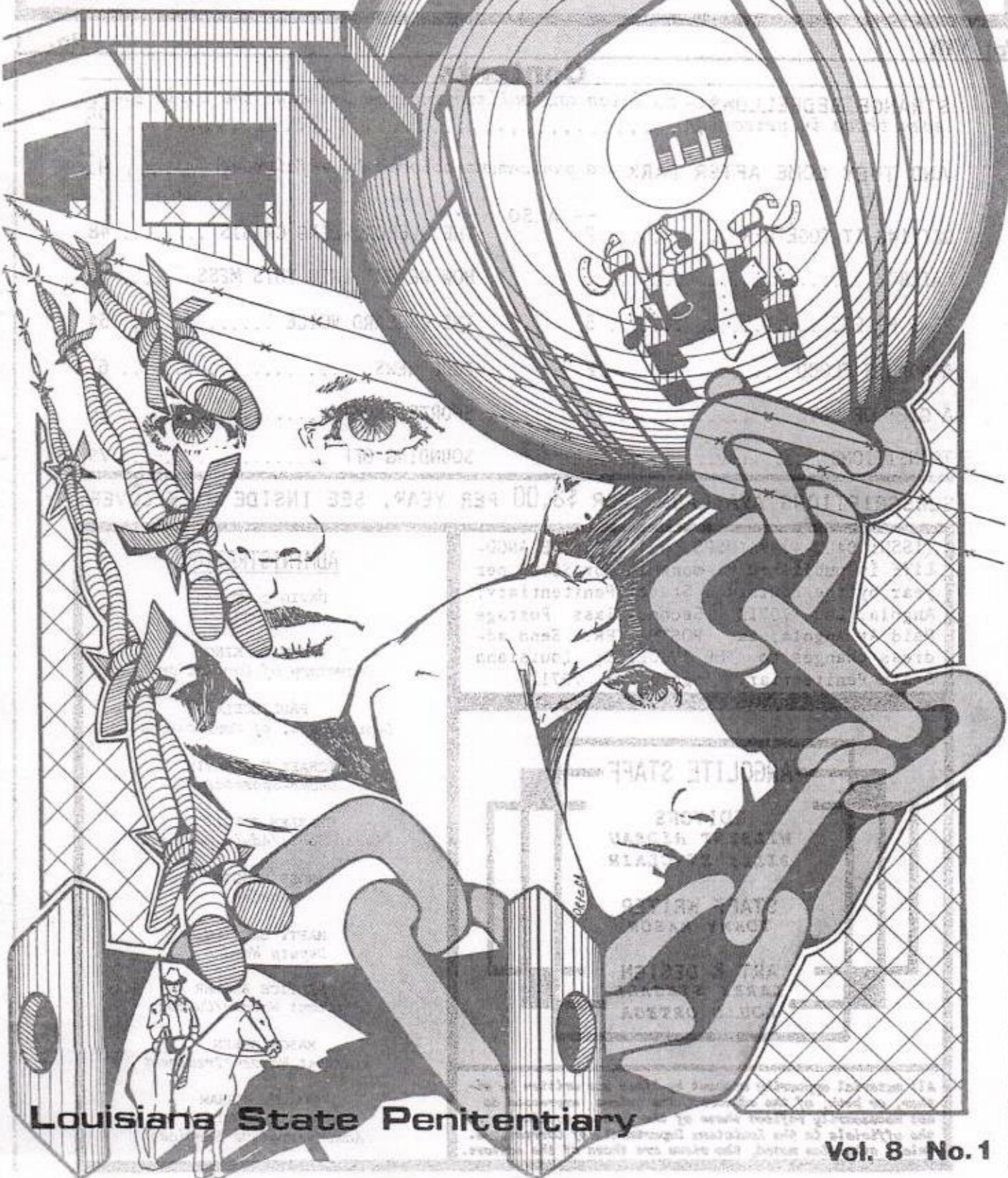


THE ANGOLITE

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Strange Bedfellows

"The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." Dostoevski--THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD.

When one enters the world of prison life does not cease. He merely enters another world, one populated by other societal castoffs like himself. The prison world is driven by the same forces that move and govern human behavior in the free world. Normal human behavior strives for sex, security, job status, class prestige, power and a life position of superiority. Deprived of normal avenues by which to pursue gratification of these innate needs, inmates create substitute avenues which provide the very foundation for the society of the imprisoned. While the prison subculture is an artificial one - held together by the shared experience of pain, oppression, guns, fences, and regimentation - it is still very much a society, complete with its own ethic, values, standards, patterns of perception, language and body expression, and the expectations, dreams, and hopes of those existing within it.

A crude, invisible government rules over the compressed prison society, wielding as much - if not more - influence and power over the inmates population as the official administration. It demands and enforces observance of its societal standards and expectations either through peer-pressure or the cut of the knife. This government consists of a very loose confederation of inmate figures of authority, influence-peddlers, and power-brokers. In the ultramasculine world of prison, inmates assume positions of influence and persuasion, not by popular election but through sheer force of character and/or Machiavelian manipulation. Because of their expertise about prison operations, ability to influence other

inmates, and willingness to make decisions, they can either create or resolve problems, depending upon their vested interest. Both inmates and prison administrators depend upon these individuals to provide leadership and guidance - and the quality of the leadership and guidance they provide greatly influence the degree of peace or violence within the prison community. As in any society, a government is no better or worse than the people who run it. Some inmate leaders are dedicated to the collective interest of the inmate population while others are concerned only with self-aggrandizement and selfish interests.

