

Letters

Prisoners' Rights

To Harvey Silverglate:
I read, with considerable amazement, your article in *The Real Paper* (Prisoners' Rights And Wrongs," 2/25). Nearly every statement made relative to the Committee on Criminal Justice grant to the Department of Correction, entitled County Technical Assistance Unit, is inaccurate. This is rather puzzling, since you and I briefly discussed this grant and you have a copy of the grant application.

The specific inaccuracies are:

(1) The County TA Unit was awarded a grant in the amount of \$53,769 — not \$200,000 as you stated.

(2) Federal funds will *not* be used "to help defend the counties against civil rights suits" as you stated. The Department of Correction proposed in its application to hire an attorney on the grant. However, the CCJ, in its review of the application, stated that this would not be congruent with our funding guidelines. The intent of the County TA Grant is to assist the county correctional agencies to meet minimum standards, and the staffing pattern will reflect that objective.

(3) While it is a minor point, the Department's application was neither voluminous (ten pages, plus an appendix) nor did it contain "fine print."

(4) The Prisoners' Rights Project did *not* lose funding because grants were awarded to the Department of Correction. These two organizations do *not* compete for the same funds.

I am very concerned that you did not take the small amount of time necessary to check on the accuracy of your "facts."

As you are aware, I respond to telephone calls and correspondence, and our grant files are public documents. It is quite easy

to verify information of MCCJ grants.

Ruth Ann Jones
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Harvey Silverglate replies: I stand by my story in its entirety. As Ms. Jones points out, I did briefly discuss this with her before writing the column, and I did have a copy of the grant application itself. Ms. Jones's four claims of "specific inaccuracies" are easily enough dealt with.

(1) I reported, accurately, that the \$200,000 grant to the Department of Corrections was in fact "for a hodge podge of three programs," one of which was the County Technical Assistance Unit program. I did not believe — nor do I now believe — that any of the three programs were sufficiently worthy of an aggregate of \$200,000, which the Prisoners' Rights Project could have put to much better use. I singled out the County Technical Assistance Unit for special criticism because it was obvious that this grant could, and would, be used to frustrate the prisoners' litigation in the area of conditions of confinement.

(2) It hardly matters whether the Department of Corrections hires an attorney, or a nonlawyer, with these federal funds. The fact is that it is likely, given a fair reading of the grant proposal itself, that Commissioner Hall intends to use such personnel to assist in fighting the prisoners' lawsuits. Remember that for every lawyer involved in a case, several nonlawyers act in back-up capacities.

(3) I considered the department's application and appendix to be unduly voluminous. It is all too easy to hide one's true intent amid a flood of words and paper, which

is typical of bureaucratic organizations.

(4) This is the crudest attempt at deception in Ms. Jones' letter. The CCJ first separates its available funds into two "separate" pools, one for court, prosecution and defense programs, and another for corrections programs. By determining how much of the original allocation of funds is segregated into the corrections programs pool, the CCJ can effectively deprive the Prisoners' Rights Project (which is classified in the other pool) of needed funds. Casting aside these artificial classifications, the fact remains that the CCJ, if it wanted to, could have shifted funds from the corrections pool to the pool from which the Prisoners' Rights Project was funded. The CCJ cannot escape its responsibility for underfunding the PRP by citing these artificially determined "separate" pools of money.

Neither the CCJ nor the public should be allowed to hide from the fact that the Department of Corrections is being given money which could, and should, have gone to the Prisoners' Rights Project.

EIS Needed for Harvard Square

In your April 15 story on the Harvard Square development controversy, several inflammatory quotes were attributed to me which were highly inaccurate. While I welcome the long overdue coverage of this issue by your paper, I am sorry that *The Real Paper* felt it necessary to spice up its story with terms like "lied" and "shit" and then chose me as the mouthpiece. I did not and would not use those words in that context.

I am concerned that with media coverage of this sort, which seeks to portray a polarized, adversarial