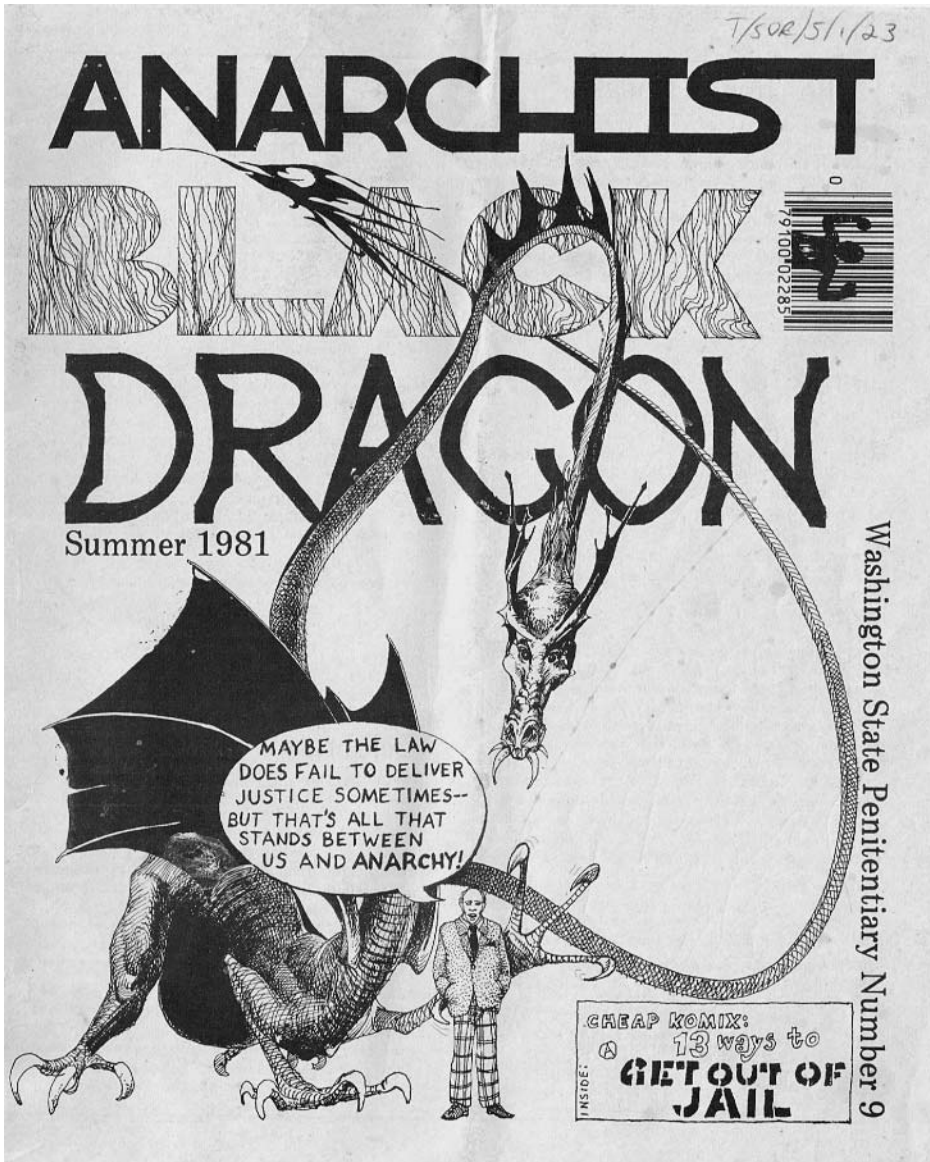


Figure 3. The publication's hand-drawn style and informal rhetoric on display on the cover of *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 9, Summer 1981. Spirit of Revolt Archives, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, Scotland.

In early issues, *Anarchist Black Dragon*'s design was a plain, typewritten newsletter with a subdued format like the *Red Dragon*. Later issues embraced a highly stylized DIY aesthetic influenced by underground, punk zine culture, prominently featuring hand-drawn illustrations and cartoons, colored ink, and visually scattered articles that were clearly cut and pasted from other sources. The rhetoric similarly contrasted with *Red Dragon*'s formal polemic, with plainspoken language that used more slang than Marxist jargon. One fictional conversation printed in *Anarchist Black Dragon* joked about the rhetorical difference:

Marxist-Leninist: The reactionary, fascist, imperialist . . .