There are only two kinds of men who become figures of influence in the prison community and they are defined by the way they acquire their status. There are the "natural" leaders, men who rise to positions of influence and power in the prison subculture because of their sheer force of character and ability to command the respect and trust of their fellow inmates. The other is the "prison politician," those who enjoy and engage in the pursuit of influence and status in the prison community much the same as politicians anywhere. They are the influence-peddlers and power-brokers who acquire and maintain their positions through the art of manipulation, both of events and people. Traditionally, the prison politician has always been the intelligent individual - and, in the old days, they were easily distinguishable by their neatly-pressed clothes, shined shoes, gift for gab, and their uncanny ability to fall into manure and emerge smelling like a rose. In today's more liberated and sophisticated prison community, prison politicians are a motley crew, ranging from Superflies to jailhouse lawyers, to wall-paper pimps, to pseudo-intellectuals, to

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

evangelical preachers, and even convict editors.

Prison politicians are often regarded with scorn by lower-line correctional officers who resent their influence and mistakenly view them as "having it too easy." But that is a popular misconception because there is nothing easy about being a successful prison politician. They must master and stay atop a caged world rife with feuding factionalism, frustrated emotions, seething resentment, and vested interests. With the ability to do that, they must then exist and function, by walking a very fine line, between the conflicting pressures and unrealistic expectations of two opposing forces - those of the prison authorities on one hand, and those of the collective inmate world on the other. That is no easy task as they alternately find themselves resented and praised by both prison authorities and inmates. Often, they find themselves pressured into situations they would like to have avoided - and always they must be on guard for "set ups," such as a political foe framing them on a disciplinary infraction to have them removed from circulation or simply feeding false or misleading information to the authorities.

Today's prison political arena is a wide-open ballgame - and the competition for status, prestige, and influence is quite fierce. Like their free world counterparts, when prison politicians vie for position or furtherance of their vested interests, nothing is sacred and everything is expendable. While prison politicians don't have cigar smoke-filled backrooms or Jack Daniels-flavored political discussions which carve up the community's interests, they do meet in places throughout the prison - from club offices to rest rooms, to plant the proverbial political knife in someone's back, displaying an ability to achieve their ends with such ease and cunning as to leave the CIA and KGB flabbergasted and blushing with envy. Numerous and varied intri-

gues are acted out as prison politicians clash in conflicts of principle, tests of wills, and pursuit of vested interests. That is the way of power and politics - everywhere. And the world of prison, while an artificial society, is a miniature replica of the greater free society that created and perpetuates it.

The Louisiana Legislature is made up of politicians who are elected to represent the interests of various districts across the state. The legislators, as a collective whole and through majority vote, possess the power to enact the laws governing society and all human endeavor within it. The legislature is also the fiscal ruler of the state, controlling its purse-strings. In addition to tending to all other non-fiscal matters, the legislature meets annually to determine how the monies of the State Treasury will be spent, hammering out a budget for the state government mandating the expenditure of specific amounts of money for specific purposes. Since there is only a limited amount of money to play with each year, someone must lose - or sacrifice if you believe in nobility in government - in order for another to win. Each legislator has his own personal preferences - the interests of his constituency and the vested interests of his campaign money lenders - to protect and further. Intrigues, treachery, legal blackmail, pressures, bitter in-fighting, and behind-the-scenes "sweetheart" deals make up the very fabric of political life - and everything not nailed down as expendable as each politician attempts to garner enough votes to get their pet projects and self-serving interests included in the state's budget. Sometimes the stakes are small, but other times they are high, involving millions of dollars and the fortunes of various vested interests either rising or falling on the outcome of the effort waged. Because of the large money involved, as well as the individual legislator's ability to protect the vested in-

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

terests behind him, politicians must be particularly aggressive in the pursuit of winning his objectives. Thus principle is often less a factor in the free-swinging political wheeling-and-dealing than is convenience, self-interest, and political mileage.

Louisiana entered the new year with the need for a "special" legislative session to attempt to resolve pressing unfinished business, leftover from the regular session last summer. Governor Dave Treen issued the call for the special session, listing a 50-item agenda to be dealt with during its 16 day session. However, the entire state knew that the session would be a platform for one of the

biggest political-legislative battles in recent years. At issue was proposed worker's compensation reforms that the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry desperately wanted enacted. It was said that the passage of the reform measures would save Louisiana employers about \$100 million a year in reduced worker's compensation insurance rates. Organized labor and the Trial Lawyers' Association opposed the reforms. With the governor's backing, the business forces had tried to overrun the opposition and push the reform measures through the 1981 regular legislative session. But the opposition, led by Senator Sydney Nelson, waged a pitch battle that killed the legislation in the final hours of the regular session.



STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

The business forces cut their losses, re-grouped to develop strategy, and pushed for a special session, setting the stage for a significant political battle.

The special session and the looming political battle on workmen's comp held special significance to Governor Treen. The first Republican Governor since Reconstruction days, Treen captured the governor's mansion with the backing of the business community and because of a scandalized and splintered Democratic Party. Political observers say the governor has been haunted by the ghost of having won office more on a disenchanting "anti" Democratic vote than by a "pro-Treen" vote. And that stalking ghost in a Democratic-controlled legislature has made his job an uphill battle. Several polls have shown that, while the public likes and respects Treen, they like his gubernatorial opponent more. Throughout his term as governor, news reports have cited Treen as being indecisive and failing to provide effective leadership. He has lost major legislative battles in the past, including the workmen's comp fight. Some business leaders have expressed disenchantment with him, with some indicating they might withdraw their support of him in his upcoming reelection bid. With the gubernatorial election only ten months away, and it shaping up as a hotly contested affair, the special session would be the last real opportunity to secure a political victory on the workmen's comp issue, re-establishing confidence in the business community and his effectiveness as a politician. Treen had to deliver and the key to delivering was, as the Baton Rouge ENTERPRISE pointed out, to deal with Senator Nelson, leader of the opposition forces. The paper quoted one lobbyist as saying: "If Treen can just keep Sydney Nelson's mouth shut this time, he will have done his job."

