



by Larry Baker,
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From behind the wall

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"Court To Weigh Inmate Rights," was the headline in the *Sunday Oregonian* on January 22, 1978; written by Stan Federman, staff writer.

The large well-known article gave a blow-by-blow description of how a small young group of dynamic attorneys known as - The Oregon Prisoner's Legal Project - helped prison inmates who have received disciplinary action by allotting fair treatment with "due process of law." The Oregon Prisoner's Legal Project is funded by grants from the Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the American Bar Association.

What makes this staff of five attorneys so dynamic? In their first year of operation they have processed nearly 1,000 inmate requests for legal assistance dealing with civil matters and inmates' families. That alone is outstanding.

Prior to The Prisoner's Legal Project many of the inmates had no one to turn to for legal assistance, except a "jail house lawyer" or an attorney or two who could find the time to help answer a legal question every now and then. Even if a prisoner wants to try to fight his own case, by filing a grievance complaint to the State or Federal Courts, the prison's Law Library is not adequately or efficiently equipped with up-to-date legal materials and books. The Federal Courts in the past few years have asked Oregon prisoners to provide these materials, but it took a prisoner's class action suit filed in Federal Court to even get this problem recognized. Now at least the problem of legal material and books is being addressed. But it had to be resolved by "due process."

Over the past few years more and more civil complaints are beginning to hit Oregon's Federal District Courts with prison grievances i.e. medical and experimental tests, racial discrimination in hiring and firing procedures, mail censoring (the list goes on). What makes this so important that all of a sudden another Civil Rights complaint has been filed against O.S.P., Oregon Correctional Institution, and even MacLaren School for Boys. What's so important that prison officials all come out quickly to defend themselves and even start throwing insults at these attorneys as being a bunch of trouble-makers? Was it the fact that Oregon's prisons have been lately accused of "physical abuse" of incarcerated prisoners and denying them the "due process" in grievances? Why are prison officials so readily trying to prepare

their justifications by releasing press reports with such phrases as "controls," "safeguards," and "security measures." These words are out of context with "physical abuse" and "due process."

Since the birth of "Behind the Walls," almost a year ago, this O.S.P. Correspondent has never had any problem getting his fellow-inmates to write on any topic chosen, but all of a sudden when they were asked to describe their experiences in "Segregation and Isolation" everything seemed to come to a complete halt. Not one prisoner who had been there was willing to write one single word...Why? Simple! Because of the fear of retaliation by the guards, officials, and some even said by the Parole Board.

As many of our readers of the "Behind the Walls" have witnessed over the past year, a column which has not constantly cried "wolf" to every thing found in O.S.P. and other institutions. It has tried to stay with the more positive and motivating types of events. Because there is no use in trying to tear down a program or treatment - unless there is something better already in the making - to replace it with....

But this is one time, O.S.P. prison officials are way out of pocket. Grievances and complaints are to be fought in a court of law; and not on the front pages of newspapers or attacking dedicated attorneys who all but volunteer their services to meet the legal needs of people who have no money or legal knowledge to defend themselves. Sure, the Governor's prison Ombudsmen can investigate incidents and try to resolve issues within the frame-work of the system. But what then? They are not attorneys.

This nation has always prided itself on "Justice in our Courts," and "Prison Reform" has played a major role in getting away from slavery.

As long as there are people in Oregon, there will be prisons and jails. Within these prisons and jails the taxpaying public will be the determining factors of how prisons should be run or what rules and procedures are correct or unjust - not the press. Because taxpayers and citizens are found in jury boxes and not on newspaper stands, television, or radio.

There will be a Judge to govern rights of all concerned...Prison Reform and Prison Treatment have come too far now to allow denial to any incarcerated person "his day in court." The moment the Oregon Prison tries to deny any of its residents such, then we might as well bring back the death penalty and slavery,

in mass force.

Gene B. Mechanic and all of the staff of the Oregon Prisoner's Legal Project should be praised for the job they are doing in trying to assist Oregon's "social outcasts" with their complaints, since it has been publicly stated by Stevie Remington, Director of the Oregon Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, that the A.C.L.U. has neither time nor money (in many other states the A.C.L.U. handles most prison complaints).

If O.S.P. has a "Kangaroo Court," as one prisoner describes O.S.P.'s Hearing System, it will be either placed in its rightful order or eliminated altogether by the class action complaint recently filed by Oregon Prisoner's Legal Assistance Project. But whatever it is that places fear in the eyes of the many prisoners this O.S.P. Correspondent tried to interview about disciplinary procedures and abuses in isolation, may the truth hurry up and be known. Fear is the most dangerous type of treatment known to mankind; it has been known to self-destruct any power, such as "control and safety."

It was very enlightening to read the statement of Robert J. Watson, the State of Oregon Correction Division Administrator, "Nothing is written in stone; if some policy is wrong we will change it." He realizes there can be abuses in any system.

This Correspondent must wholeheartedly reply by stating: "Only time will tell...only time will tell...only time will tell."

by Stephen K. Miller #39313

Almost fifteen hundred men are locked behind walls at the Oregon State Penitentiary, cut-off not only from the society they wronged but from their wives and children. The only female companionship these prisoners can enjoy is a 3 1/2 hour visit, four times a month, holding hands awkwardly across a table in a crowded room. What kind of a man is a system like this destined to produce? What can be done to change this?