Anarchist: Alright, already, how about some air on the jive! If you got some thing to say just break it down to the streets man, shit.⁴⁹

While there were arguably benefits to both newspapers' design and rhetorical approaches, together they linked different readers to struggles on both the inside and the outside.

Issue 4 described the ABDC members. Bosch "started as an Egoist, ventured further into Mutualism, and is getting progressively worse as time goes on," and these political leanings meant he was often been attacked by "Democrats, Republicans, Communists, Socialists, Monarchists, Theocrats, house cats, and an occasional irate Pekinese."⁵⁰ Harp's bio described him as an anarchist communist "most noted for his poetry and art work" whose imprisonment by the state was "taken as both a compliment of his work and a mistake on the part of the State."⁵¹ While the races of pseudonymous members are unknown, Harp and Bosch were both white.

Though produced by Washington State Penitentiary prisoners, *Anarchist Black Dragon* was embedded in a transnational network of prison publications, "out-mate" activists, and anarchist politics. Publishing and distribution was made possible through the assistance of the Solidarity Committee based in Montreal, Quebec, as well as the libertarian communist group Count Down from Madison, Wisconsin, in issue 4 and the New Orleans eco-anarchist Bayou La Rose/Survival Network in issue 10.⁵² Anti-authoritarian and anarchist newspapers that weren't specifically dedicated to prison activism, such as *Fifth Estate* and *Open Road*, also published articles about the *Anarchist Black Dragon* and its members (*Fifth Estate* also helped distribute *Anarchist Black Dragon*). This network of outside support did not always function smoothly. The first issue of *Anarchist Black Dragon* never appeared (nor does it seem to exist in archives); after the ABDC sent the master copy to people on the outside to print and distribute, these outside allies went incommunicado for six months and never seem to have printed it.⁵³

In addition to receiving solidarity and aid from across borders, the *Anarchist Black Dragon* also supported other prison publications by prominently featuring

calls for other publications to be sent to the ABDC to be distributed locally in Washington.⁵⁴ It advertised subscriptions for anarchist, prison, and gay publications. For example, the February 1981 issue advertised subscriptions to five Canadian prisoner-run newspapers, including one that Carl Harp had contributed to, and thirty-four other radical newspapers, many of which were free to prisoners. However, solidarity from an anarchist newspaper did not always help other causes. In issue 5, the ABDC published an article titled "OOPS!" that remarks how Washington State Penitentiary's Creative Writers Workshop was under investigation by prison authorities after being promoted in a previous issue.⁵⁵

In addition to being partnered with activists in Canada, *Anarchist Black Dragon* reported on issues on both sides of the US-Canadian border. For example, one article from Women Against Prison, Vancouver wrote about violence against women in prisons. It recounted the story of Maureen Shirley Richards, who killed herself in Oakalla Prison's women's unit while awaiting trial. To counteract the lack of mainstream press coverage on Richards's death (they remarked that the only coverage was a three-inch article in the *Vancouver Sun*) and the warden's narrative that blamed other prisoners for not preventing the death, Women Against Prison, Vancouver took to the pages of the anarchist press. They recounted multiple instances of violence against women in Oakalla, claiming that with this context "the responsibility for the death of Maureen Richards lies with the prison system and its administrators."⁵⁶

As part of its network of prison activism and ethic of unity, the ABDC also actively solicited art and writing to be republished within its pages. As with the *Red Dragon*, this led to varied coverage that encompassed many prisons, prisoners, and causes. For example, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, a Black anarchist prisoner incarcerated in Illinois and Kansas during the publication of different issues of *Anarchist Black Dragon*, was featured often. Ervin remarked, "Carl Harp agrees with me that the anarchist should be in the forefront of anti-racist struggles and should direct propaganda and provide organizers to the Black and other national liberation struggles in North America."⁵⁷ Still, while *Anarchist Black Dragon* and its readers may have been nominally opposed to racism as a general concept, there were some fundamental disagreements on key details of anti-racist theory and practice.