The Inmate Welfare Fund is a special financial trust established years ago at

the Louisiana State Penitentiary to hold, invest, manage and spend monies on things of benefit to the inmate population which are not provided for in the official prison budget. The money theoretically belongs to the general inmate population, not by virtue of any natural ownership of it, but in the sense that it does not belong to the state and cannot be used for prison operations. Revenue for the Fund comes from a variety of sources - the annual prison rodeo, dividends from investments, THE ANGOLITE's subscriptions, Visitors' Identification Cards, confiscated money within the prison, to name a few. The largest source of revenue, however, comes from an arrangement with the plasma firm operating within the prison whereby the firm pays \$1.50 per inmate donor to the prison for accounting and bookkeeping services - and everything in excess of the actual service expenses must be deposited in the Inmate Welfare Fund for the exclusive benefit of the inmate population. During the fiscal year ending with June 30, 1982, the Inmate Welfare Fund "earned" a total income of \$213,426.26 while, during the same period, it "spent" \$208,984.71. Projected income and expenditures for the current fiscal year are expected to be about the same. While that's far from the "millions" that many prisoners popularly believe is in the fund, it's still a lot of money in a world where the majority of the inmates earn only 2½ cents an hour for their labors.

The Inmate Welfare Fund is under the direct supervision of the Warden's Office. For all of its existence, the management and expenditure of its funds have been arbitrarily handled and decided by the Warden, obviously upon the premise that he alone knew what was best for the inmates. The inmates had no voice or input in the matter and, in fact, were told absolutely nothing about the Fund's activities and expenditures. The inmates naturally assumed the worst - that the "free folks are ripping us off" - and their suspicions were fed by the prison authori-

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

ties' secretiveness. Upon Ross Maggio's return to Angola as warden, he created an 11-member Inmate Welfare Fund Advisory Committee for the specific purpose of giving the inmates input into how the money would be spent. Maggio decreed that requests for expenditures of Inmate Welfare Fund monies were to be submitted to the committee for its approval or disapproval. While Maggio retains veto power over the committee, it is reportedly rarely used. The inmate members of the committee, each representing a different segment of the inmate population and/or a special interest group, are appointed by Maggio. The membership of the committee is heavily-weighted with inmates involved in recreation because, according to the Warden's Office, the majority of Inmate Welfare Fund expenditures are for recreational purposes. The Committee is guided and assisted by three prison departmental heads,

all of whom have no vote. The prison's athletic director, Coach Fred Allen, serves as chairman and Business Administrator Harvey Grimmer and Assistant Warden for Rehabilitative Services Mason Green are a part of the committee to provide information, advice, and clarification. An inmate, G. Ashanti Witherspoon, serves as secretary of the committee, maintaining minutes of the meetings, but he also has no vote. Witherspoon describes the committee's members as: "There are strong and weak personalities, all with their own individual preferences and prejudices and little pet projects - it's a good combination of personalities with individual philosophies, which brings out a variety of ideas and needs of the prison population."

"The committee is fairly conscientious about representing the interests of the



THE INMATE WELFARE FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

inmate population by making sure that the money is spent for the benefit of the inmates," Witherspoon continued. "They ask some pretty probing, even embarrassing, questions of the prison officials, and while as a rule the sessions are no big deal, there are times when things can get pretty heated. Sometimes the members disagree and even have some pretty fierce conflicts. But the only times things really zing is when they've got a leader among them in a particular situation who takes a strong stand on an issue. I guess they're like representatives and politicians anywhere else."

The Inmate Welfare Fund Advisory Committee entered the New Year haunted by the ghost of a behind-the-scenes political feud that spilled over during its December meeting, tearing at its gut and remaining un-resolved. It began with a seemingly insignificant issue that precipitated strong opposition among several committee members. It concerned a small financial request the prison's Chaplaincy had made for 50 religious pamphlets, costing 50 cents a piece, and one baptismal garment, consisting of a pair of rubber boots and overalls, to be used by the chaplains during Christian immersial baptisms. Currently, the chaplains wear their own clothing during such events and requested the garment to prevent them from getting wet. Cost of the special garment was \$83.

The request for the Inmate Welfare Fund to purchase the items was initially made in November by Senior Chaplain Joseph Wilson. "I submitted the request to Warden Green, my supervisor, before I knew the Inmate Welfare Fund Committee had been established," he told THE ANGO-LITE. "Warden Green turned it over to Warden Maggio, who returned it to Warden Green with a statement that all these matters should be cleared through the committee." Green then forwarded the Chaplaincy's request to Athletic Director Fred Allen, in his capacity as the committee's chairman, with instructions that



SOMETHING TO KEEP THEM FROM GETTING WET

the request be presented to the next Inmate Welfare Fund meeting scheduled for December 7 for the committee's consideration.

The request for the \$25 purchase of the religious pamphlets was first presented to the committee at the December 7 meeting. It ran into immediate opposition led by Adullah Rauf Amin, Main Prison Recreation Department representative, who expressed the feeling that the Inmate Welfare Fund should not make such purchases because, if approved, it would open the door to similar requests in the future. Bruce Walker, Camp J's representative, wanted an explanation as to how a mere 50 pamphlets would serve the interests of 4,600 inmates.

Prentice Robinson, representative for the religious community's needs, was asked by Committee Chairman Allen to clarify the request for the committee. Robinson's

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

responsibility is to work with the religious organizations and the Chaplaincy in identifying the needs of the religious community and present these needs to the committee. He was unprepared. "The way it was presented, I did not have a chance to have enough insight on it," Robinson explained to THE ANGOLITE. "I told Chaplain Wilson that this was the improper way to do it and that he should have more or less come to me first. I was caught off base - I didn't know it was going to be presented that day." In face of the intense opposition, Robinson did the wise thing by cutting his losses. "My strategy was to have it tabled to give me a chance to better prepare my defense and offense," he stated. "I was placed in a defensive position at that meeting because I went in unprepared. Wilson later told THE ANGOLITE that Robinson's lack of preparedness was his own fault. "Prentice should have been prepared," Wilson told

THE ANGOLITE. "It was his responsibility to be prepared."

