NPRA. There was the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam, and we—I—drew heavily from those models. Pulling security, so to speak, was no snub or demeaning task—everyone did it from time to time, even the block representatives. Security was one of the most important jobs in the organization because all of our lives and futures depended upon it, ... and it was surely the hardest job. Try to prevent 500 repressed, angry, racist, and extremely violent prisoners from rioting and tearing each other apart at any given moment of every day utilizing the only tool that you've been afforded—the promise of hope. It is not easy.

It can be said about the bulk of the white prisoner population in Walpole (who were the overwhelming majority in the prison) that there was an appearance that they were opportunists looking only for what they could get "now." On the other hand, the Black prisoner population (i.e., BANTU) had far-reaching expectations that took us from behind the prison walls, having entered as the proverbial pariahs; back to our respective communities, as educated and contributing members of the Consciousness Movement. We sought meaningful vocational and educational programs to transform us into productive human beings; where we saw our white counterparts as already accepted in society by virtue of their skin color, focusing upon momentary pleasures and good time credits. Robert Dellelo was seen as one of the exceptions to that rule, as he had the most difficult task of balancing the prospective goals of the NPRA (i.e., seeing the need for career-oriented educational and vocational programs for all) with the "gratification now" attitude of his constituency or the white prisoner population, all the while having to keep the majority, extremely volatile prisoner population in check. He, more so than any of us, may have understood the fine line upon which we all walked, as he was placed in the position as the spokesperson for the NPRA's community-based corrections format.[310]

Yet, even though the NPRA was doing everything in its power to keep the prison population under control, after the meeting in the auditorium, a prisoner stabbed a guard. To his credit, rather than blaming the prisoners for the stabbing, Boone blamed the guard culture. The *Herald* responded by publishing an article describing the crimes and convictions of Dellelo, Hamm, and Miguel Trinidad, the board representative of the Latino prisoners.[311] The paper included cartoons of the three men with placards hanging from their necks, labeling them cop killer, rapist, and drug dealer.

WITNESSING REFORM: THE ROLE OF CIVILIAN OBSERVERS

Boone finally acquiesced to the prisoners' demands for civilian observers because the guards were increasingly hostile to the administration and increasingly slothful on the job. Rodman invited Boone out to discuss how well-trained citizens watching and documenting the actions of prisoners and guards could be a catalyst for stability. According to Rodman, after this discussion, Boone decided he could trust him.

Once Boone accepted the idea of civilian observers, Rodman had to produce them. He assembled a small group of trusted volunteers who became the core of the AHC's Observer Program (OP). Among them were a number of dedicated ex-cons: John McGrath and Arnie Coles from the External NPRA, and Russ Carmichael and John Ramos from Ex Cons Helping Others (ECHO). Rodman also recruited John Osler, a divinity student; Obalaji Rust from the Black United Front; Douglas Butler, a highly respected labor organizer in the Black community; Frank Kelly from Packard Manse; and David Dance, the Harvard student running the Black history class at Walpole. When the AHC announced that the observers were to be permitted in the prison, many of the women from CARCAP showed up at the prison to volunteer. Boone's assistant, Walter Williams, told Rodman that no women would be allowed to enter the prison as observers. Rodman recalls:

> I didn't really disagree with him, but I knew this would be a difficult conversation because these women had spent months outside the prison protesting the conditions their husbands and loved ones were enduring. I said, "Sure, but who is going to tell them?" Then I opened the door and turned to face them; Williams closed the door behind me and left me out there alone to tell them. They were none too happy, but there was a lot of work to do, and they coordinated the volunteers and made phone calls keeping the lines of communication open.[312]

On March 8, the first observers from the OP entered the prison with the 7 AM guards' shift. The Kwanzaa lockdown had ended; the men in 9 and 10 Blocks had been locked down for 70 days. That day, Obalaji Rust began political-awareness classes. Over the next 12 days, Rust would stay inside the prison continuously, only leaving for one break.[313]

FROM GUARDS' UNION TO PRISONERS' UNION: THE INSTITUTION CHANGES HANDS

On March 9, after the first observers took their posts, 50 guards refused to punch in at the three o'clock shift change. Those who did report to work tried to turn an already scheduled meeting with the commissioner into a press conference by bringing the press with them. Refusing to play along, Boone left the prison. As he walked out, the guards who were assembled on the lawn began to "boo, hiss, and shout, eventually spitting racial slurs at the Commissioner. 'Get out of here you bum' and 'Pack your bags you carpet bagger.' They also chanted 'Boone the coon.'"[314] "Boone the Coon" was the headline in the *Herald* that day. The guards' union released a statement saying they were disturbed by Boone's interference in running the prison.[315] The liberal white North had been unmasked, revealing the ugly face of overt racial hatred.