A particularly contentious topic among both the collective and *Anarchist Black Dragon*'s readers was Black nationalism and separatism. Some *Anarchist Black Dragon* articles explicitly sought to make white prisoners fight against racism, stressing that white racism was a barrier to the unity of prisoners as a class.⁵⁸ Other articles, particularly by John Bosch, stressed "unity" to the point that they obscured existing social divisions and power imbalance between races.⁵⁹ This became controversial in an article in issue 8, when Bosch claimed that people deriding white radicals or the "White power structure" were themselves racist, even going as far as saying he couldn't "see too much difference between the Klan's anti-Black stand

and a Black anti-White position.”⁶⁰ Bosch intended this as a call for multiracial unity, necessary for both fighting oppressors and forging a new world without racism.

Readers wrote to the *Anarchist Black Dragon* to point out how this view was based on a fundamental misunderstanding of race and Black nationalism. In contrast to his earlier praises for Harp, Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin wrote a scathing response that called the article “simplistic and intellectually insulting” and Bosch a “naive fool” who “inhabits a fairy tale world” for not recognizing the reality of racism in America.⁶¹ Mark Cook responded as well, engaging with philosophical misunderstandings surrounding nationalism, resharing his primer on racism published earlier in *Red Dragon*, and noting anarchist philosophical priorities were “separate” but “just as important” as the national priorities of “Wymyn, Afrikaans, Hispanics, and others.”⁶² Issue 9, which included these responses, also noted that Bosch resigned from the Anarchist Black Dragon Collective with no explanation.

By issue 10, Bosch rejoined *Anarchist Black Dragon*, perhaps in part because Harp had died. One note from the ABDC claimed that Bosch’s article “was excellent (though not his best) because it generated more discussion . . . than any other contribution.”⁶³ Bosch doubled down on his argument in issue 10, focusing more on critiques of the nation-state but still denying Cook’s definition of racism and defending his false equivalencies. In issue 11, Black anarchist political prisoner Kuwasi Balagoon responded, pointing out the practical need for self-determination and national liberation movements in the face of racist systems. While Balagoon remarked that he did not believe most nationalists wanted “a separate state to be Bosch’s master,” he did think nationalists had a “limited scope” that could be criticized and expanded as more anarchists “joined the armed struggle and deliver[ed] a living model of what we intend” which could lead more people “to choose Anarchy.”⁶⁴

Mead was privately critical of Bosch’s piece, but for the most part *Red Dragon* and *Anarchist Black Dragon* tended to offer one another solidarity throughout their pages. Divisions between the two publications brewed over private and interpersonal, rather than public and ideological, conflicts. Ed Mead recalled that he started out “liking, even loving” Harp, but over time came to respect him less and less.⁶⁵ Mead claimed that Harp, despite publicly proclaiming his innocence in regard to his crimes of murder and two counts of rape, freely acknowledged his guilt in private and “sought to justify his behavior as a response to personal problems he was having.”⁶⁶ Mead came to understand Harp as an “opportunist who was more interested in personal aggrandizement than in furthering revolutionary principles.”⁶⁷ Despite these serious personal grievances with Harp, Mead thought *Anarchist Black Dragon* itself was “other than being Carl’s mouthpiece . . . an okay publication,” and he observed that “people on the streets liked it.”⁶⁸

Mead’s claims about Harp point to how prison publications were not only risky political endeavors but also potentially benefited authors, from increasing

their reputation to allowing them to advocate for themselves publicly. While Mead raised doubts about Harp's claims to innocence, *Anarchist Black Dragon* also aired other serious personal grievances, sometimes with reliable evidence. In 1979, Harp was publicly raped with a baton by a prison guard, a story which he recounted in detail in the *Anarchist Black Dragon*. This claim was substantiated by witnesses and documented injuries, leading to an outpouring of public support, but prosecutors did not seek charges for the guards involved.⁶⁹