The sad truth is that the corrections system is currently designed to inhibit the continuance of marriage and family ties. Too often men lose their wives either because of existing weakness in the marriage, or because of the tremendous rift that can grow between two people, suddenly kept apart, except for those visits. What kind of an attitude do

you suppose a man comes out with, having not only served a prison term, but now stripped of the stability and love of marriage? Likely as not that now will be your parole violator or repeat offender.

There is another possibility, of course, and many men take that route. With all physical desires just as strong as ever and their normal love mate on the other side of the wall, they become homosexuals. Even in our progressive time, it certainly is much more difficult to reintegrate a homosexual into society. So again we find the returnees, back inside, because they just couldn't adjust.

What can be done? Some members of the 1977 Oregon House of Representatives believed that one answer would be a program of conjugal visits, designed to be both physically and emotionally fulfilling, and of value in rehabilitative efforts.

Under such a program each inmate would be visited by his spouse for twelve hours in a totally private situation. Modeled on programs already adopted by many other states (i.e. California, New York and Mississippi) this program would have a double benefit. First, it would tend to keep strong the ties between a man and wife - making for a more stable environment upon release. Secondly it would, as proven where tried, reduce the amount of homosexual activities in prison. It's a tragic commentary on our values that the Ways and Means Committee of the Oregon Legislative killed this measure by not recommending funds for it.

Another program that is desperately needed, besides conjugal visits, is the availability (if not requirement) of marital counselors. Too often the frustrations, anxieties and misunderstandings of a shaky marriage are direct causes of the criminal acts men commit. So once sent to prison, the basic rifts widen until the marriage is beyond salvage. With a marital counselling program we would at least have a chance to examine and if possible renew the relationship. Far better to release a man to a life as a husband and father than as an emotionally damaged remnant of a broken marriage.

The Legislature is beginning interior work on legislation for 1979. I would urge that the passage of bills calling for the institution of a joint conjugal visit/marriage counselling program, and its funding be a priority.

THE HANGING OF TWO IN THE HOLE -OR- THE MASTER PLAN

Pandemonium raced non-stop as the lords of fear, force, intimidation, terror initiated the feeble minded souls of the condemned in their diabolical plan conceived from the womb of confusion and control, nursed on contempt and hate.

A system existing through a marriage of two pyramids who when joined together connotes the epitome of E pluribus unum - one who has assumed knowledge of all, selfishly maintaining occupancy at the apex in both worlds - and ignorance is the beginning of the master plan, sustaining its existence upon the broad back of fear.

And a solitary figure constituting the realm of the whole in a farce termed "rehabilitation," verbally contesting the brilliancy emanating from the foundation of a pyramidal world - base to base. And Justice is blind; the diamond - the omniscient of all disruption compounding the intricacies of survival, in a rank and file life, surrounded by cement walls and steel bars.

While the cry "Man Down", "Man Down!" rebounding through corridors in the living dead echos the lie of "only the strong survive"; so Wild Bill and Moose became victims of atrocities in the master plan, and the beast of both plane applauded the wizardry of their children - for every action a reaction - where does it begin? Where does it end...the Master Plan.

Julius D. Snowden #38013

BECAUSE

Reflecting images jubilantly
Dancing at the door of my mind
As memories of a long forgotten
Yesterday beckon to once more
Become a part of a desite moment

Like imprisoned inhabitants of
The sand your laughter fills the chambers
Rebounding off the walls of my soul, eyes -
My eyes seeing you in a place where there
Is no time or space - as with the Atom,
And metamorphosis, a change for one,
The other...And you continue to be

As young shoots of green grass
Greet the morning sun, their arms open
Wide accepting its rays of warmth
As enriched elements of the earth ensure
A lasting strength and growth

And you are a moonchild with eyes
Of green, I, your sun, with eyes
Of brown, exist for your conception
As you are for my purpose.

Julius D. Snowden #38013

HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED 4th YR. PLAN SUMMARY

CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING Wednesday, February 8, 9:30 A.M. City Hall, 1220 S.W. Fifth Ave.

BUDGET BY NEIGHBORHOOD*

North	2,505,000
Northeast	2,558,600
Northwest	747,000
Southeast	4,530,000
Southwest	440,000
Downtown	2,000,000
"At Large"	2,796,000

*HCD & All other sources

BUDGET BY CATEGORY*

Housing	10,295,987
Special Projects	3,702,560
Project Improvements	1,551,000
Misc. & Indirect Costs	368,840
Administration	2,821,948
Contingency	124,265

*HCD & All other sources

VOICE YOUR OPINION

On Wednesday, February 8, at 9:30 a.m., the Portland City Council will hear testimony of the Housing and Community Development Fourth Year Program. Citizens have participated in the planning implementation monitoring and evaluation of the program through the first three years. All interested parties are invited to attend this hearing to submit their views and proposals.

The Housing and Community Development Block Grant Program is conducted by the City of Portland in conference with Federal Regulations on eligible Activities, Program Management, Performance, Standards, Equal Opportunity and Fair Housing, Environmental Protection, Citizen Participation, Relocation, Federal Wage Standards and other laws and Regulations imposed by HCD or other Branches of the Federal Government.