Allen then presented the Chaplaincy's \$83 request for the baptismal gear to the committee. That was also hit with instant opposition, again led by Amin, who objected to the use of Inmate Welfare Fund money being spent for the gear to be used by a state employee in performance of his official job. Sensitive to being a Muslim objecting to a request relating to Christianity, Amin explained his opposition to the committee: "I don't want anyone to get the impression that this is a Muslim-Christian thing," he said, "because it's not that. If this was a Muslim Iman requesting the Inmate Welfare Fund to purchase a Kufi Cap, which is part of his religious dress when he performs his Kubat on Fridays, I would be against it. My opposition to this has nothing to do with religion and I want to make that



THE DECEMBER MEETING (AMIN IN T-SHIRT AT RIGHT)

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

clear."

Amin pointed out to the committee that a chaplain is a state employee who is paid to perform specific duties - and one of them is baptizing inmates. Amin felt it improper for the Inmate Welfare Fund to provide the chaplain with clothing needed in the performance of his official duties, as much so as it would be to provide uniforms for security officers in performance of their official duties. He opposed on the premise that such clothing needed by employees should be provided by the prison budget - not the Inmate Welfare Fund.

Robinson argued for approval of the request, with Green and Allen also taking part in the arguments. But Amin would not relent in his opposition, arguing that the state should make the purchase. The committee voted on it, with five members in favor of approving the request, five opposing it, and one abstention. Amin had won. The request was dismissed and returned to Chaplain Wilson. But the issue was not dead - not by a long shot.

Prentice Robinson is a prison politician. "I've been in prison politics more or less since I've been here and I think I'm one of the more successful ones," he candidly admitted to THE ANGOLITE. A jailhouse lawyer, Robinson is officially assigned to the prison's Law Library and Paralegal Program, where he assists inmates with legal problems and represents them before the prison's Disciplinary Court. For a period of several years, he more or less coordinated the law library system, maintaining control of the activities of the legal service program emanating from the Main Prison. But his grip as head-honcho has loosened considerably over the past year, something observers attribute to Robinson's decreased interest and perhaps desire for greener pastures. When the editor of THE EPISTLE, the prison's religious magazine, was transferred to Camp H last year, Robinson moved for and became editor of the maga-

zine while retaining his position in the law library.

Exercising his diplomatic skills, Robinson was able to assuage the doubts and reservations of the religious community regarding his appointment as editor of THE EPISTLE. The religionists would have preferred an editor from their ranks, but Robinson's rationale that the editor should come from outside their ranks to insure impartiality prevailed. Having just put down the initial rumbling of resentment and learning the mechanics of the magazine, Robinson had to engage in a fierce political struggle with George Evans, associate editor of THE CHALLENGER and vice-president of Full Gospel Businessmen organization. Evans, a religionist who wanted to be editor of THE EPISTLE, had done his homework, enlisting the backing of other prison politicians, including Witherspoon and several stalwarts in VETS Incarcerated, several prison official officials, members of the Chaplaincy, and a number of prominent inmate religious leaders. But Robinson, a veteran with many battle scars from intense law library power struggles, managed to beat back the power-play to oust him, but only by the skin of his political teeth - and, in the end, he was forced to accept Evans as his associate editor. "Prentice is a strong personality," Witherspoon told THE ANGOLITE. "He's a fighter, but he's also a manipulator - he will assess a situation and see whether he can go in and win outright, or he will go in with an argument to see what happens before backing up. He's a pretty good tactician."

Later when the religious organizations complained to Maggio about a lack of representation on the Inmate Welfare Fund Advisory Committee, Robinson was appointed to oblige them. His appointment immediately drew fire from the religious community who questioned his effectiveness to represent the needs of the religious community since he didn't come from their ranks. Petitions were circulated, letters written, complaints lodged, and meetings

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)



ROBINSON - HE HAD TO DELIVER

held - all designed to remove Robinson from the committee. But once again the fox dodged the bullet, beating back the attempt to oust him from the committee. A shrewd and perceptive man, Robinson immediately embarked on a campaign to win the support and trust of the religious community by clearly demonstrating his sincere interest in their needs and ability to represent them. He began to lend his ear to the religious leaders, listening carefully to their needs and desires. While the request from the Chaplaincy to the Inmate Welfare Fund was a minor thing to most observers, it was important to Robinson because it presented another opportunity for him to establish his effective leadership. He could ill-afford to lose such a minor request - not when his position and political fortune within the religious community hinged upon his ability to deliver. He had to deliver.

On a visit to THE ANGOLITE Office on

the afternoon of December Inmate Welfare Fund committee meeting, Maggio casually remarked: "I heard that the Muslims teamed up and voted down the Christians today." While his remark was casual, Maggio was apparently concerned about the possibility of religious factionalism on the committee. Maggio left THE ANGOLITE Office and went to Major Eddie Boeker's office where he summoned Robinson to find out about the matter. "He asked me, and I told him that it wasn't a situation like that," Robinson told THE ANGOLITE, "because there's only one Muslim on the committee - and that's Amin. So it couldn't have been a confrontational situation between Christians and Muslims."

Within hours after the committee meeting, a rumor started circulating that Amin would be fired from the committee because of opposition to the Chaplaincy's request. That very afternoon Robinson informed THE ANGOLITE that he had information that Amin was going to be removed, but he refused to divulge whether his information came from an inmate or a prison official. Robinson told Amin of the rumor as did Witherspoon who had also heard the rumor. It was Amin's first knowledge of it. The following day Amin asked Allen if he had heard anything about it and Allen said he had heard nothing.