Harp and the *Anarchist Black Dragon* feared retaliation from the officers who raped him, warning of rumors of a contract that they put out on his life. On September 5, 1981, Harp was found dead in his cell of an apparent suicide that some thought was staged. He was grieved and the cause of his death was debated throughout anarchist and prison newspapers. Despite heated debates with John Bosch about race, Mark Cook wrote that Harp was in a "constant state of developing political responsibility towards society and against authoritarianism" and should be "saluted for his contributions."⁷⁰ Cook did not believe that Harp killed himself but instead "long expected he would die abruptly as a direct or indirect result of the oppressive pressure applied by the state."⁷¹ Based on what he had heard within the prison, Mead believed specifically in the "indirect" killing explanation, claiming in *Red Dragon* that the "pigs did Carl in, but not [directly] . . . They beat him, segregated him for long periods without cause, gassed him, banished him, and guards even raped him in the anus with a riot baton."⁷² This explanation elicited anger from those who believed Harp more was more literally murdered, to which Mead replied "don't direct your anger at the RD [*Red Dragon*], aim it at the system that perpetuates the conditions in which men would rather die than endure. According to *WSP News Service*, the suicide [rate] at Walla Walla has increased by 3,000 percent."⁷³

After Harp's death, *Anarchist Black Dragon*'s original content contained less breadth and incisiveness. Issue 11, the final issue, featured more on Black nationalism (which Bosch noted he was tired of debating) as well as a seemingly impossible plan for a utopian community called the Proudhon Project. While still incarcerated, Bosch asked that readers mail him materials so he and the ABDC could build their own anarchist country (to Bosch, the only obstacle that prison posed to this was that the administration only allowed brand new construction tools).⁷⁴ This was a regrettable turn for a paper that was also still copying stories on more realistically actionable issues, such as an article calling for solidarity with American Indian Movement prisoner Leonard Peltier. The New Orleans, Louisiana-based eco-anarchist group Bayou La Rose/Survival Network took over the publishing for this final issue, and they included with it a petition to support Maliseet Nation (Wəlastəkwewiyik) fishing rights in Canada. While *Anarchist Black Dragon* showed how prison newspapers, including those published by white prisoners, could draw together causes like prisoner rights and Indigenous rights, its controversies and decline also

demonstrated how fragile these connections could be. Though some of the specific circumstances are extreme, its decline was woefully typical for prison media, which have been historically plagued by censorship, repression, harm toward prison publishers, and the practical difficulties of publishing behind bars.

“Dragons Will Fly Out”: The Aftermath of the *Anarchist Black Dragon* and *Red Dragon*

In addition to leading to the eventual end of the anarchist paper, Carl Harp's death demoralized John Bosch. No anarchist publications seem to appear under Bosch's name after 1982, though a “J.B.” who one response notes has “paid some dues” did write an anarchist polemic in *Fifth Estate* in 1990.⁷⁵ Bosch reappears in newspaper coverage from 1996 until 2000, when he had terminal lung cancer and was found guilty of interstate stalking.⁷⁶ Although lacking in Bosch's perspective, details from this coverage include Bosch suffering from homelessness, handing out a “15-page anarchist statement on bombs and his violent past” to a Wiccan church, and attempting to cast a spell that would bind him with a church member forever.⁷⁷

Following Harp's death, Ron Reed of the Solidarity Committee in Montreal wrote a scathing op-ed to *Open Road* called “Armchair Anarchism” that criticized the “near bankruptcy of radicals who do little more than analyze and publish.” Statements to a similar effect were made in the *Anarchist Black Dragon* in issue 10, which also lambasted an unnamed Marxist-Leninist prison group. Reed described how leftists repeatedly ignored his appeals to have them publish news on both earlier threats against Harp's life and what Reed believed to be Harp's murder. As Reed described, leftist publishers asked Harp's widow for proof that he was innocent before they would act on his behalf. Reed concluded that too many radicals were more concerned with publishing and reading rather than action, himself included. He said that he was “finishing my commitment to the upcoming issue of *Anarchist Black Dragon* and returning to more direct participation. . . . I've co-opted myself too much as a producer and distributor of radical publications.”⁷⁸

