# AFFIRMATIVE : PRISON STRIKES

### V/C

#### I Strongly affirm today's resolution :  A just government ought to recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike.

#### MY VALUE FOR TODAY'S ROUND IS SOCIETAL WELFARE TO DETERMINE A WELL SOCIETY, WE USE THE CRITERION MATERIAL ANALYSIS

#### Burns in 39 explains:

Emile Burns, 1939, What is Marxism? He was a prominent british economist who wrote on economic perspectives. https://www.marxists.org/archive/burns-emile/1939/what-is-marxism/ch06.html

CRITERION : But even within capitalist society there is what is known as “solidarity” among the workers – the sense of a common interest, a common responsibility. This is not an idea which someone has thought of and put into the heads of workers: it is an idea which arises out of the material conditions of working-class life, the fact that they get their living in the same way, working alongside each other. The typical grasping individualist, on the other hand, the man with no sense of social or collective responsibility, is the capitalist surrounded by competitors, all struggling to survive by killing each other. Of course, the ideas of the dominant class – the competition and rivalry instead of solidarity – tend to spread among the workers, especially among those who are picked out by the employers for special advancement of any kind. But the fundamental basis for the outlook of any class (as distinct from individuals) is the material conditions of life, the way it gets its living.

Hence it follows that the outlook of people can be changed by changing their material conditions, the way in which they get their living. No example could be better than the change which has been brought about in the outlook of the peasantry in the Soviet Union. Everyone who wrote of the peasant in Tsarist Russia described his self-seeking, grasping individualism. Critics of the revolution used to assert that the peasant could never be converted to socialism, that the revolution would he broken by the peasantry. And it is perfectly true that the outlook of the peasantry was so limited, so fixed by their old conditions of life, that they could never have been “converted” to socialism by arguments, or forced into socialism by compulsion. What these critics did not understand, as they were not Marxists, was that a model farm, a tractor station near them, would make them see in practice that better crops were got by large-scale methods. They were won for machinery and methods which could only be operated by breaking down their individual landmarks and working the land collectively. And this in turn broke down the separatism of their outlook. Now they are settling down to a collective basis of living, and they are becoming a new type of peasantry – a collective peasantry, with a sense of collective responsibility, which is already some distance along the road to a social outlook.

When therefore the material basis in any country is socialist production and distribution, when the way in which all the people get their living is by working for society as a whole, then the sense of social responsibility so to speak develops naturally; people no longer need to be convinced that the social principle is right. It is not a question of an abstract moral duty having to establish itself over the instinctive desires of “human nature;” human nature itself is transformed by practice, by custom.

**JUDGE, weigh this peasant metaphor highly. It explains how social change is preceded by material conditions. Until peasants in tsarist russia had a change of conditions, they could not make social improvement because their view was limited by simply surviving. This means that the only weighable impacts in the round are the material, because our material conditions lead up to what we decide is a social right.**

Definitions:

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/worker

According to The Merriam Webster a worker is: one that works especially at manual or industrial labor or with a particular material or a person who does a particular job to earn money

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/unconditional

According to The Merriam Webster unconditional is: not conditional or limited: ABSOLUTE, UNQUALIFIED or not limited in any way : complete and absolute

According to Encyclopedia of American Law A RIGHT IS : ("Right." West's Encyclopedia of American Law, edition 2. 2008. The Gale Group 29 Oct. 2021 https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Right )

an entitlement to something, whether to concepts like justice and due process, These rights include various freedoms, protection against interference with enjoyment of life and property, civil rights enjoyed by citizens such as voting and access to the courts, natural rights accepted by civilized societies, human rights to protect people throughout the world from terror, torture, barbaric practices and deprivation of civil rights and profit from their labor, and such American constitutional guarantees as the right to freedoms of speech, press, religion, assembly and petition. Or just, fair, correct.

According to The Merriam Webster strike is: a work stoppage by a body of workers to enforce compliance with demands made on an employer or a temporary stoppage of activities in protest against an act or condition

# My Sole Contention: PRISON STRIKES

#### SUB-POINT A :  RECIDIVISM

#### **The lack of pay prisoners** receive **raise the rates of recidivism**

SMITH 18 (Mitch Smith covers the Midwest and the Great Plains. Since joining The Times in 2014, he has written extensively about gun violence, oil pipelines, state-level politics and the national debate over police tactics. He is based in Chicago. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/26/us/national-prison-strike2018.html?.?mc=aud_dev&adkeywords=auddevgate&gclid=Cj0KCQjwnoqLBhD4ARIsAL5JedI1F62xcBfFNelGLDlUwnt5bXNy8rhw2shaQXOMVv62_TlLfFPoOc4aAqV0EALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds>) lm

The inmates at North Carolina’s Hyde Correctional Institution hung three banners from the prison fence last week as supporters gathered outside. One sign asked for better food; another requested parole; the third said, “In solidarity.” The protest came in support of a nationwide prisoner strike to call attention to the low inmate wages, decrepit facilities and harsh sentences that organizers say plague prison populations across the country. Though it is unclear how widespread such demonstrations have been, activists said they had shown a new ability to reach inmates across state lines at a time when prison unrest and in-custody deaths are frequently in the news. “Prisoners aren’t oblivious to their reality,” said Paul Wright, the executive director of the Human Rights Defense 88Center and a longtime critic of prison conditions. “They see people dying around them. They see the financial exploitation. They see the injustice.” Inmate protests have been happening for generations, but it is only in the last few years that organizers have had success coordinating from penitentiary to penitentiary and state to state. In 2010, [Georgia inmates used contraband cellphones](https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/12/us/12prison.html) to coordinate protests across at least six prisons. And in 2016, prisoners in several states stopped reporting for work to protest their wages. Much of the recent activism has focused on inmate pay, which can range from nothing at all in states like South Carolina and Texas to, at best, a few dollars for a day of hard labor in other places. Prisoners frequently refer to it as “slave labor,” and organizers of this year’s strike have called for inmates to be paid the prevailing wage for the cleaning, cooking and other work they perform behind bars. “People are starting to realize how disgusting it is how human beings can be paid pennies,” said Amani Sawari, a spokeswoman for Jailhouse Lawyers Speak, a group organizing the strike. The current pay leaves many prisoners struggling to afford phone calls to family members or toothpaste and deodorant from the commissary, experts said. Even after years of hard work inside, they frequently have little or nothing saved to help with rent or other necessities when they are released. “If they were being paid — even something less than minimum wage, but some reasonable amount of money — they could get out and have at least a little bit of money to get started again,” said Michele Deitch, a senior lecturer at the University of Texas at Austin who once served as a court-appointed monitor of that state’s prison system. Ms. Sawari said inmates in several states planned to participate in the strike, which started last week and is scheduled to run through Sept. 9. In addition to increased pay and better living conditions, strikers were calling for changes to sentencing laws and expanded access to rehabilitation and educational opportunities for inmates, among [other requests](https://incarceratedworkers.org/news/august-21st-going-be-lit). Ms. Sawari’s group has suggested that inmates could stop reporting for work, stop eating or perform subtler protests, such as no longer buying supplies from the prison commissary. She said word of the protests has spread through the news media, word of mouth and outreach to different prisons. “Prisoners have heard on the radio, they’ve seen on TV,” said Ms. Sawari, whose group has also supported demonstrations in recent days outside of prisons. “We know that this is widespread. We just don’t know what specific actions and what specific prisoners.” Prison officials in several states downplayed the impact of the protests and, in many cases, denied that they were occurring. Knowing what is happening in prisons in real time is notoriously difficult. When strikes played out across the country in 2016, activists said it often took weeks or months to fully understand the scope of the protests. Members of the public cannot witness what is going on inside a prison, inmates are limited in their ability to relay their accounts and corrections departments have little incentive to publicize discord. In California last week, activists circulated video that appeared to show an inmate turning down a burrito and saying he was on a hunger strike. State officials said they could not confirm that the footage was real. “I’m aware of the video but I have no way of identifying the inmate in the video or verifying where it was recorded,” Vicky Waters, a spokeswoman for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, said in an email. “I can tell you we have had no reported incidents or activities from inmates related to the national prison strike.” Activists said detainees at a federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Washington State were on a hunger strike. A department spokeswoman, Lori K. Haley, said Sunday that those were “false rumors.” Officials in Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, New York and South Carolina, where protest activity had either been reported or rumored, all denied on Sunday that anything was amiss at their facilities. Officials in Ohio, New Mexico and at the Federal Bureau of Prisons did not respond to requests for comment. “There are no strikes occurring in Georgia,” wrote Joan Heath, a corrections spokeswoman there, in a message that was typical of the other states. “We have been, and will continue to monitor the situation.” Advocates working on behalf of inmates say there is an urgency in this year’s strike, which they are convinced is gaining momentum despite the lack of corroboration. In April, [seven inmates died](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/16/us/south-carolina-prison-riot.html) in a riot in a South Carolina prison, and already in August, at least [10 Mississippi inmates have died](http://www.mdoc.ms.gov/Pages/Commissioner-Hall%E2%80%99s-Statement-on-Deaths-in-MDOC%E2%80%99s-Custody.aspx), most in cases that officials believe were from natural causes. By inmates stopping work and calling attention to the problems, their supporters said, there is a hope that conditions might eventually improve. “Do we expect that, hey, there’s a prison strike and all of a sudden tomorrow prisoners are going to be paid the minimum wage and get adequate health care?” asked Mr. Wright, of the Human Rights Defense Center. “Probably not,” he said, “but it’s a process.

#### SUBPOINT B :  INHUMANE CONDITIONS AND TREATMENT

#### UNICOR Prison Recycling Harms Workers, Communities, the Environment

Jackson & Shuman 06’ ((Anita Sarah Jackson is a researcher for the Center for Environmental Health (CEH). CEH protects the public from environmental and consumer health hazards. They are committed to environmental justice, reducing the use of toxic chemicals, supporting communities in their quest for a safer environment, and corporate accountability. CEH changes corporate behavior through education, litigation, and advocacy. Aaron Shuman is a researcher for the Prison Activist Resource Center (PARC). PARC is an all-volunteer grassroots group committed to producing materials that expose human rights violations behind prison walls while fundamentally challenging the rapid expansion of the prison industrial complex. PARC provides support to prisoners, their family members, and communities, and information to educators and activists. <https://static.prisonpolicy.org/scans/ToxicSweatshops.pdf))//LM>

In the past few years, the storm of complaints about UNICOR’s recycling program from prisoners, prison guards, and others has brought these hidden sweatshops into public view. Since 1994, UNICOR has built a lucrative business that employs prisoners to recycle electronic waste (e-waste). A massive array of ewaste is largely hidden from view, as are the workers who handle the waste. Over 100,000 computers become obsolete in the U.S. every day.1 And that’s only the computers. E-waste includes computers, personal digital assistants, TVs, and other electronic devices. E-waste is a doubleedged sword: it is rich in precious materials that can be recycled, but it also contains a cocktail of hazardous chemicals such as lead, mercury, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), and cadmium. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 4 This report examines the e-waste recycling programs run by Federal Prison Industries (FPI), a government-owned corporation that does business under the trade name UNICOR. Founded in 1934 as a work program to keep prisoners occupied, FPI has become a large government contractor, generating over $765 million in sales in 2005. UNICOR’s connections gave it access to lucrative government contracts and easily made it a force in the e-waste recycling industry. As journalist Elizabeth Grossman states, “With revenue of ten million dollars in 2004, seven locations ... and roughly one thousand inmate employees who in 2004 processed nearly 44 million pounds of electronic equipment, UNICOR is one of the country’s largest electronics recyclers, and its prices are tough to beat.”2 Unfortunately, UNICOR’s low prices come at the expense of its captive labor force. Some types of discarded electronics are considered hazardous waste by the EPA and other regulatory agencies, researchers, industries, and advocates across the globe. As states become aware that these hazards may leach into and contaminate soil and groundwater, more are banning televisions, monitors, and sometimes other electronics from landfills. Quoted in sidebars throughout this report, you will hear directly from prisoners, the front-line workers recycling ewaste for UNICOR. The conditions prisoners describe are dire. UNICOR’s captive laborers work in conditions similar to those in sweatshops across the world. Prisoners have few of the labor rights and protections other U.S. workers enjoy. Prisoners are excluded from the Fair Labor Standards Act and insufficiently protected by regulatory agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which cannot conduct surprise inspections. The quotations presented in this report are drawn from letters and affidavits received by Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition. Identifying characteristics have been stripped due to reports of firings and retaliation against prisoners. While this report is grounded in prisoners’ experiences, you also will meet responsible recyclers, contractors, and prison staff who recognize the problems of exploitation in e-waste. Government hearings and investigations confirm that serious problems exist. As U.S. Special Counsel Scott Bloch stated: Federal employees and prisoners inhaling poisons due to the neglect of their superiors, and federal agencies whitewashing the investigation. It sounds like a Hollywood dramatization like Shawshank Redemption, or a John Grisham novel with wild conspiracy theories. In this case, however, workers and inmates were exposed to hazardous materials without protection... and the Bureau of Prisons and Federal Prison Industries did nothing to stop it, and indeed frustrated attempts to investigate the matter... Now some people might say, prisoners getting poisoned? What’s the big deal? Who cares? We do.3 This report’s principal findings are outlined below. “What I and others think is the funniest thing about this recycling plant is that the STATE made it illegal to dispose of computers and computer peripherals in their waste and garbage dumps, because it is hazardous to the health of STATE citizens. Guess who our biggest provider of old and recyclable computers and monitors is?? Yup, you guessed it: the good ol' STATE!!! They are too dangerous for their law-abiding citizens, who need to be protected, but they aren't too hazardous to federal prison inmates incarcerated in STATE, who are not given all the information, the correct or adequate tools...and who are not being given adequate safety gear to protect them from the hazardous wastes that the citizens are being protected from. Ironic, isn't it??!!” —Prisoner A 5 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY KEY FINDINGS UNICOR has failed to adequately protect prisoners and staff from exposure to toxics. When dismantling electronics, prisoners handling toxic components need ventilation, proper tools, and adequate protective gear, as do prison staff working in the area. UNICOR facilities repeatedly failed to provide proper recycling procedures to captive laborers and staff supervisors. UNICOR’s policy of measured modernization— limiting automation in order to maximize the number of prisoners who work—increases the risk of workplace injuries to prisoners and guards. The adverse health effects of long-term exposure to the toxic materials in e-waste are costs that families and/or public health services will bear— not UNICOR. UNICOR has failed to protect communities from hazardous materials. Poor workplace safety practices affect communities as well. Leroy Smith, a prison health and safety manager, has expressed concerns about prison guards who go home to their families with dust on their clothes. Smith’s attorney Mary Dryovage and Jeff Ruch, director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, have noted that Smith’s claims “were not fully investigated,” including charges that UNICOR disposed of “hazardous metals” and “contaminated mopheads...at county landfills” and that “mop water would be disposed down sewage drains, which would be released into the city waste water treatment plant.”4 Concern about the community health and safety effects of prisons is in keeping with the findings of the recently concluded national, bipartisan Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons, which open, “What happens inside jails and prisons does not stay inside jails and prisons. It comes home with prisoners when they are released and with corrections officers at the end of each day’s shift .... It influences the safety, health, and prosperity of us all.”

