

## From behind the wall

by Larry Baker 35021  
O.S.P. Salem Correspondent

"There are only two kinds of people in American prisons: Good Black men and bad white men. The bad white men include guards and fellow prisoners alike, and most Black men are in prison for being Black."

Ted Mahar, the Oregonian  
May 12, 1977

On Saturday afternoon, May 7, 1977 over a hundred Black prisoners assembled on the recreation yard of the Oregon State Penitentiary, for the main purpose of discussing steps to protest the confinement of Harold Hamick, John Polite, and William Farmer, who earlier in the week had been placed in Solitary (The Hole).

The three Black men were accused of having a verbal altercation with a newly hired white guard who had abruptly offended Hamick among his fellow inmates by demanding the Hamick shirt up (during a shower period).

As told to this Reporter by inmates who witnessed the affair, Polite and Farmer came to Hamick's defense as five O.S.P. guards stationed themselves between Hamick and the guard but only as witnesses to how the verbal exchange began. In doing such all three Blacks were placed in "The Hole" pending investigation. Many of those Black prisoners who had witnessed the event did not believe such disciplinary action was warranted and viewed this as another form of harassment by prison staff.

During the mass Black assembly Black prisoners related to others what they had witnessed and gave their version of the situation. To protest the mishap, such opinions were suggested from boycotting prison assignment - to taking legal actions, the legal approach was chosen.

As this Reporter mingled among the large gathering of Black prisoners, I could not help but admire how orderly and intelligently the Black leaders in this prison had constructed the assembly so that it would not get out of hand - especially with a subject being as touchy as "How to handle past and future racial harassment by white guards." Other prisons across the United States have had bloodsheds and destruction - such as

Attica.

On the following Tuesday afternoon, May 10th, the second meeting was held in the Activities Department of O.S.P. between Administration, Captains of the Guards and Black prisoners to iron out complaints, grievances and problems recently shadowing this prison.

From Administration: H.C. Cupp, Superintendent, J.C. Kenney, Assistant R.E. Pribble, Director of Security, R.L. Versteg, Director of Activities.

From Guards Staff: Captain Clayton Jacobus, Lt. Harold Whitley, Lt. E.E. Good, Training Officer, Ed Ban. Among the Black prisoners were the Coordinator Ray Charles Maple and his full executive board of the O.S.P. Black Culture Organization, which represents the rising population of over 300 Black inmates among the 1500 total prison: Dennis Whitlow, Secretary; Deone Washington, legal advisor; Charles Williams and Nate Howard, advisors.

To the surprise of many concerned the Coordinator, Charles, had invited all other presidents and coordinators who make up the entire prison representation to participate in the open discussion.

Riley Gardener, (Cyclo Club), Charles Bose (Bible Club), Kol Anttila (Chess Club), Alvin Hersha (Slot Car Club), George Haller (High Rollers), Jerry Albers (Athletic Club), Mike Taggart (Lifers), Danny Longoria (Chicano Club), and George Rose (Islamic Faith).

The message Maple immediately presented to the O.S.P. staff was the actions many of the guards were taking against prisoners within recent months - that it was no longer a Black problem, but an institutional problem.

It was related by Riley Gardener that there seems to be a movement by certain guards to create racial disturbances between Blacks and white inmates. Mike Taggart told the Administration it was felt there was a movement by guards to undermine many of the present prison procedures. Lt. Good explained that his office had not received ninety-nine percent of the complaints that were being voiced at this meeting. Mr. Ban assured the group no such movement of harassment has been adopted in his department.

Superintendent Cupp called for suggestions as to how everyone could start

working together to resolve these internal problems. One of the inmates from the audience suggested R.E. Pribble be given full authority to investigate all serious matters concerning disciplinary purposes. It was stated that Pribble was a person feared by many, liked by a few, but respected by all. Superintendent Cupp approved this action. It was informed at the meeting, the newly hired guard had been reassigned to the prison annex. (He was the one who told Hamick to "Shut up.")

Cupp was asked about the Administration's future goals - a move toward punishment or rehabilitation? Cupp explained the public pressure and the recent crime wave along with new laws being promoted by the state's legislature plus the over-crowding at O.S.P. make programs for rehabilitation difficult to promote. He hopes programs assisting prisoners will continue to exist. J.C. Kenney added that if another prison is built it would be a very small one to handle hardened and uncontrollable individuals.

This Reporter, at this point, searched the crowded room for anyone in the audience from Prison's Inmate Treatment Staff, but found none.

The meeting was adjourned on a smoother avenue than it opened. "Ain't No Niggers Here, No More." All these men were working together to live in peace and harmony in a city. Behind the Walls.

From Four Corner's Trinity United Methodist Church in Salem - Hughes Memorial Methodist Church in Albina. There is unfolding one of the most beautiful events that I have ever had the opportunity to report.

Hughes Memorial Methodist Church once had one of the largest Black church congregations in Portland, Oregon, out over the years and due to financial problems, along with a decrease in attendance, this church has dwindled down to a precious few.

Today, Hughes Memorial is in desperate need of funds to keep its doors open and to participate in many of the Albina community's involvements as it has been soulfully sung out. Even so fondly that it touched the hearts of an all white congregation in Salem, Oregon named Trinity United Methodist Church on Elmore Street.

Every year, Trinity United Methodist has an offering on Christmas and Easter Sunday. These offerings are called "Love

Offerings." Money is raised to support the needs of others throughout the world. These needs are turned into projects, and commissions are contributed to the "Love Offering" too.

For this year the "Love Offering", taken on Easter Sunday, referred to as "30 Pieces of Silver", Trinity United Memorial had chosen the following project and the amounts.