Though the *Anarchist Black Dragon* was over and its publishers disillusioned, parts of the anarchist movement more broadly remained actively involved in prison organizing and publishing. Notably, Anarchist Black Cross, a political-prisoner-support federation founded in the early twentieth century, has continued assisting some prison newspapers but primarily has focused on providing aid to political prisoners. Mark Cook, who was incarcerated longer than any other George Jackson Brigade member, recalled a primarily anarchist group in Seattle, along with Mead, being involved in the successful campaign for his release in 2000.⁷⁹

Anarchist activist Bill Dunne started *Washington Prison News Service* while he was incarcerated at Washington State Penitentiary. *Washington Prison News Service* prioritized quick news reporting, publishing thirty-six issues of plain-text bulletins between 1982 and 1983. Dunne later carried on this work with the

international, Toronto-based *Prison News Service*, which published fifty-two issues from 1987 to 1995. Although the *Anarchist Black Dragon* alone was short-lived and controversial, it should also be understood as one project in a longer history of anarchist activism and publication against prisons, in Washington and across borders.

Meanwhile, Ed Mead and fellow Marxist-Leninist prisoner Paul Wright attempted to relaunch *Red Dragon* in 1989. When those efforts fell through due to the ambition of the project and a lack of support, they turned to a law-focused publication that became *Prison Legal News*. The first three issues were banned in all Washington prisons, prison officials ransacked Wright's cell for any writing materials and anything related to the publication, their outside supporter refused to print the second issue, and Wright was disciplined for reporting on racist beatings of Clallam Bay prisoners. Wright later recalled that his punishment received more attention than the beatings themselves.⁸⁰ The publication, born through this history of radicalism and censorship, quickly gained traction. Its legal focus was both of practical interest to prisoners and professional interest to the legal community, including many who could pay for subscriptions. Part of the condition of Mead's 1993 parole was that he could no longer communicate with felons, preventing him from being involved with *Prison Legal News* even after he was ostensibly free.

Mead has occasionally written for *Prison Legal News* since being released from parole but has mostly focused on editing a succession of other newspapers focused on prison issues. Notably, he published the *Abolitionist* while incarcerated in Monroe, Washington, in the 1980s, which successfully exposed the repeated digital rape of prisoners under the guise of contraband checks, leading to successful lawsuits and reforms. He was also the director of California Prison Focus, and for around fifteen years edited its newspaper *Prison Focus*. Other projects of his were more short-lived, like the *Kite* newsletter for Washington and Oregon prisons, which sought to agitate in favor of a prisoners' labor strike, and only published four or five issues before ending due to heavy prison censorship.⁸¹

At the time of writing in July 2020, Mead is the editor of *Prison Covid*, a newsletter concerning the COVID-19 pandemic in prisons. The lead piece in the August issue by Dan Berger, a historian involved with the Washington Prison History Project, asks the question: "Why has COVID-19 not led to more humanitarian releases?" Berger began with a story of another political prisoner from the 1970s, the Black Panther Jalil Muntaqim, who had been incarcerated since 1971 and was still incarcerated despite having a severe case of COVID-19. He then remarked that "even the most liberal of US governors would rather risk their prisons turning into mass graves than offer the faintest of admissions that mass incarceration is unnecessary for public safety."⁸² The problem of COVID-19 in prisons highlighted the deep violence at the core of the prison system; meanwhile there was a growing national movement to "defund the police." Berger asked readers to consider how "in moving to defund the police, we also must act to dismantle the prison system where many

Figure 4. *Red Dragon* illustration from *Prison Covid*, August 2020, p. 8. The same image is used by Mead in earlier publications, such as *Rock* in 2015, which also had the same layout as *Prison Covid*.



victims of police violence reside.”⁸³ The rest of the issue underscored exactly how incarcerated people were victims of violence, including data on how Black inmates made up a disproportionate share of COVID-19 cases in prisons and stories on how COVID-19 cases were rising sharply in prisons even as the curve appeared to have plateaued nationally. Although Mead noted that *Prison Covid* was designed to avoid censorship, the issue also contained calls for action ranging from the release of prisoners to the abolition of prisons. *Prison Covid* highlights Mead’s and others’ ongoing efforts to balance the need to avoid censorship with the goal of critiquing and exposing the violence of the prison system. The publication’s ongoing concerns with the health of still-incarcerated political prisoners of the 1970s also points to the ongoing, lived consequences of this history. The newsletter also contains an illustration of a red dragon with a message of radical change, linking Mead’s recent response to the pandemic in prisons with his past work in *Red Dragon*.