#### PLAN : A just government ought to recognize an unconditional right of prisoners to strikeyyyyyyyyy

#### SUBPOINT C : SOLVENCY

#### WARRANT ONE : LEGAL PROTECTIONS

Supporting the unconditional right to strike is key for prison strikes to be legally permitted. Current levels of legal protection allow for massive judicial influence by shutting down strikes. Having the unconditional right forces overhaul of statutes and laws that allow governmental overreach. Harvard Law Review states that “evaluates the legal framework governing prison strikes, demonstrating that such strikes likely do not receive sufficient protections under either the Constitution or federal and state statutes and therefore can be shut down by prison administrators without fear of judicial oversight.” But if the judicial branch would recognize these prisoners right to strike to be one that is unconditional, there conditions would improve.

#### WARRANT TWO: SOLIDARITY

The aff promotes solidarity with prison strikes because it links directly to our v/c because we plan on improving the material lives.  By promoting solidarity with these workers we reveal the iron curtain. Prisoners are stripped of much of their individual rights. Much of the inhumane violence done to prisoners is isolated from society. Out of sight out of mind. The aff uncovers this iron curtain by showing solidarity with prisoners by our definition of workers, it shows that prisoners ought to to be able to unconditionally strike because they are workers as well. This gives me two arguments. A. More solidarity empowers these strikes in the status quo creating more advancements for the conditions of prisoners and B. gives prisoners legal access to the category of worker. Solidity spills up to more legal protections when it comes to labor and strikes. The restoration leads to better prison conditions and better negotiations during strikes and better accurately describes the forced labor prisoners are expected to do. Harvard law review explains “

As the Marshall Project states, “[s]ociety won’t fix a prison system it can’t see”; peaceful prison strikes like the 2018 strike, however, draw back the “iron curtain” of prison walls, bringing to light many of the pressing issues described above.”

THE THRESHOLD OF VOTING AFF IS PROVING THAT THE UNCONDITIONAL RIGHT TO STRIKE WILL IMPROVE PRISONERS LIVES MATERIALLY. THE RESTORATION OF RIGHTS, THE IMPROVEMENT OF CONDITIONS AND THE AWARENESS OF S/Q STRIKES, ARE ALL INDIVIDUAL REASONS TO VOTE AFF. I STAND OPEN FOR C/X

### AFF OVERVIEW

MY VALUE