

Tallulah Juvenile Prison, Tallulah, Louisiana

January 19, 2007 *Times Picayune*

The state is preparing to purchase a Tallulah correctional center that for years has been a target of criticism for financial deals and management problems that occurred under a group of private owners with ties to former Gov. Edwin Edwards. The Louisiana Correctional Facilities Corp., a state agency, received permission Thursday from the State Bond Commission to borrow as much as \$30 million to buy the facility, which was once known as the Swanson Correctional Center for Youth. The Department of Corrections currently leases the property from the private firm FBA LLC and runs it as an adult substance abuse treatment center. The department intends to keep running the facility for that purpose. Under the current deal, which has been criticized over the years, the state is obligated to make annual payments to FBA through 2020 to pay off the debt that backed the construction of the prison. Even though the state is meeting the payments, the private group in the end would still own the property under the old deal. Under the new plan, the state would pay off the old debt, take ownership of the facility and then pay off the new bonds over the next 13 years. According to the Bond Commission staff, the state would save about \$4.2 million over time and FBA will be out of the picture. The Bond Commission's approval is contingent on the state receiving indemnity from a lawsuit related to the facility between the city of Tallulah and the private owners. If that legal step is completed, the state can proceed with the deal. FBA will get \$1.6 million that is kept in an escrow account for maintenance costs. Verdi Adam, an FBA partner who is president of the Baton Rouge engineering company GEC Inc., said the partners would have to pay some taxes, debts, legal fees and other expenses with that money. In the end, FBA would have "way below" \$1.6 million, he said. Secretary of State Jay Dardenne was the only commission member who opposed the deal. He said the state should not allow the owners to keep the \$1.6 million in the maintenance reserve fund. "I have felt, going back a number of years, that the state should acquire the facility by assuming the debt service but not paying the owners," said Dardenne, a former state senator and longtime critic of the deal. "The owners of that facility have done quite well by the state over the years, and I think we have more than fulfilled whatever obligation we have to them."

October 4, 2006 *The Advocate*

The state wants to buy the infamous Tallulah juvenile prison from its owners, whose politically tinged deal requires the state to keep paying even though its conditions required removal of all the inmates, Gov. Kathleen Blanco said Tuesday. "At least we would own it instead of them," Blanco said about the owners, who were political allies of former Gov. Edwin Edwards. Her chief administrative officer, Jerry Luke LeBlanc, said Tuesday, "We felt the solution would be cheaper for the taxpayers of this state." Within 30 days, LeBlanc said, a deal should be completed to take over Swanson Correctional Center for Youth-Madison Parish Unit facilities, near Tallulah in the northeast corner of the state. State officials are still considering what to do with the buildings once the state owns them, he said. The 700-bed facility was built by private developers closely aligned with Edwards and paid for with \$122.5 million in bonds backed with money out of the state budget. Called the nation's worst "gladiator school," Tallulah became the symbol of

Louisiana's broken juvenile justice system, which was rife with violence and poor living conditions. Two class-action lawsuits and worldwide human rights groups claimed the treatment at the adult-style prison prepared youthful offenders for a life of crime. The state closed Swanson and by June 2004 transferred all its juvenile inmates. But the state is required to continue paying \$3.4 million annually for the next 15 years under a 1994 agreement among the state Department of Corrections, the City of Tallulah and the private prison developer, Trans-American Development Associates. Edwards was governor at the time. Once that debt is paid, TADA continues to own the facility under the agreement. "The state was saddled with a really horrendous deal from a prior administration," LeBlanc said. "We've been trying to work out of the situation for many years." The primary owners of TADA are George Fischer, a chief of staff, campaign manager and transportation secretary under former Gov. Edwin Edwards; James Brown, former Tallulah state Sen. Charles Brown's son; and Verdi Adam, a former state highway official, who had business connections with Fischer.