Conclusion

By creating their own press and often evading prison censors, radicals generated public awareness of prison conditions. The editors and writers of these newspapers were also able to pursue other forms of political action, such as prison strikes, community organizing, and in some cases violent activity like hostage taking. These actions were interconnected with prison newspapers in a mutually reinforcing cycle of organization, action, and propaganda. Organized activities helped raise interest in prison news and unite political prisoners toward longer-term collective causes, including newspapers, which in turn published calls to action and news on actions from prisoners’ perspectives. As Carl Harp wrote, propaganda and action were “so interrelated that to place one above the other is ridiculous.”⁸⁴

This interrelationship was also true of politics on the inside and outside of prisons. Prisons are often imagined as spaces that are completely removed from the rest of society, but they are in fact porous. Similarly, prisoners are often imagined as confined, separated, and politically immobilized. In some regards, these are accurate reflections of the conditions that incarceration imposes. While circumstances vary across institutions and states, many prisoners cannot vote, their communication is often restricted, and they are incarcerated in places like Washington State Penitentiary that are both walled off and intentionally far removed from prisoners' home communities. But prisoners still communicate, still circumvent restrictions, and still find ways to resist incarceration and participate in public discourse. Radicals make up a small minority of all prisoners, but they have played a historically significant role in both anti-prison movements and the "outside" political left. Histories of the left should take prisoners' contributions and involvement more seriously.

While the newspapers forged networked connections between different people, spaces, and movements, they did not lead to one cohesive or unified anti-prison movement. Despite their expressed hopes for both unity and anti-racism, in some instances, these publications sparked conflict between inside and outside activists, disagreements between the white left and Black left, and further repression by the state (though, in other cases, these newspapers fought against these same problems). The most common pitfall was that these publications simply struggled to stay afloat, with a largely incarcerated, impoverished audience that was unable to devote much financial support to radical publications. Paul Wright attributed the relative longevity of *Prison Legal News* to the fact that more prisoners were interested in paying for news that could tangibly relate to their immediate legal concerns, a gap that the newspaper filled while also maintaining a critical perspective.⁸⁵ This could be viewed as the result of social censorship, where more transgressive ideas are self-censored and therefore excluded from the public sphere, but Wright also favored this as a rhetorical strategy, remarking that reactionary prisoners will not be convinced by a communist polemic, but some may become more informed by accessible, critical media.⁸⁶ Still, like news media in general, the prison news landscape has largely constricted over the past several decades, with countless publications shutting down and few ever making it from behind prison walls to a sizable outside audience.

As a work of history, this article has been marred by the conditions, censors, and violence of prisons; countless prison publications were unable to be archived and analyzed, and only some publishers were alive to be interviewed. But this is not just history, and violence is not merely being perpetrated against knowledge. Many of the people involved in these publications are still alive, and some are even still incarcerated. Bill Dunne, the anarchist who edited *Washington Prison News Service*, for example, is still imprisoned at the time of writing in July 2020. His efforts to get parole have been repeatedly denied, and he has quoted the parole

commission proclaiming that his “continued association and affiliation with anarchist organizations is evidence you [Dunne] still harbor anti-authoritarian views that are not compatible with the welfare of society or with the conditions of parole.”⁸⁷ What should not be forgotten as we note Dunne’s work on *Washington Prison News Service* is that his life is still being taken away by imprisonment. Others, like Carl Harp, had their lives ended early, at least in part by the prison system. Meanwhile, as prison newspaper publishers have highlighted, our current approach to justice often exacerbates issues like rape culture and inequality rather than solving them. Ultimately, by studying those who have struggled against the prison system from within, we not only see the need for a free prison press but also for transformative change so that the categories of prison writing, prison publications, and prisoners, all grounded in a fundamentally violent institution, may one day no longer describe our present.

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Notes

1. This article uses the language favored in the publications analyzed, including the use of *prisoner* over *incarcerated person*. Note that when people are called “prisoners” in reference to their status during a specific historical moment, this does not indicate a permanent identity (i.e., some people discussed here are still alive and are no longer incarcerated). Some prisoners and activists note the importance of the term *prisoner* to clearly identify the specific social position or class that is actively constituted by imprisonment.
2. Minnesota State Prison’s *Prison Mirror* started in 1887 but is operated by the prison administration, while *Prison Legal News* is independent. *Prison Legal News* readership data is calculated on the basis of two figures: its 2018 readership survey found that 90 percent of readers shared their copies with others, sharing with ten or more readers on average, and a 2018 legal case specified that it had seven thousand print subscribers. See *Prison Legal News v. Secretary, Florida State Department of Corrections*, No. 15-14220 (11th Cir. 2018).
3. McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 6.
4. McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 6, 10.
5. Morris, *Jailhouse Journalism*, 193.
6. Jorgensen, “Criminal Diversions,” 2.
7. Jorgensen, “Criminal Diversions,” 10.
8. Jorgensen, “Criminal Diversions,” 13.
9. *Sunfighter*, July–August 1975, 1–2.
10. Jerry Brakebill #87736, “Dear Sunfighter,” *Sunfighter*, July–August 1975, 2.
11. Robert H. Wilson, “Six O’clock News,” *Sunfighter*, July–August 1975, 2.
12. “With a Little Help . . .” *Sunfighter*, July–August 1975, 3.

13. *Sunfighter*, July–August 1975, 2.
14. Burton-Rose, *Creating a Movement with Teeth*, 38–39, 53, 257.
15. Burton-Rose, *Creating a Movement with Teeth*, 257.
16. McCoy, Hoffman, and Berger, *Concrete Mama*, ix–9. Also, see Judd, "The Trickle Down Theory of Prisoner Rehabilitation," 13–15. For Washington State Penitentiary prison population data, see Murray, *Unusual Punishment*.
17. Mark Cook, correspondence with author, July 18, 2020.
18. Anonymous [Ed Mead], "The Anti-Exploits of Men against Sexism," ca. 2012, 3–9.
19. Mead, *Lumpen*, 293.
20. Mead, *Lumpen*, 278, 293.
21. Mead, correspondence with author, July 14, 2020.
22. Bay Area Research Collective, *Dragon*, August 1975, 3.
23. Bay Area Research Collective, *Dragon*, August 1975, 3.
24. Mead, correspondence with author, July 14, 2020.
25. Werbel, *Lust on Trial*, 9.
26. Werbel, *Lust on Trial*, 9.
27. Ed Mead, "Editorial Comment," *Red Dragon*, April–June 1982.
28. Mark Cook, "Prisons in a Racist Society," *Red Dragon* 6, July–August 1981.
29. Mark Cook, "Prisons in a Racist Society," *Red Dragon* 6, July–August 1981, 13.
30. *Red Dragon*, July–August 1981, 2.
31. Therese Coupe, "A Brief Note on the History of Irish Hunger Strikes," *Red Dragon*, July–August 1981, 14.
32. Ed Mead, "Editorial Comment," *Red Dragon*, April–June 1982.
33. "Editorial Comments," *Red Dragon*, January–March 1982.
34. "Editorial Comments," *Red Dragon*, January–March 1982.
35. Mead, correspondence with author, July 14, 2020.
36. Mead, correspondence with author, July 14, 2020.
37. "Demands of the Washington Prisoners," *Red Dragon*, January–February 1980.
38. Ed Mead, "Threat of Censorship Grows," *Red Dragon*, April–June 1982.
39. Ed Mead, "Censorship (cont.)," *Red Dragon*, April–June 1982.
40. Ed Mead, "Editorial Comments," *Red Dragon*, April–June 1982.
41. Ed Mead, "Editorial Comments," *Red Dragon*, April–June 1982.
42. See "The Dragon Speaks," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 11, ca. 1983.
43. Carl Harp, "Politics and the Prison Struggle," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, February 1981.
44. Ed Mead recalled only Harp and Bosch being involved in the editing of *Anarchist Black Dragon* and did not know any of the people with pseudonyms. Mead, correspondence with author, July 14, 2020.
45. See *Red Dragon*, January–February 1980, 15, and *Red Dragon*, April–June 1982, 2.
46. ABDC, "Anarchy Is . . ." *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 2, September 1978.
47. Harp, "Criticism and Analysis."
48. John Bosch and Carl Harp, "The Police," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 8, Valentine 1981.
49. *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 3, December 1978, 9.
50. *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 4, February 1979, 18.
51. *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 4, February 1979, 12.
52. For Count Down, see *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 4, February 1979, 24. The Solidarity Committee also guest edited the newspaper at least once; see *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 8, Valentine 1981, 2.

