

EDITORIALS

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The Soledad Frameup

If Don Jelinek's Soledad story were submitted to a Hollywood producer, he would probably reject it as too improbable and incredible for the movies.

"Z," he might say, is about as much as the public will believe.

There's lots of talk these days about bugging, about framing people, about knocking off members of the liberal/radical opposition; but rarely, if ever, is the bugger and the framer, particularly if working for law enforcement agencies, ever caught and exposed in flagrante delicto.

The Guardian believes, after making as careful and thorough an investigation as is possible without subpoena power, that Tony Pewitt's story is true and that he was indeed dispatched from prison on a mission to get evidence that would implicate Dr. Frank Rundle, the controversial Soledad psychiatrist, in two Soledad killings.

We have in our possession a good deal of substantiation of Pewitt's story (a photo of him wearing the bug, affidavits from him and Rundle, tapes of Pewitt and Rundle statements, the "original" Pewitt/Rundle notes passed between them while the bugging equipment was on, a copy of Pewitt's false 72-hour pass to allow him to leave prison and visit Rundle in Rundle's home, a copy of the Avis Rent-A-Car form, the report of a Monterey private detective firm called to Rundle's house to witness the bugging attempt) and we will make it available to the proper investigating authorities.



We find this whole business immensely disturbing, particularly the move by some prison officials, apparently working without the knowledge of Raymond Procnier, chief of the California prison system, to try to frame Dr. Frank Rundle—the one Soledad man who had the sense and the courage to speak out publicly about the gut causes of the bloodshed at Soledad and in our prisons.

We find equally disturbing the use of an inmate, with a good prison record, as a hostage to seek the “get-Rundle” information on the threat of a three-year delay in his parole. And we find disturbing the use of the parole system as an obvious political device to serve the political ends of some of the more hard line, law and order forces in the prison system.

Sgt. “Moe” Comacho, vice-president of the Calif. Correctional Officers Assoc., has been making speeches around the state about the left-wing conspiracies he argues are creating havoc in the prisons.

It may be easier, in the short run, to accept Comacho’s conspiracy theory line than to listen to experts like Rundle, who get at the causes and the inhuman conditions that prisoners have rightly been protesting at Soledad and elsewhere.

That’s why the Jelinek story needs a thorough investigation by the California Legislature, the Dept. of Corrections and several district attorneys’ offices. First, to answer some of the critical questions the story raises:

Were state laws violated when Pewitt was coerced into obtaining a 72-hour pass to leave prison?

Who paid the bills for the private airplanes, rental cars, motels, restaurant meals?

Did Atty. Gen. Evelle Younger authorize the actions of his aide, Norm Gard? What other government agencies were involved?

Were federal and state bugging laws violated? Were court orders obtained and, if so, under what representation were they given?

Did the Adult Authority suspend Pewitt’s release date from prison because he failed to cooperate in the bugging? Was Pewitt’s release date then reinstated as the result of other political pressure and the investigation by the chief of California prisons, which was prompted by Pewitt’s attorneys and the events in

Jelinek’s article? What does all this say about the politics of parole in California?

Has the Adult Authority ever before conducted its own investigation into a local murder case after local authorities had abandoned the official investigation?

Did the Bakersfield police by coincidence begin investigating a four-year-old murder two days after the bugging failure, or was it ordered by someone? If so, who ordered it and why?

Why did Gard telephone the Monterey DA’s office the night before Pewitt’s visit to Rundle? Was the Monterey DA involved?

Until these questions are answered satisfactorily by a proper investigation in open forum, the California prison system will continue under suspicion.

But there is more to investigate than these specific questions in this specific case: there is the whole business of determining the root causes of prison revolt, how we can start penal reform quickly and how we can deal, in the meantime, with the conservative elements embedded in the prison system that would like to find the Rundles and the reformers guilty of conspiracy to aid and abet prisoners. Don Jelinek’s story is the place to start with this larger investigation into the prisons and the general administration of justice in California.

The Media Keeps The Con in Conservation

Standard Oil tested this peculiarity of journalism in the nineties, and found it good for the purposes of Standard Oil. The company was in the desperate pipe line war. It had bought a string of newspapers from Oil City to Cleveland, but it could get no other support. All Ohio journalism was snapping at its heels. Dan O’Day, the clever old Standard Oil “fixer,” visited Toledo to see what could be done.

“I’ve got it—Mica Axle Grease!” he said one day.

Mica Axle Grease was a new by-product of Standard Oil. One small factory was manufacturing it as an experiment.

With every Ohio newspaper worth considering, O’Day placed an advertisement for Mica Axle Grease. He drew the contracts to run eighteen months,