1. Methodist Home for the Retired Senior Citizens in Salem, Oregon \$500.
2. A sister church in the Philippine Islands to help buy a recording machine to exchange and spread the gospel (Word of Jesus) verbally \$100.
3. India, to help support an Indian student through college \$300.

Trinity United Methodist heard the message of an assistant district supervisor for the Oregon Methodist Churches, Bill Walker, a frequent visitor to O.S.P. and volunteer of many years helping prisoners behind the walls, state Hughes Memorial's financial needs. The church wants to hire a highly motivated top Black minister who could take control of this well known beautiful church that sits squarely in the middle of Portland's large Black community, and glory again. The entire "30 Pieces of Silver" raised last Easter was pledged.

Over \$1000 was contributed. If that was the end of the report, then this reporter would write "a nice thing is happening", but there's more.

Trinity United Methodist is sending its youth choir to sing and have fellowship with Hughes Memorial. Along with that youth choir will go a blind youngster noted for his guitar folk song playing throughout the Salem area, and does he see the color of skin? Now, the event becomes a beautiful one. The touch of humanity, physical as well as spiritual.

Quite a few personnel working at O.S.P. are members of Trinity United Methodist, including one of the founders and board members of their Mission's Commission.

He has been hanging around here behind the walls, some twenty-five years. Who? John Akins, director of the counselors. He also has a little worn Bible in his lower left hand desk drawer, that has been there just as long as he has - and it's Something of Value.

(From O.S.P. Correspondent: I wish to acknowledge the many kind letters received by the staff and myself on behalf of 'Behind the Walls'. We hope to continue collecting and reporting events and things which go on at the Oregon State Penitentiary as we see them.)

## Caged

I feel like i'm in a cage,  
I feel like an animal,  
I feel like i'm in a zoo,  
like pets they tell us what to say and what to do,

If i felt like a human,  
I'd feel like i was on a stage,

White people come, and white people go,  
but for us blacks humph! we never know,

In my cell i look down the highways,  
that used to be my life,  
and i count on my fingers my days,  
the feeling of freedom is stabbing like a knife,

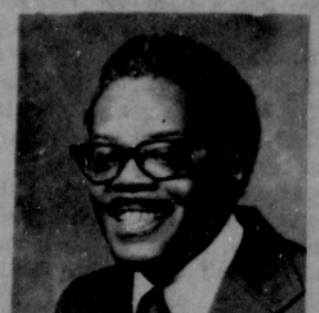
Will i ever rise, like the morning sun,  
because you see,  
you can't close the door on the sun,  
but you can on me,

OH! LORD, GOD ALMIGHTY,  
PLEASE SET ME FREE.

by Diane Jordan  
Women's Prison



Bob Nelson



Cal Toran

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## Aaron Henry praises AuCoin

Aaron Henry of Mississippi, Chairman of the National Rural Housing Coalition praised Congressman Les AuCoin, (D-Oregon) for his leadership in guiding a series of rural housing amendments through the housing committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Henry said that had it not been for the persistence and skill of Representative AuCoin in preparing the legislation, discussing it with other members and explaining both the need and the desirability to the Committee, "we would have once again had a housing bill that was totally urban in character - one which completely ignored 75-million rural citizens who suffer an even higher percentage of inadequate housing than do those in urban areas."

The AuCoin amendments to the Administration's Housing and Community Development Act of 1977, would require the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) to implement several rural programs in housing which have long been commonplace in urban programs.

It would permit rural borrowers to prepay taxes and insurance on their homes in the same way banks escrow such similar payments for other homeowners;

It would require the FmHA to operate the rural rent supplement program authorized by Congress in 1974, but never instituted. Tenants in rental units

financed by FmHA would need pay only 25% of their income for rent, with the balance assumed by FmHA;

It institutes a program of compensation for defects in new FmHA financed homes, where diligent inspection by the government would have disclosed the defect before the borrower purchased the home. (FmHA may subsequently recover any cost incurred from the negligent builder.)

Makes elderly and handicapped persons and families fully eligible for all FmHA housing programs.

Other provisions would establish a research office within FmHA to study problems peculiar to rural housing; insure that at least 60% of the home-ownership and rural monies are utilized for the benefit of low-income families; extend housing programs to farmworkers in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands; and, other technical amendments designed to make present programs work more easily.

Henry, in assessing the future of the rural amendments said that "the biggest difficulty has now been overcome and the Bill will certainly pass the House of Representatives. The Senate Subcommittee on Rural Housing will consider a similar Bill next week. I think they cannot help but be influenced by the action of the House Committee in adopting the AuCoin Amendments."

## Gas rate conference scheduled

A prehearing conference will be held Friday, May 20 to consider Cascade Natural Gas Company's request for a 5.6 percent rate increase, according to Public Utility Commissioner Charles Davis.

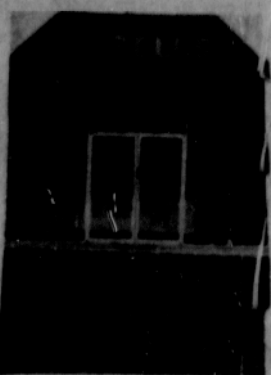
Davis suspended for 6 months effective May 22 company-proposed schedules that would increase the bill of a typical residential customer using 84.5 therms from \$25.32 to \$26.49 per month.

Cascade, with headquarters in Seattle, Washington, serves approximately 17,600 customers in northeastern and

central Oregon, including the cities of Baker, Hermiston, Bend and Madras.

If its request were approved, residential rates would increase 4.6 percent, commercial rates 5.3 percent, and industrial rates 6.2 percent. The increase would generate an additional \$839,371 annually in Oregon.

The conference will be held at 10 a.m. in Room D, Labor and Industries Building in Salem. Anyone wishing to be a party to the case must appear at the conference and formally say so.



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