After Boone got into his car, the entire three o'clock shift—in front of the assembled media representatives—walked off the job, leaving the prison in the hands of the AHC's Observer Program and the prisoners. Ed Rodman remembers:

> That morning, I had set up a table after the first shift of observers went in. We let the second shift in at three and I was sitting at the table. One of the guards came up to me with a big manila envelope. He dropped it on the desk with a big clunk, saying, "I think these belong to you." In the envelope was every key to the prison. I got up and took the keys over to the office the state police had just set up in the prison that morning. I placed it on [the state police officer's] desk and said, "I think these belong to you!"[316]

That afternoon, there were no guards in the prison. The NPRA had already determined what its role would be. Dellelo remembers: "When the guards went on strike, we were prepared. We had everything in place. We could not afford to miss a beat."[317]

Within a week, Bishop withdrew DOC support for the Inmate Advisory Council and quickly recognized the NPRA as the prisoners' bargaining unit.[318] This acknowledgment affected the State Labor Relations Commission's process. In fact, the SLRC had already reached the decision that it could not certify the union. The SLRC notified DOC attorney Robert Bell, who asked the SLRC to delay the release of its decision, since the guards were on strike and the commissioner had just recognized the bargaining power of the prisoners' union. The SLRC complied; it would be well into September before the commission released its opinion. The NPRA and its allies would proceed with the conviction that the organization had a strong chance at recognition as long as the NPRA could demonstrate its ability to perform the functions of a labor union.

The NPRA set about demonstrating just that. Hamm explained the structure the NPRA adopted as it assumed responsibility for running the prison:

> Each member of the internal board of directors for the NPRA was assigned as overseer of at least one committee. The committee itself was usually headed by a cellblock representative or his assistant, with the board member as the chair. The committee head was accountable to the chair, the chair was accountable to the board of directors, and the board of directors was accountable to the general prisoner population (membership of the NPRA). The committee chairman and his designee had total access to his area of concern (e.g., school, hospital, 9 Block, 10 Block, chapel) any time within reason, day or night. A committee report had to be typed and submitted to the board of directors twice a week, except in cases of emergency when matters had to be decided upon and dealt with immediately. The education, furlough, vocational training, legal, and visiting committees were oriented toward research and program implementation.
>
> It was these specific committees' task to develop feasible programs for the prison population's benefit and to submit these program formats to the legal committee for verification ... to be formulated into proposals, submitted to the board of directors for review and a vote, and if approved by the board then forwarded to the Department of Correction or the prison superintendent [Bishop] for consideration. The findings of the committees once submitted to and signed off by the board of directors were sent to the prison superintendent, the commissioner of correction [Boone], the external board of directors [NPRA], and the correctional officer union representative, and released to the general prisoner population via the block representative and the monthly general prisoner population meetings held in the prison auditorium. Emergency meetings with the general population could be held any time, especially if we of the board needed a vote from the membership concerning proposed policy.[319]

Dellelo's description of the NPRA's structure, developed in the fall well before the Kwanzaa lockdown, contributes further to our understanding of how the prison was run under its authority.

> There was an army of committees in the formal structure of the NPRA. Because there were so few Latino prisoners, Miguel Trinidad took care of the Spanish; there was a Spanish Committee, but it wasn't as formal. The Hospital Committee worked with hospital staff and made sure medical and dental treatment was decent, all the prisoners were taken care of, and that the hospital was running in a humane manner. If a doctor wasn't there, they would record it. We had some really great paramedics working in the prison. They were Vietnam vets; they were used to trauma, and they were used to dealing with drug addicts.
>
> Guys who knew the hospital would get assigned there; guys that worked in the kitchen would get assigned there. What we did with the committees, what I tried to do, was find the guys who were sincerely interested in the area and put them in the area. For example, Jimmy Pena did not give a fuck about prison reform; he wanted to get a good meal and to be treated like a decent human being. He was on the Kitchen Committee.
>
> Industries encompassed the laundry, the brush shop, et cetera. The Sports Recreation committee made sure all the equipment was available. The canteen was the property of the inmates. When Recreation needed basketballs, et cetera, they would make out a request to us and we would purchase the equipment. We did not stop with recreational equipment for the prisoner population. The Rec. Committee built a playground for their children. The avocations pitched in and built picnic tables.
>
> There was a lot of internal house stuff: work that was necessary to make the institution functional. We negotiated control of the canteen and its profit was to be used to support additional NPRA initiatives. We took things a step further because we wanted to open a store that sold sandwiches, sodas, hot dogs, and

hamburgers so that the money went back to be used for halfway houses.[320] We wanted NPRA halfway houses. They would be supported by selling product inside of Walpole prison. The NPRA philosophy of prisoner self-determination would be the philosophy. We wanted the NPRA expand to other institutions. We are talking good money in those times.

We could have developed three halfway houses and paid for them ourselves and charged guys a minimum amount to live there—that way they could hit the street with money in their pocket. Prisoners who had shown leadership while they were in the prison and had experience developing programs would run the houses. John McGrath and Russ Carmichael were already doing this in Cambridge. This would give guys a job on the outside and build our external network.

We didn't control industries—they were controlled by DOC—but we had committees about safety conditions and making sure guys didn't get screwed. We didn't have jobs to pay everyone so we wanted to make sure it was a fair process. There was some equitable forum to get employment, like a working list.

It was important that those of us in leadership did not appear to be benefiting from our positions. I didn't move to minimum end—I stayed in the maximum end. I didn't take any perks. I wasn't doing anything to benefit myself, which was another reason they feared me.

The observers did not have any keys. But the NPRA block leaders did. The prisoners had keys to all the cells, but no keys to the outside. Didn't want them. That was the insanity of the situation. We even passed out meds, which was against the law. And no one got ripped off. Everyone got their pills—even the assholes.

What almost happened is that we almost got a union, and the concepts that we laid out, they are still talking about today, thirty years later: rehabilitation, vocational training, providing rehabilitation tools, and halfway houses. The notion of making a prisoner a law-abiding person who goes out better than when he came in. Unfortunately, the system has gone in the opposite direction. For example, the BU college program resulted in a zero recidivism rate. Education is a viable tool. People became law-abiding, productive persons. You have to give a guy a trade to make a living.[321]

There was no denying that Walpole prison was a community of laborers. According to the SLRC opinion, delivered later that year, of the 575 prisoners, 400 were working. The opinion lists 31 specific work assignments, ranging from the industrial jobs in the foundry and the print shop to custodial jobs such as corridor maintenance. In December, when the NPRA had applied for certification, two prisoners were even employed to orient new arrivals. Within Walpole, the pay ranged from 25 cents to $1.25 a day; the NPRA was negotiating for minimum wage, then at around $1.75 an hour.

Despite the strikes and work stoppages, $443,835 worth of goods were produced at Walpole in fiscal year 1973. The Boone administration was far along in negotiations with private industry to provide job training and jobs that would follow the prisoners after release. The SLRC opinion also referred to a computer-programming service, and to a Walpole contract with Mail Group, Inc., that was prepared to start prisoners at $30 to $60 a week.[322]

WHO IS MINDING THE PRISONERS?

Civilian Observers or Citizen Guards?

When the afternoon-shift guards walked out on March 9, Rodman knew that he was involved in something much bigger than he had originally conceived. Initially, the observers were to enter the prison to observe, not to act. Their presence was intended to bring balance to the environment. With the line guards gone, though, the observers had an even more crucial role to play. It was essential that all of the observers fully understand that their proper function was not replacing the guards, but rather witnessing how the NPRA ran the prison in their absence. They were to be the eyes and ears of their communities, relaying accurate information to the press to counterbalance the reports guards had clearly fabricated from air, given that they weren't even in the prison at the time. At the end of each shift, observers would leave a report for Phyllis Ryan to review before she released her daily summary to the media.

Making Observers Out of Allies

Almost immediately, it became obvious that a larger group of volunteers would be needed to meet the AHC's commitment to the prisoners and the administration. Phyllis Ryan and Mary Norris from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) went to work contacting all of the organizations that supported prison reform. Then they contacted all the individuals who had signed the postcards sent to the governor in December 1971. The AFSC Criminal Justice Program became the coordinating center for the Observer Program. Within a few days it had hundreds of volunteers.

Ed Rodman adapted training lessons originally designed for volunteers witnessing civil-disobedience actions undertaken by CORE and SNCC to prepare the civilian observers. Rodman's first concern was that dedicated volunteers who spent too much time on the blocks might begin to consider themselves responsible for the prison. Because they were primarily middle-class church people, he feared they would identify with the role of guard or custodian. Ultimately, Rodman turned to an unexpected source to prepare the observers. Sunny Robinson, who was part of the medical team at Norfolk prison, recommended approaching George Moore, a guard who sat in on the Inmate Advisory Council at Norfolk prison. Moore, who had also been a member of the Elam Committee, agreed to work with Rodman to train the observers. Rodman remembered, "Without Moore's advice and participation, we would not have been as successful. He understood the dynamic at Walpole and the seduction of power."[323]

At Moore's suggestion, the AHC reduced the shifts from eight hours to six hours and limited the number of shifts a volunteer was permitted to take per week. Years later, Rodman reflected, "I think about this all the time. Guards who log even a thirty-hour work week, well, they start looking at control as their job and as the prison as 'their prison.' Imagine how this plays itself out when there is no AHC to debrief you or say, 'Watch it—power is getting to you.'"[324]

Certain observers were key to this project, and despite Moore's guidelines, they worked long hours inside the prison. Osler, Butler, Rust, and Kelly were the core volunteers, with Rodman and Doug Butler taking most of the night shifts. Butler was a middle-aged Black man who had been a prize-winning body builder in his younger years. He withstood the rigors of the Observer Program better than many of the other volunteers. His name appears on the log for the night shift as many as five times a week. On many occasions he did double shifts. His copious notes evince a disciplined man who never lost sight of his purpose.

The work with the prisoners became a commitment for Rodman's whole family. Many recently released prisoners were already making their transition to the community at the Rodman home under the careful mentorship of Gladys, Ed's wife. White ex-cons who lived with them had all of their stereotypes challenged. "When they found out that Gladys's mother was a school principal and they realized that many of the adults in our family were educated, professional, and respected people, well, you could see that they were thinking about it," Ed Rodman recalled. "Gladys and her mother didn't really cut them any slack either. They challenged them whenever possible. And they did regular household chores just like the rest of us."[325] On weekends, the reverend's young daughters would accompany him to the prison and help the observers file papers and make phone calls in the waiting room.

Guards Out, NPRA In

On March 10, the *Boston Globe* reported on the guards' walkout the previous day, explaining that it was the prisoners who were actually responsible for the relative calm within the institution. The paper relied extensively on information provided by the AHC members and ex-cons who were observers. Rodman's statements focused on the irresponsible behavior of the guards who

> instead of being on the job ... are at the governor's office and the State House trying to get Commissioner Boone fired. The prisoners with the help of the Ad Hoc Committee on Prison Reform and the NPRA are trying to get the institution under control and running in an orderly fashion. [The guards] are resisting the process.... There will come a point when it will be necessary for them to be reprimanded for not following the orders of Ken Bishop, acting superintendent, and I think we are very near that point right now.[326]

Arnie Coles, an ex-con, chair of the external NPRA, and a former member of BANTU, described the NPRA's work during this critical time.

> What the men are basically doing in there is holding the institution together. What prisoners want is relevant programs and the return of the institution to what it was before the lockup, when men were not pitted against each other. They want relevant job training and programs and this harassment from the officers to cease. It is a correctional institution and not a concentration camp, and it's been run like a concentration camp since the lockup.[327]

The prisoners counted on Ryan to manage the media and use the observers' reports to inform the public about conditions in Walpole. The guards' union's public-relations strategy relied on a fabricated and alternative story line. The *Herald* printed these fabrications as fact—daily, relentlessly, spitting out baseless, venomous attacks on the commissioner and the NPRA.

Honoring Agreements, Inspiring Change

On March 11, two days after the guard walkout, the prisoners finally went back to work for the agreed-upon one-week trial. Walter Anderson, Walpole's deputy superintendent, publicly disputed the one-week stipulation, but the AHC and the external NPRA members backed the prisoners' memory of the agreement.[328] The prisoners planned to meet in committees and as a whole after a week to assess the progress of negotiations and determine whether they would continue to work.

Later that day, there was a rebellion at the Concord State Prison in New Hampshire. Prisoners there broke furniture and allegedly assaulted officers, though no guard injuries were actually reported. In the end, four of the prisoners were put in solitary confinement.[329] The *Herald* raised the specter of chaos spreading across New England prisons as a result of the activities of the NPRA at Walpole. There was some substance to the paper's fears: the Attica rebellion had offered Massachusetts prisoners the opportunity to bring fresh public attention to their yearlong protest against the conditions of their own confinement. Now the Walpole prisoners' resistance had become an inspiration to other prisoners across the country, albeit minus the chaos the *Herald* invoked. Dellelo remembers,

> When the guys from the California prisoners' union came to Walpole, we asked them, "How do we stack up against what other prisoners are doing across the country?" They said, "Are you kidding? Everybody is watching you guys; you are leading the way. Everyone is waiting to see what is going to happen in Massachusetts."[330]

The NPRA was not alone in claiming prisoners' right to self-determination. Prisoners in many states were forming unions; however, most simply used prisoner unity to fight for the extension of certain rights, or entitlements, to prisoners. In addition, these organizations often relied upon the leadership of formerly incarcerated men and women who had contacts within the prison. The NPRA in Massachusetts was unique in that it was composed entirely of incarcerated prisoners and used a