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O.S.P. Correspondent

Behind the Wall

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Poetry Editor

"Why must there be violence before a problem can be recognized?"

These were the words uttered in a meeting at O.S.P. between eight prisoners, eight Oregon legislative assistants and aides earlier this month.

The discussion was based on the topic: "How do we, the Prisoners, get rid of the Prisoner's Legal Services of Oregon?"

For the past six months, a series of meetings have been staged by the inmates before guest members of the Oregon House and Senate to alleviate this problem. The rumor circulating in this 1,500 man institution is that employees and attorneys who work for Prisoner's Legal Services (P.L.S.) are instilling in certain inmate clients heated issues that might brew up a disturbance among the prison population — that might bring about violence against inmates who oppose P.L.S.'s next biennium funding from the State.

This is only a rumor. A similar tactic was lodged against the P.L.S. employees last summer as a diversion tactic while P.L.S. tried to secretly hide that they had signed a contract with the Department of Corrections to fund their agency on an emergency basis. But such information was quickly uncovered by a dynamic investigation, led by Verne Creek and other inmates.

Since that time Creek and the inmates have kept a careful watch on P.L.S. and their movements, while other inmates formed a coalition to come up with a better situation than P.L.S. on how to meet the legal needs of the prison population.

During this time the inmates have uncovered other alleged actions against P.L.S.:

1. Referral of cases to other agencies that did nothing to assist the inmates.

2. Set-up a defunct para-legal program, in order to rip off funding in their next legislative and correctional financial request.

3. Refuse legal services to many inmates which request P.L.S. services.

For the past three years P.L.S. has had prisoners in the State institution under the impression that the main purpose for establishing this agency was to assist inmates with their legal problems (i.e. child support, custody, governmental benefits, inheritance, property and personal injury).

At least this was the original story P.L.S. gave the inmates at O.S.P. to gain their support, because it took the inmates' support to obtain their (P.L.S.) four years federal funding from Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

Other areas of concern P.L.S. would cover would be institutional complaints regarding access to courts, commissary, medical care, disciplinary, sanctions, religious expression, custody, general living conditions and employees misconduct.

In a letter from Gene Mechanic, director of P.L.S. to Verne Creek, written August 17, 1978. Mechanic informed Creek that 40% of the inmates who requested help from P.L.S. were related to legal problems concerning child custody and support, governmental benefits, and etc. P.L.S. claims 30% of the prison clients requests are institutional related problems, 10% more involve parole and sentence questions, the remaining requests for legal representation are concerning criminal matters.

P.L.S. also states that 2,000 requests have come through their office since they have been in business, but when asked just how many of those complaints had reached a solution by direct court action, P.L.S. could not identify one. Their constant excuses always come in a manner of referral action. It is a noted fact that the taxpayers of Oregon did not approve P.L.S.'s large budget to become a referral agency when it comes to prisoners

legal civil complaints.

The establishment of P.L.S.'s local funding during the first two years came through the American Bar Association in order for P.L.S. to receive a large bucket of money from L.E.A.A., but A.B.A. discontinues such funding after the first two years, 1977-78.

Ten percent (first year), 25% (second year), 33% (third year) and 50% (fourth year). After the fourth year P.L.S. will have to approach the Oregon Legislature for direct funding. But during the third year P.L.S., using Washington v. Penwell to assure their existence, tried to secretly obtain local funding from the Division of Corrections. The word *secretly* must be loudly stressed, because they were aware such action on funding would bring a dissatisfaction from the prisoners as being a "conflict of interest." Any legal project is not about to bring legal action of any kind against the agency that funds them. You just don't bite the hand that feeds you.

During the summer of 1978, a group of prisoners who had developed an inmate class on legal matters during 1977 called "Class of Legal Process," requested help for legal assistance to do writing and research and para-legal training from students of Willamette Law University and the Oregon State Public Defenders Office, along with institutional approval. Twelve student-inmates wanted to develop self-pride in their own ability to learn the legal profession. . . . It was not long before P.L.S. stepped in and created problems for them by insisting it was P.L.S. who was supposed to provide such training. But such training actually never got up off the ground.

Oh, yes, P.L.S. sent a couple of people a few times for a legal bull session with the class, but they only dismantled all the good that Willamette and the Public Defenders Office had done voluntarily.

It was not long after that the prisoners found out the P.L.S. was

writing in their next budget for this type of training and class process, that P.L.S. was requesting \$210,000 budget from the Division of Corrections for their 1980-81 budget. This information was supplied to "Behind the Wall" by the Governor's Ombudsman for Corrections, who also was very displeased by P.L.S.'s actions on cases their office referred to P.L.S. Many of the prison counselors also are dissatisfied in their referrals to P.L.S. on civil matters.