53. *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 4, February 1979, 23.
54. "Anarchist Black Dragon Contacts," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 8, Valentine 1981, 2.
55. *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 5, ca. 1979, 4–7.
56. Women Against Prison Vancouver, "We Will Leave No Prison Deaths Forgotten," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 8, Valentine 1981, 6.
57. "Kombo," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 8, Valentine 1981, 16.
58. See, for example, ABDC, "Against Racism/Smash Fascism! Unity," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 3, December 1978, 3.
59. For an earlier example, see ABDC, "The Dragon Speaks," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 5, ca. 1979, 2.
60. John Bosch, "Dragons and Dragons," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 8, Valentine 1981, 17.
61. "Dragons and Dragons, Two Responses," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 9, Summer 1981, 14.
62. "Dragons and Dragons, Two Responses," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 9, Summer 1981, 14.
63. ABDC, "Concerning 'Dragons and Dragons,'" *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 10, Spring 1982.
64. Kuwasi Balagoon, "Power," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 11, ca. 1983.
65. Mead, *Lumpen*, 246.
66. Mead, correspondence with author, July 14, 2020.
67. Mead, correspondence with author, July 14, 2020.
68. Mead, correspondence with author, July 14, 2020.
69. "Walla Walla Prison Revolt Continues," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 6, ca. 1979.
70. Mark Cook, "Carl Harp," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 10, Spring 1982.
71. Mark Cook, "Carl Harp," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 10, Spring 1982.
72. Ed Mead, "Letters," *Red Dragon*, April–June 1982.
73. Ed Mead, "Letters," *Red Dragon*, April–June 1982.
74. ABDC, "Project Proudhon," *Anarchist Black Dragon*, no. 11, ca. 1983.
75. Lewis Cannon, "Commoditized Good Life," *Fifth Estate*, no. 335, Winter 1990–91. While these common initials are not exactly proof that this is the same JB, it is worth noting that Bosch also signed *Fifth Estate* articles with "J.B." earlier; see J.B., "Anarcho-Tripe," *Fifth Estate*, no. 297, April 18, 1979.
76. Clary, "Wiccan Priestess Says She Was Stalked."
77. Clary, "Wiccan Priestess Says She Was Stalked."
78. Reed, "Armchair Anarchism," *Open Road*, Spring 1982.
79. Dan Berger, interview with Mark Cook and Ed Mead, November 14, 2012, University of Washington Archives, Washington Prison History Project, digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/p16786coll15/id/431/.
80. Wright, "The History of Prison Legal News."
81. Ed Mead, correspondence with author, July 14, 2020.
82. Berger, "Why Has COVID-19 Not Led to More Humanitarian Releases?," *Prison Covid*, August 2020, 1.
83. Berger, "Why Has COVID-19 Not Led to More Humanitarian Releases?," *Prison Covid*, August 2020, 1.
84. Harp, "Criticism and Analysis," 6–7.
85. Paul Wright, interview with author, July 15, 2020.
86. Paul Wright, interview with author, July 15, 2020.
87. Dunne, "U.S. Parole Commission Just Says No."

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