Wilson speculates that he first heard the removal rumor two or three days after the meeting. "I was told that a decision had been made to remove Amin from the committee," he told THE ANGOLITE. "I don't recall any particular reason being given although there may have been some insinuation that it possibly had something to do with the baptismal request but I can't say for sure." Wilson added that "I was told that some of the Muslims - which is the way it was stated to me - had voted it down, at least for that particular meeting, but that it would not be that way the next meeting; that the Muslims would not be stacked against the Christian request the next time."

Having heard from two sources after

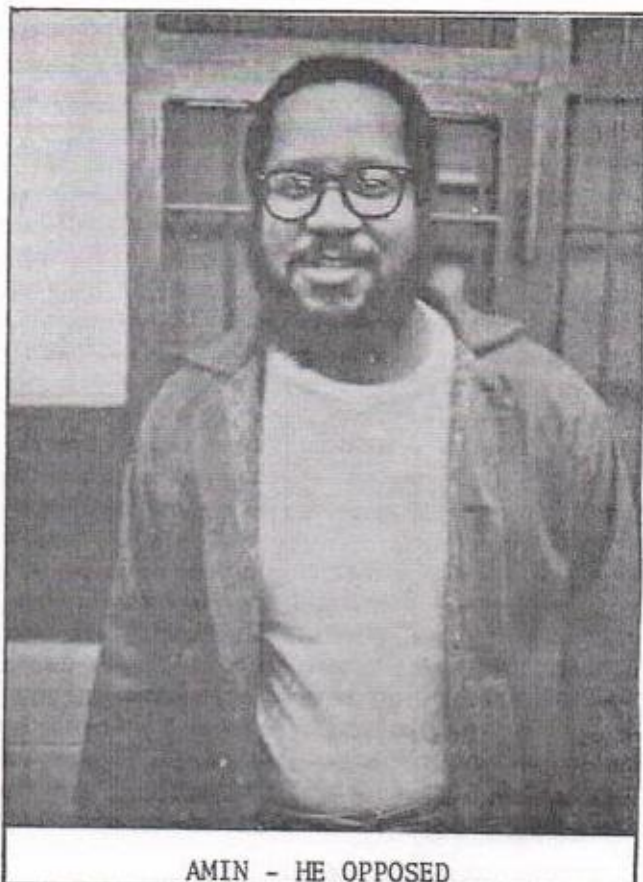
STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

the Inmate Welfare Fund meeting that a religious Muslim/Christian clash had occurred during the meeting and that Amin would be fired as a result, THE ANGOLITE immediately began investigating to ascertain what had actually happened. Amin couldn't confirm his rumored dismissal simply because he didn't know. THE ANGOLITE requested an official administrative listing from Green's office of all the inmate representatives serving on the committee. A list, dated December 16, 1982, showed Amin's name at the top of it. Assistant Warden Peggi Gresham told THE ANGOLITE that she had been assured that the list was current and up to date.

As for the rumor that the Muslims had teamed up to vote down the Christians, Amin shook his head sadly, pointing out that five committee members voted against the request. "What's so ridiculous about the rumor is that I was the only Muslim there," he told THE ANGOLITE, "so it's quite obvious that four Christians felt the same way at the time. It had nothing to do with religion."

"I can definitely say that this wasn't Islamic-motivated," Rasheed Abdul Mumin, leader of Angola's Muslims, told THE ANGOLITE. "It's something that Amin, as an individual, saw as not being necessary. There is nothing in Islam that would motivate him to stop anyone from having some type of baptismal paraphernalia. Muslims are taught to uphold other religions, and we wouldn't fight to stop them from baptizing one another. In Islam, we're taught to protect other religious rituals. The things we stand out against, we make it publicly known - and this is not one of them."

Still, the rumored dismissal of Amin persisted throughout the Christmas Season and the matter finally came to a head on January 4, the day of the regularly scheduled monthly meeting. Shortly before the meeting, in early afternoon, Amin began to collect the minutes and records in preparation for the meeting. He saw the call-



out lying on his desk and looked at it. His name, normally first on the list, was not on the callout. Instead, Sam Stark's name - who is one of the most respected Christian leaders in the Main Prison - appeared on the callout. Amin turned to Allen, his work supervisor, and asked if he had been removed from the committee. Allen acknowledged that he had been replaced.

"Coach Allen told me that about 15 minutes before he had looked in his mailbox and found a letter from Warden Maggio saying I had been replaced," Amin told THE ANGOLITE. "I said, 'Wow, that's pretty cold.' I asked him if anyone had told him why I had been replaced, but he said that nobody told him anything about it. So I asked him would he ask Warden Maggio if I had done something wrong - not that he had to give me a reason, or that there even has to be a reason, but if I did

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

something, at least tell me so I can know where I'm heading. He told me that he'd check it out, but, so far, I haven't heard anything from anyone."

Like the world of politics anywhere, the maneuverings of politicians and vested interests groups are often invisible, pursued behind-the-scenes away from public view and camouflaged with seemingly good intentions. One only knows something is up or has gone wrong by the result produced. In this instance, something had gone wrong or someone had obviously pulled the political carpet from beneath Amin - either for political gain or personal vengeance.

"I was not involved in the decision," Wilson told THE ANGOLITE. "Let me say for the record that I have no problem with Abdullah Amin. He and I have always been on the friendliest of terms. And I have made no recommendations against him being on that committee. I have no objection to him being on that committee or any other.



WILSON - NOT INVOLVED IN DECISION

I made no recommendation, period - nor was I even asked for a recommendation."

Robinson also denied having anything to do with Amin's removal from the committee. "But I would venture a speculation that it wasn't because of the opposition he voiced in regards to the baptismal equipment because he was not the only one who voiced opposition to it," he told THE ANGOLITE. When THE ANGOLITE pointed out that he was under political pressure as a representative for the religious community to produce results and that he could ill afford to lose on the baptismal requests, Robinson shook his head, disclaiming any involvement in the ouster of Amin from the committee. "I play politics and I play pretty good," he said, "and politics in here are just as they are in the streets. There's a time to push and a time to just lay cool - until you get a chance to push even harder. I was there to do a job, to be a representative. I do my job - and I have no quarrel with who is put on the committee and who is removed. When I have something to present, I'm going to present it and I'm going to argue it - and to the best of my ability, I'm going to try to get it passed. But, no, I didn't encourage or have anything to do with Abdullah's removal."

When questioned by THE ANGOLITE, Allen stated that he didn't see Amin's removal as being tied to his opposition to the baptismal equipment. He pointed to another possibility. "As I told him, I don't know exactly why," he said, "but I know he upset one of the administrators at the last meeting concerning Inmate Welfare money. But it didn't have anything to do with the baptismal request. He questioned how much money was in the bank and the Business Administrator said, 'Hey, now this is what we have and, more or less, don't tell me we don't have it.' I know for sure that Mr. Grimmer got upset with Amin's implication concerning the amount of money that was in the Inmate Welfare Fund, upset with the implication that it wasn't what was actually on paper."

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

Witherspoon recalled the disagreement between Amin and Business Administrator Harvey Grimmer. "It was over the financial statement," he told THE ANGOLITE. "Mr. Grimmer seemed to become kind of emotional when Amin questioned the amount of money that was in the account. Mr. Grimmer said something about we had \$150,000 in bonds or bank statements up there and Amin questioned that. It was done in sort of joking way, much the way he questions everything. But Mr. Grimmer got highly upset about it. Matter of fact, he snatched up the paperwork. At that point Amin told him that he was just joking. But Mr. Grimmer said, 'No, I'm going to show you.'"

Witherspoon told THE ANGOLITE that while Amin is a straightforward type of person and can be diplomatic when he wants to be, he is sometimes abrasive in his outspoken manner. "I'd say 'guilty' to that charge," Amin admitted to THE ANGOLITE. "But not intentionally abrasive, or abusive - just firm and determined. It may be abusive to some people because I am an overly aggressive person - and I am aware that because of my size and my religion, some people react to me that way. But most everyone knows that I am an outspoken individual, that I generally don't hold back my feelings."

Steering away from the baptismal issue, Allen told THE ANGOLITE: "If I had to speculate, I would say that his personality led to his being removed from the committee rather than his opposition to the baptismal request."

While acknowledging that an irreconcilable personality clash may have caused Amin's removal, Witherspoon, who is an astute analyst of prison politics, was not inclined to share Allen's line of thinking. And to cloud the matter even more, THE ANGOLITE was unable to ascertain what role, if any, Green or Grimmer played in the removal of Amin from the committee. At press time, neither man had responded to THE ANGOLITE's requests for interviews.



ALLEN - A MATTER OF PERSONALITY

The buck always stops with the man at the top. In this case, Maggio - and he denied the involvement of any other person in the decision to remove Amin. "They had nothing to do with it," Maggio told THE ANGOLITE, referring to all the people connected with the incident. "No one told me anything. No one suggested anything to me. That decision is strictly on me - I did it. And I don't have anything personally against Long (Amin). But I want a balanced representation on the committee. I don't want it going too far to either side, but one that kind of represents everyone. I'm trying to manage this thing so it works out to the benefit of all."

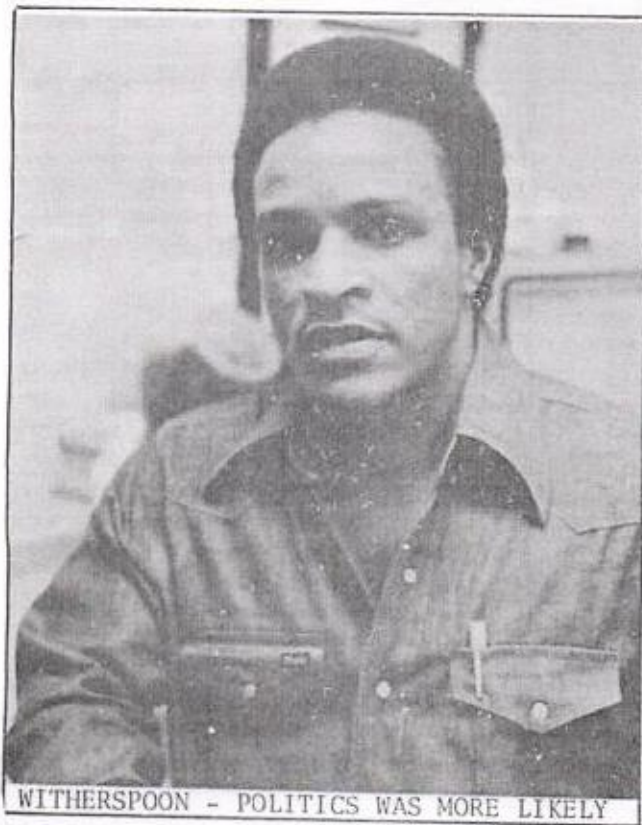
THE ANGOLITE pointed out that Amin was the only Muslim on the committee. "No, he's not," Maggio responded, stating that there were several other Muslims on the committee.

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

THE ANGOLITE pointed out that since he had not attended the meeting, there was no way for him to know what had transpired unless someone who had attended told him. "I know what happens in those meetings," he replied. "I don't have to be there - and I knew what had happened in that one."

Maggio's initial concern about a possible religious conflict on the committee between Christians and Muslims, as well as his belief that there were several Muslims on the committee, indicates that someone at that December meeting obviously misrepresented the facts of the situation to him, apparently for the purpose of getting him to remove Amin from the committee.