Prisoners at O.S.P. started holding group meetings with legislators, begging that the funding for P.L.S. be discontinued, and that a more positive method of respectable institutions such as Willamette University and other legal agencies. Prisoners were tired of seeing this fly-by-night agency (P.L.S.) with its Washington D.C. staff receiving all of the funds.

On February 7, 1979 the prisoners at O.S.P. demonstrated a mass work strike, which resulted in a prison lock-down. There is no doubt about it, if P.L.S. had handled many of the complaints and issues that had been raised many times before through court action as requested it would have never happened. But to ignore such should be a criminal act within itself.

"Behind the Wall," the class of Legal Processes, and others directly blame for creating such actions by the prisoners straight at P.L.S. and their legal staff.

"But why must there always be violence, before a problem can ever be recognized?"

An appeal goes out to the Division of Corrections, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Oregon Legislators and the people of Oregon. Please don't grant future funding to the Prisoner's Legal Service in Salem, Oregon. We make this plea on behalf of our safety. Please allow such funds to be granted to Willamette Law School for whatever proper training and education in the legal profession we might learn.

We also ask that P.L.S. be dealt with in a proper and legal fashion for the problems they've created in ignoring many prisoners legal needs. After all . . . it took a thief to catch a thief.

activities. Activities include swimming (students should bring their own suits), racquetball and basketball.

At the same time, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., the PSU Engineering Open House will be underway in Science Buildings I and II. The Open House features tours of the labs, demonstrations, and student competitions, including a mechanical mouse contest.

Parents, as well as students, are invited to Intro/79. The University has made special arrangements for group meetings of parents of interested minority students.

The PSU campus, located along Broadway and the Park Blocks between S.W. Market and the Freeway, is easily accessible by Tri-Met bus or by automobile. Free parking will be provided for Intro/79 guests in the University parking garages between Broadway and Sixth Avenue.

For more information about Intro/79, contact the PSU Admission Office, 229-3511.

PSU offers seniors look at University

Portland State University's "Intro/79," an opportunity for high school seniors to learn some of what a university is all about, will include sessions directed at students who, for financial or academic reasons, may be hesitant about going on to higher education.

Intro/79 is scheduled for Saturday, March 31st, in the University's Smith Memorial Center Ballroom.

The day begins at 9:00 a.m. with free refreshments and an introduction to some programs of special interest and opportunities for assistance at PSU. There will be information on opportunities for housing and financial assistance, for example. The Educational Opportunities Program, which offers tutorial and counseling help to students who want to upgrade their academic skills, will provide information to students and their families, as will the University Scholars Program.

PSU's Black Studies Department

also will be on hand for questions and information.

At 9:30 a.m., students and their families will be welcomed by PSU's Vice President for Student Affairs, Orclia Forbes. The University's advising, admissions and registration process will be outlined.

By 10:00 a.m., the students will be visiting with faculty members from the academic areas they choose from among the more than three-dozen undergraduate majors and certificate programs available at PSU. A second visitation period is scheduled for 11:00 a.m., allowing students and their families to talk with faculty from at least two academic areas.

Lunch will be available for Intro/79 participants in PSU's Nordic Room in Smith Center from noon to 1:00 p.m.

In the afternoon, Intro/79 will provide students with free sports and recreational activities in the University's Health and Physical Edu-



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POIC

(Continued from Page 1 Column 6)
zation was not due to ineffectiveness of POIC but to ineffectiveness of the system. He said there are some deficiencies in POIC's performance but he was unable to determine whether these were the fault of POIC or of the system.

The Council voted unanimously to adopt the reorganization and to allow the contracts to POIC for another year.

Coalition

(Continued from page 2 col. 6)
recruit majority students to replace the Blacks who are to be bussed out?

Summary

In summary, we see that these resolutions are vague and ambiguous, perhaps purposely so. Further, they give no hint at time-frames for even these band-aid measures. They are but talking about the Board's intent not to see substantive relief of the present inequity.

"Little minds are wounded
by the smallest things."
La Rochefoucauld

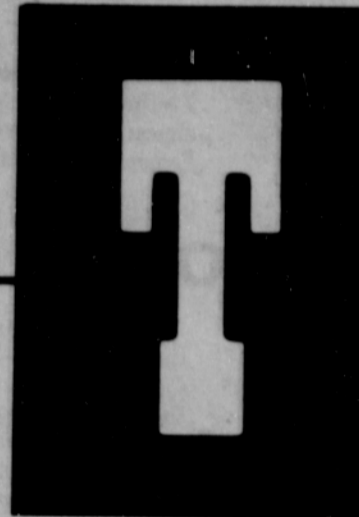


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MARCH 1979

On the Season of Spring:

Spring is nature's activity of renewed substance.

On Self-Control:

I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies; for the hardest victory is the victory over SELF.

Aristotle

On Self-Reliance:

The greatest thing in the world is to know how to be sufficient unto oneself.

Montaigne

On Reward:

The reward of a thing well done is to have done it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson