

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

GEM Judicial Unit Plans New Thrust

By BONITA BALDWIN

The Judicial Process Commission, a reform thrust of the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries, will launch a new strategy next month against what they see as inequities in the criminal justice system. Promotional meetings within the 53rd and 54th Senate districts will introduce "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" an instruction manual on effecting change through legislation, to concerned parish groups. The burden of the booklet asking the most ancient of ethical questions is not simply that each individual bears responsibility for his brother, but that prison guards and wardens acting as society's surrogates make every person a prison-guard by extension.

JPC, one of the few prison reform groups to predate the Attica uprising, believe that theirs is a religious issue. Mrs. Ginny Mackey, administrative and educational coordinator of JPC, hopes to be ordained within the United Church of Christ upon completion of studies at Colgate Rochester-Bexley Hall-Crozer Theological Seminary spring semester. "This is my ministry!" she exclaims. (JPC workers remember, too, that the burning of the chapel was one of the first acts of rebellion at Attica in September 1971.)

"Am I My Brother's Keeper?" culminates years of JPC effort. Members of the Judicial Process Commission marked the first anniversary of the Attica rebellion by meeting with area legislators to learn what had been done in Albany to counter the injustices and grievances Attica revealed. No bills had been passed.

The Judicial Process Commission then drafted a 13-bill reform package. In the past two years, however, only one of the bills has been approved by the Senate. The bill, requiring that reason be given if parole is denied, is now buried in an Assembly committee.

The only significant measure passed since Attica, Mrs. Mackey said, is a law allowing the temporary furlough of prisoners about to be released to enable them to look for jobs.

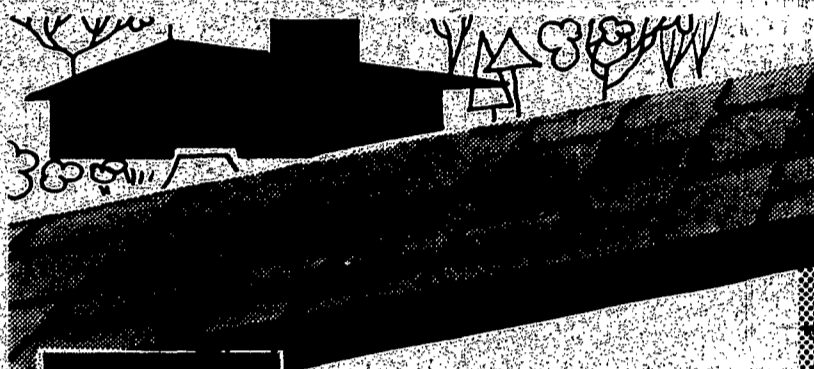
The JPC envisions that, through using "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" parish groups will become informed and establish action goals. The current statewide action goal is "to cause

the New York State legislature to adopt measures which would require improvements in areas affecting the daily lives of inmates and which would afford due process in matters of discipline and parole denial. Ideally, the parish groups would work together to press for this legislative reform.

Is the Commission optimistic? "Why, yes. Of course," veteran Mrs. Mackey grins. "We wouldn't stay if we weren't."

FOOD FOR WORK

Honduras — In an area of Honduras especially hard hit by the hurricane in September, 500 houses are under construction in a food-for-work CARE project.



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CHRISTMAS STAR

The Star of Christmas is back at the Strasenburgh Planetarium, shining from a simulated Bethlehem sky of 2,000 years ago. The show, now in its seventh season, is scheduled for 8 p.m. each evening during the Christmas season, except Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. There are afternoon shows on Saturdays and Sundays, and there will be a daily 2 p.m. matinee Dec. 26-Jan. 3. Reservations may be made by calling 716/244-6060, ext. 56. The planetarium is at 663 East Ave., Rochester.

COURIER DEADLINE

The Courier-Journal deadline is noon Thursday for articles intended for the following Wednesday edition.

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"I don't like the idea that because you're a senior citizen you're no longer useful."



Willard "Bill" Knope, 68, president the past three years of the Senior Citizens Action Council of Monroe County, Inc., an organization of 30,000 senior citizens, and a member of The Mariner House's advisory board. Here's what Bill Knope says about The Mariner House:

"If The Mariner House wasn't a good proposition, I wouldn't be on its board, quite bluntly. Nobody's paying me, so I say what I think. And in my opinion, The Mariner House is doing a good job. I'm impressed with it."

"How did I get involved with The Mariner House? I was recommended to be on the advisory board. I've been associated with it since it started three years ago, and I never thought I'd be interested in senior citizens the way I am."

"You've got to realize one thing. The Mariner House isn't only for senior citizens, although many of its residents are elderly."

"And that brings up another point. I don't like the idea that because you're a senior citizen you're no longer useful. You are useful. When you attain the title of senior vice

president, it's a title you've worked for. It's the same with the senior citizen. A senior has worked for that title, he should be proud of it."

"It has a lot of advantages. It's in an ideal location for the senior citizen or adult who lives there—stores and transportation are readily available. You can step right out the front door, get a bus and go practically wherever you want. Churches and banks are nearby too."

"Sometimes there's a problem with seniors living at a place where meals are not provided. Then they have to go out to eat, and many people in that case would rather forget it. So nutrition-wise, Mariner House is a good setup."

"What if there were no Mariner House? What happens then? Many people would have no place to stay, or they'd have to live alone. That's why The Mariner House should be considered a public service. Who else has taken on a project that size, renovated an old hotel and made improvements throughout its entire residence program?"

The Mariner House. A full-service residence for adults, licensed by the State of New York to supervise the acts of daily living. All rooms are spacious, completely furnished, fully carpeted, centrally air conditioned and heated. Each room has its own private tile bath.

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