As I see it, it was something they used to get rid of Amin," Mumin told THE ANGOLITE. "They had a reason to get him off the board and this just provided an opportunity."



WITHERSPOON - POLITICS WAS MORE LIKELY

Whether it was a case of personality conflict or political manipulation flowing from the clash over the baptismal request, the matter is still open to speculation - and the truth will probably never be known. One thing is known - someone at the December meeting deliberately misrepresented the facts to Maggio, resulting in the removal of Amin. The identity of that person, or persons, is not likely to be learned. The matter stands with the officials viewing Amin's removal being attributed to personality problems while the inmates view it as being political.

Asked if Amin's removal was political in nature and a planned effort, Witherspoon told THE ANGOLITE: "I think that's a very good possibility."

Robinson was more blunt. "Abdullah attacked City Hall and lost. The problem is that he didn't know how to do it properly. When you butt your head into a steel wall, you get a headache. You have to wait until you find the key instead of running head-on. You wait, find the key, and unlock the door - then you walk through. You don't try to butt the door with your head and force your way through."

Would Robinson buck City Hall? "Not head-on," he said. "There's a proper way to fight City Hall. I fight the proper way, 'cause I like to win."

On January 4th the Inmate Welfare Fund Advisory Committee convened in the Parole Board Room for its first meeting of 1983. Amin was conspicuously absent, but no one questioned his absence. There was no mention of the rumors and behind-the-scenes that had occurred since their last meeting. The committee was well into the meeting, having already dealt with all old business, when Prentice Robinson finally walked in, proud and confident, fresh from having successfully engineered the first Christmas concert for inmates in

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

protective custody. He immediately launched into the request for the 50 pamphlets which had been tabled at the last meeting conveniently tacking on to it the previously-dismissed request for the baptismal garment. The committee members listened attentively to his argument for approval of the request. There were no counter arguments - no questions, no objections. The request, which had previously generated so much opposition and controversy, was approved unanimously, with one abstention. On the wings of that victory and in the face of Amin's empty chair, Robinson graciously solicited the assistance of other representatives in helping him ascertain the needs of the religious community in their respective living areas, so that he could better pursue their interests.

"To be honest with you, I wasn't surprised by the vote," Amin told THE ANGOLITE in reference to the committee's approval of the baptismal garment.

Robinson denied that Amin's removal from the committee impacted the vote, attributing the victory to his superior presentation and ability to convince the committee of the need for the requested items. "It was just a coincidence," he explained to THE ANGOLITE. "Like I said, I play politics. I felt it was a good political move on my part to have the issue tabled because my defense wasn't properly prepared. And when I moved in the next time, I had a defense and offense ready and my proposal was presented properly - and I won. That's the name of the game."

But David Ballard, the only abstaining vote, disagreed with Robinson's analysis. "The information that Prentice brought in was still vague," he told THE ANGOLITE. While the other members who had originally voted against the baptismal request changed their votes, Ballard didn't. "I didn't change mine because I felt the same way," he said. "I really wasn't convinced that what he was doing was right, that we should buy this equipment. I kind

of lean toward what Amin said - that the state should provide this equipment for the church, just like they do for security. So rather than vote on this thing one way or another, I chose to abstain."

But the long-rumored and ultimate removal of Amin from the committee did influence the other members. "Yes, that's quite obvious," Ballard said.

Amin told THE ANGOLITE that four days prior to the meeting Jimmy Miller of Camp D, who had originally opposed the Chaplaincy request, informed him that he was going to vote for it when it came up again - indicating that at least some of the members knew that the request would be resubmitted and that their vote would have nothing to do with Robinson's "superior presentation."

Amin expresses no anger or bitterness about his removal from the committee. "I was hurt by the way it happened," he told THE ANGOLITE. "They could have done it



BALLARD - AN OMINOUS MESSAGE DELIVERED

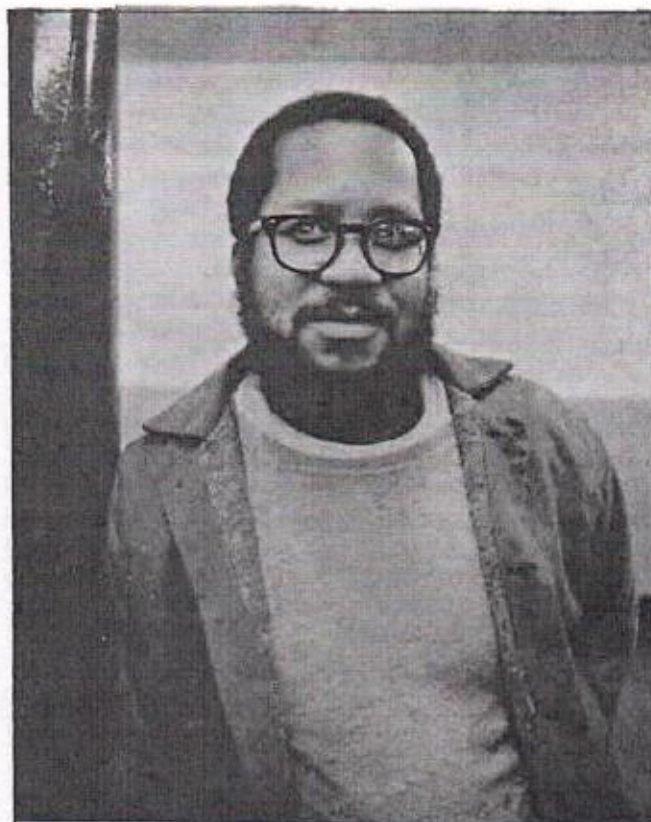
STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)

more honestly." And he has no regrets. "That was not the first time I lined up against proposals on the committee, I'm not ashamed to say. If I don't believe in something, I'm going to express my belief. And on more than one occasion, I've more or less spearheaded opposition against certain things. That's the reason I was put there - to vote my conscience. If I didn't believe that, I probably would have tried to find some way to get out of it earlier. From what I understood, if I recall Warden Maggio's words correctly, that the money was to be spent according to our wishes because it's the inmates' money and I totally agree with that reasoning." And despite his removal from the committee, Amin still agrees with Maggio's rationale for having such a committee: "I think it's a good idea and serves a good purpose." And he agrees with Sam Starks being named as his replacement. "I feel the warden made a good choice."

But while Amin expressed no animosity, others expressed concern. "The process where Amin was eliminated for voicing his opinion, I don't think is fair," Ballard said. "I was under the impression that everyone in the room had that choice. That's what we're there for - to voice our opinions. He didn't feel like the request was right - and he voiced his opinion. I don't feel he should be punished in any manner or be removed from the board for being outspoken. I don't think that was fair."

Amin's removal does cast an ominous shadow over the committee, perhaps lessening some of its independence. The specter hangs now that convenience will more often prevail than conscience. One source told THE ANGOLITE that Amin's removal told every committee member that there's a price for being straightforward and conscientious. "Yes," Ballard admitted to THE ANGOLITE. "That's the message."

But while the committee's sense of independence has been tarnished, there were some winners emerging from the affair.



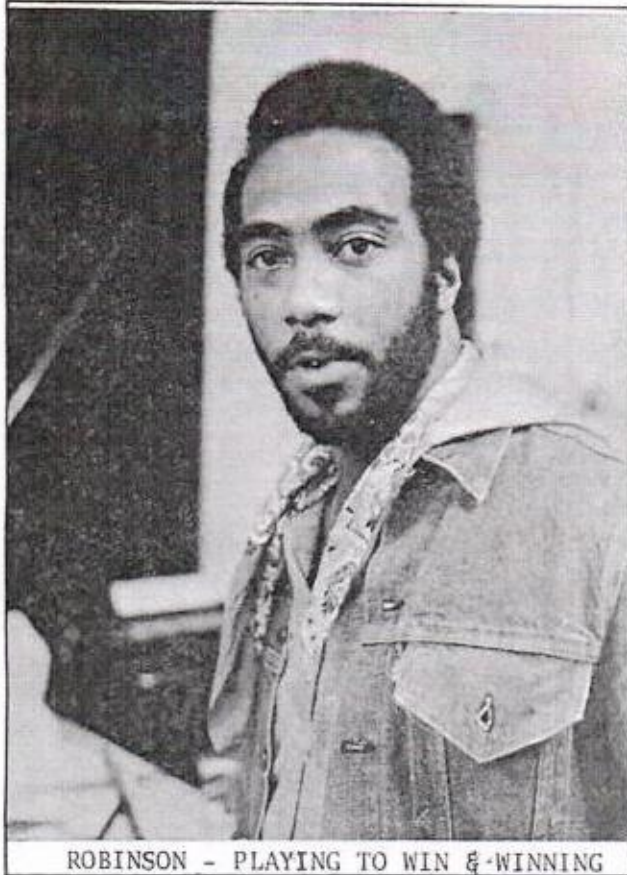
AMIN - VOTING HIS CONSCIENCE & LOSING

The replacement of Amin with a widely respected religious leader gives the religious community two representatives on the committee. The Chaplaincy got what it wanted - and, more importantly, Robinson demonstrated his effectiveness as a religious representative. He had delivered, considerably enhancing his political fortunes.

On the afternoon of January 4 Chaplain Wilson learned of the committee's approval of the requested pamphlets and garment from Robinson. "That's been taken care of, Chaplain Wilson," he was overheard saying in a telephone conversation. "No problem - everything went smooth, just perfect."

Two weeks later a summit meeting was held at the Interfaith Chapel in the Main Prison with approximately a dozen inmate religious leaders from various units

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS (Cont.)



ROBINSON - PLAYING TO WIN & WINNING

throughout Angola. Three members of the Chaplaincy also participated. The meeting, called for by Robinson, was reportedly for the purpose of facilitating better organization, representation, and resolution of the needs and desires of the prison's religious community.

Franklin D. Roosevelt once observed: "In politics, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, you can bet it was planned that way." THE ANGOLITE asked Witherspoon that if, in light of everything that had transpired in the Amin Affair, he agreed with the FBR statement. He laughed. "Yes, I agree with it."

On January 4th the Louisiana Legislature convened in the state capitol for a special session called by Governor Treen, with a major fight expected over work-

men's compensation reforms. Having failed in previous attempts to get the reforms through and lagging behind in two recent polls for the upcoming gubernatorial election, Treen had to deliver - and the governor had done his homework.

In his address to a joint session of the Senate and the House, Treen announced that Senator Sydney Nelson, who had been the thorn of opposition in the past, would be the lead author of the governor's compromise bill. That sent a signal to all observers that the workmen's comp legislation indeed had a chance to be passed; that the governor had come to play hardball.

What happened to effect Nelson's major change in attitude? Successful politicians rarely allude to behind-the-scenes maneuverings, deals, and battles. But Treen did acknowledge that he had been "wooing" Nelson ever since the defeat of the workmen's comp issue in the previous legislature.

The MORNING ADVOCATE quoted Louisiana Association of Business and Industry President Ed Steimel as saying that he believed Nelson's support of the legislation would be beneficial because he represented some of the views held by trial lawyers and labor on the subject. "I don't think anything is assured, but it certainly does mean that a major qualification (Nelson's opposition) that was there in the minds of some people is no longer there," Steimel was reported as saying.

While no one would say the legislation was certain, something was obviously assured since it passed the Senate 39-0 and sailed through the House with the same ease. Treen had delivered, considerably enhancing his political fortunes - and the governor said it was accomplished through "good preparation" and "hard work."