September 13, 2003 *The Advocate*

A state inspector general's investigation of the school inside the state's juvenile prison in Tallulah revealed missing computers, a potential case of nepotism and a principal who had juvenile offenders make campaign signs for her unsuccessful School Board campaign. "We consider these findings both singularly and as a whole quite serious, and as such, requiring immediate and unconditional corrective action," state Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard wrote to Inspector General Bill Lynch on May 9. Lynch and his staff completed their report May 9, but the Governor's Office made the report public Friday only after inquiries by *The Advocate*. Westside Alternative School Principal Clara Durr was put on paid leave from May 2 to May 22 while state education officials conducted a follow-up investigation. Durr is now back on the job and all but one of the 16 computers in question are accounted for, said Cline Jenkins, acting state director of Special School District 1. Jenkins said Friday the department has upgraded inventory control procedures at the school and that no disciplinary action has been taken against Durr as of Friday. Meanwhile, internal department audits of the school's Sunshine Club "flower fund" for ill employees and of Durr's school-issued credit card will be completed and forwarded to the Finance/Audit Committee of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education by Oct. 14, Jenkins said. Westside Alternative High is located behind the razor wire-topped gates of the Tallulah juvenile prison, officially called the Swanson Correctional Center for Youth -- Madison Parish Unit. Like the schools at the state's other juvenile prisons in East Baton Rouge, Monroe and Bridge City, Westside Alternative High is run under the direct jurisdiction of the state Department of Education through Special School District 1. On March 18, inspector general's investigators conducted an inventory of computers at the school, but could not locate 16 computers and two printers, costing more than \$30,000, according to the report. Lynch also wrote that Durr improperly commingled the school's public petty cash fund with the employees' private "flower fund" in violation of Department of Education policy. The report also revealed that Durr hired her son for 20 days as a teacher's aide, in apparent violation of the state's nepotism laws, and had a vocational teacher use students to partially build political signs for her unsuccessful campaign for Madison Parish School Board.

September 11, 2003 *The Advocate*

With the ceremonial signing Wednesday of the state's Juvenile Justice Reform Act, reform advocates called on the next governor and legislature to enact the reforms called for in the legislation. The reforms include creating a new state agency, the Department of Children, Youth and Juveniles, to be carved from the state corrections, health and social services departments. The legislation signed into law by Gov. Mike Foster also calls for the closure of the state's juvenile prison at Tallulah within the next 18 months.

June 3, 2003 *The Advocate*

A much-maligned juvenile prison in Tallulah would undergo minor changes and still accept youthful offenders under a proposal put forth by the state's corrections chief. But one of the chief sponsors of a juvenile justice reform bill, passed Monday and aimed at taking juveniles out of the Tallulah facility, said the proposal defies the will of lawmakers. Department of Corrections Secretary Richard Stalder said the Swanson Correctional Center for Youth-Madison Parish Unit would no longer accept inmates treated as juveniles. Instead, the facility, set up to handle inmates under 21 years old, could still be used for youthful offenders treated as adults by the judicial system, Stalder said. "It really doesn't matter if that adolescent came in as an adult or a juvenile," Stalder said. "He's still the same 18-year-old, and his problems are still the same." The proposal to keep any youthful offenders at the controversial facility drew the ire of Sen. Don Cravins, D-Arnaudville, a sponsor of a juvenile justice reform bill. "He either follows the will and intent of the legislation, or we need to find another alternative for him: looking for another job," Cravins said. The House approved House Bill 2018 on Monday, which requires the state to turn the juvenile prison in Tallulah into an adult prison within 18 months. Along with taking juveniles out of Tallulah, the bill would form a commission to set up a new juvenile justice department, which would pull together entities spread among several state departments, including corrections, education and social services. HB2018, sponsored by Rep. Mitch Landrieu, D-New Orleans, cleared the House 104-0. The Senate previously passed similar legislation. Cravins said the bill should be on Gov. Mike Foster's desk by next week for him to sign into law. "It's a huge day for Louisiana," said David Utter, executive director of the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, which has pushed to close the prison. The prison houses juveniles convicted in juvenile court who can be held up to their 21st birthday. Under the conversion plan, the facility's educational, therapeutic and life skills units could still be used, Stalder said. "We will transform that facility from one that deals with juveniles from age 17 to 20 to adults 17 to 20," Stalder said after the bill passed. Cravins said the intent of the legislation is to keep all juveniles out of Tallulah, not simply to make a change on paper about who is housed there. Given the near unanimous support for the measures in the House and Senate, Stalder should realize the intent of the legislation, Cravins said. "I guess we're going to have to spell it out for Mr. Stalder in clear, concise terms," Cravins said. "It really doesn't matter what you do with it, just so long as it's not for juvenile services at all." The privately run facility at Tallulah, modeled after adult facilities, has a short, but marred history. A riot broke out almost as soon as it opened; a state takeover occurred in 1999 and allegations of physical abuse and questions of the propriety of the contract between the state and builder/manager Trans-American Development Associates Inc. became public. The primary owners of that company, which will take ownership of the

facility once the state pays off the bonds, are George Fischer, a chief of staff, campaign manager and transportation secretary under former Gov. Edwin Edwards; James Brown, son of former Tallulah state Sen. Charles Brown; and Verdi Adam, who had previous business dealings with Fischer. A 2001 legislative auditor's report showed the owners made nearly \$9 million in dividends and salaries since 1995. That deal, along with the allegations of abuse at the facility, lent momentum to the push to reform the juvenile justice system, Utter said. The measure passed Monday should spur a further look at the deal the state made with the prison's owners, Utter said

May 15, 2003 *The Times-Picayune*

A compromise proposal to overhaul Louisiana's juvenile justice system by shutting down the much-criticized Tallulah prison and moving to create more rehabilitative programs closer to the communities where young lawbreakers live unanimously passed the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday. A centerpiece of the proposal is to close the secure juvenile facility in Tallulah, formally known as the Swanson Correctional Center for Youth-Madison Parish Unit. The operating money spent on the prison and care of the offenders, which by one estimate is \$16 million to \$20.6 million, would be used to pay for myriad residential, day-treatment and other programs to work with many juvenile delinquents instead of just locking them up. The legislation calls for all juveniles to be moved out of the prison by Dec. 31, 2004, about six months longer than was mandated by another bill that passed the Senate earlier in the day. The governor also would be given an emergency option to keep the facility open until May 31, 2005. Closure of the Tallulah prison in remote northeast Louisiana has become a hot-button issue in recent years, as critics have pointed to what they describe as a pattern of inmate abuse and mistreatment by other inmates and by guards. Also, many of the offenders assigned to the prison are from the New Orleans area and other parts of south Louisiana, making it difficult for the teenagers to stay in touch with parents and other relatives.

May 7, 2003 *The Advocate*

State Sen. C.D. Jones, who represents the Tallulah area, cast the lone vote against closing the juvenile prison. Jones, D-Monroe, said some of the problems at Tallulah are not unique to Tallulah. "I certainly don't want to suggest in any way that I'm not interested in the protection of our children," he said. Jones, saying he also was looking out for the 300-plus employees of the facility, suggested changing the mission to handling offenders age 17 to 21 who have been sentenced as adults. The committee voted against that provision. The big problem in the juvenile system is population density, cautioned Elijah Lewis, assistant secretary for Youth Development for the state Corrections Department. He suggested that closing the Tallulah prison would push more juvenile prisoners together in closer quarters elsewhere. Cravins told Lewis that, after three years of discussions and studies, the Legislature has to act. "I believe the only way you are going to comply with the will of the people of Louisiana is if you are forced to do it by legislative act, period," Cravins said.

March 2, 2003 Capital Bureau

Louisiana officials are negotiating with the owners of the juvenile prison in Tallulah on a deal that would eventually give the state ownership of the troubled youth prison. Under the current agreement, signed in 1994 with the town of Tallulah, the state of Louisiana pays the annual \$3.4 million debt service on the prison but will not own the property when the bonds are paid off in 15 years. Instead, the company that contracted with the town to build the prison, Trans-American Development Associates Inc., will own the buildings. Drennen has asked the state's bond attorneys to negotiate with the owners of the prison, officially called the Swanson Correctional Center for Youth, Madison Parish Unit, to change that arrangement, having the state take over the bond indebtedness on the prison. The Foster administration will move to do so, he said, only if the owners agree to give up the prison without getting any extra money on top of the state taking over the debt. That could be a problem for the owners, who also want the state to pay any taxes they incur as a result of the transaction, said David Sherman, an attorney for Trans-American Development Associates. Sherman said he did not know exactly how much those taxes would be but that they could add up to hundreds of thousands of dollars. The owners also want to keep the money they have put into a maintenance fund to pay for major repairs on the property, he said. Of the state's four juvenile prisons, the Tallulah facility has come under particular fire. Foes of the prison want to close it, citing a pattern of inmate abuse, not only when it was operated by Trans-American in the mid-1990s but also after the state took it over in 1999. "I'm shocked that there might be support for buying more prison beds in a state that is overbuilt both in terms of juveniles and adults," said David Utter, an attorney with the Juvenile Justice Project in New Orleans. Lawmakers last spring considered stopping payment on the debt service, looking to use a provision of the agreement obligating the state that allows the Legislature to stop appropriating at any time it deems it necessary. But bond analysts told state officials that move would jeopardize the state's bond rating, signaling that the Louisiana government is unwilling to make good on its debts.

September 20, 2002 *The Times-Picayune*

Agreeing wholeheartedly with advocacy groups calling for juvenile justice reform, five candidates in the race for New Orleans Parish district attorney said Wednesday that the state should close the youth prison at Tallulah and create alternatives to locking up troubled children. Eddie Jordan, James Gray II, Paul Massa and Gary Wainwright met with juvenile advocates at the office of the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana. Dale Atkins had a scheduling conflict, but said later she also is in agreement. Each endorsed a three-step plan laid out by the Coalition for an Effective Juvenile Justice System, a group of 26 New Orleans organizations. The group invited all eight candidates for the top prosecutor's job to the event, which had been rescheduled from Tuesday. Half of the showed up. The plan calls for closing the 400-bed facility in Tallulah, which holds about 330 juveniles, and putting the money used to house New Orleans juveniles-- an estimated \$2.4 million a year-- into local rehabilitation programs.

May 29, 2002 *The Advocate*

Escaping a private-prison contract would shackle the state to a horrid bond rating, Commissioner of Administration Mark Drennen warned the Senate Finance Committee

on Tuesday. The state spends \$3.2 million a year to lease a privately owned juvenile prison in Tallulah. "I think we need to know how we're going to exit Tallulah," Sen. Don Cravins, D-Arnaudville, said. "Find a solution so we do not default. We're either in or out. I'd rather be out." If the state's going to make more than \$30 million in lease payments until 2019, it might as well go ahead and spend that money on buying the prison, Drennen said.

May 29, 2002 *The Times-Picayune*

Cutting off state money for the juvenile prison in Tallulah could hurt Louisiana's bond rating, jeopardizing many construction projects around the state, Gov. Foster's chief financial adviser said Tuesday. Commissioner of Administration Mark Drennen's testimony before the Senate Finance Committee comes as many lawmakers are suggesting closing the Tallulah prison. They cite reports of inmate abuse and say the state's lease to operate the privately owned prison is a bad deal for taxpayers. Although the lease specifies that the Department of Corrections must ask for financing each year, it also contains a provision letting the Legislature get out of the arrangement by not ponying up money in the budget bill.

May 28, 2002 *The Times-Picayune*

Almost the entire budget for programs to keep young people from going to prison and to provide shelter for runaway youths is in jeopardy. Also on the table is whether the state should continue financing the juvenile prison in Tallulah, which has been the subject of persistent criticism, said Senate President John Hainkel, R-New Orleans. Many lawmakers, critical of the facility's lease and concerned about complaints inmates have been abused, have agitated to close the prison, perhaps directing many of the nonviolent offenders to community-based programs. "I think there is general agreement that Tallulah was born of parents named avarice and greed," Hainkel told Corrections Secretary Richard Stadler. The state took over operation of the privately owned facility in 1999, but continues to pay Trans-American Development Associates Inc. rent on the building, which last year came to about \$3.2 million. Stadler said bonding agencies have questioned whether a legislative move to stop paying the rent would jeopardize the state's bond rating.

May 23, 2002 *The Times-Picayune*

If the Legislature decides to close the controversial youth prison in Tallulah, the administration will need time places for its 400 inmates, Corrections Secretary Richard Stadler said Wednesday. The prison is owned by a private company, Trans-American Development Associates Inc., but the state took over operations in 1999 after reports of rampant abuse there. Some lawmakers say it remains a violent place, and they are chafing to quit paying on the state's operating contract with Trans-American. They have suggested simply not appropriating any more money for the prison as a way to get out of the contract. If the Legislature decides to close Tallulah, the administration has a conditional agreement to buy the now-closed youth prison in Jena for \$14.5 million from the Wackenhut Corrections Corp. The final decision on buying it will be left to the Legislature. The plan would call for the youths in Tallulah being moved to Jena. But David Utter, director of the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, said both prisons are

doomed. "Both Jena and Tallulah will never run safely because of the small rural parishes they're located in," he said. The small population near the prison often leads to a limited hiring pool of staff who are often not properly trained, critics say.

May 23, 2002 *The Advocate*

State Corrections Secretary Richard Stalder said he may have to put juvenile offenders in parish prisons with adult inmates if the state empties the Tallulah juvenile prison without building, buying or leasing adequate cell space elsewhere. Stalder, speaking Wednesday to the state Senate Judiciary B Committee, said he'll need up to three years before he can transfer the last of the 400 juvenile offenders from the for-profit Tallulah prison. Donald M. Fendlason, a 22nd Judicial District judge and president of the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, urged the legislators to reject "Wackenhut's attempt to sell the Jena facility to our state and use your appropriations authority and oversight to force the Department of Corrections to begin developing non-secure alternatives to incarceration immediately." The state Office of Facilities Planning on May 8 signed a 90-day conditional option to purchase the Jena prison for \$14.5 million. The Jena deal won't go through without the following conditions: The Legislature must appropriate enough funds to operate the prison, estimated at \$10 million a year; the state must raise enough money in bonds to buy the prison; and the plaintiffs in the civil-rights juvenile prison lawsuits must agree to allow the state to house juveniles at the Jena prison. Tim Roche, deputy director of the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, a nonprofit advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C., said states such as Maryland have closed juvenile prisons in far less time than the three years that Stalder said he needs. Key Louisiana legislators expressed a desire to end the Tallulah contract after a legislative audit report revealed last year that the prison's politically connected owners received more than \$8.7 million in dividends and salaries since 1995. The report also revealed that the investors will retain ownership of the Tallulah prison when the state's lease expires in 20 years. State Sen. Jay Dardenne, R-Baton Rouge, who called the contract "a bad deal for the state," suggested to Stalder on Wednesday that ending the Tallulah contract should not be tied to buying the Jena prison. Both private prisons, which have separate owners, have troubled histories involving riots and allegations of abuse and neglect.

May 9, 2002 *Leesville Daily Leader News*

Lawmakers told corrections officials to present them with a plan for the possible closure of the juvenile prison at Tallulah, where conditions have outraged advocates of young inmates. The request Tuesday came after a lawyer explained that the Legislature can legally terminate the Department of Correction's contract with the private owners of the youth prison, without penalty, simply by suspending funding -- a move advocated by Sen. Don Cravins, D-Arnauville, chairman of a judiciary committee. The state took over day-to-day operations of the once-private prison in 1999 but continues to lease the building from Trans-American Development Associates through a contract that involves the town of Tallulah. The state pays about \$3.2 million a year to run the Tallulah prison, including a lease to cover debt payments owed on the building by Trans-American Development. A number of lawmakers have complained about continuing to pay down the debt on a building that a private company will own when it's paid off.

May 8, 2002 *The Times-Picayune*

Louisiana could get out of its legal agreement with owners of the Tallulah juvenile prison simply by not anteing up the money to pay off its debt, a contract lawyer told a Senate panel Tuesday. The focus of much criticism since shortly after it opened as a privately controlled prison in 1994, the Swanson Correctional Center for Youth-Madison Parish Unit is commonly known by its location in Tallulah. After repeated reports of inmate abuse, the Department of Corrections took over operations in 1999 from the owner, Trans-American Development Associates Inc., but some legislators continue to agitate to close it. "It is a scourge to this state," said Sen. Donald Cravins, D-Arnaudville, chairman of the Senate Judiciary B Committee. Closing Tallulah is complicated by the state's contractual agreement to pay \$3.2 million every year on the construction debts of Trans-American Development. Even when the debt is retired, Trans-American Development will still own the prison. But Laurence Eisenstein, a Washington lawyer, said the Legislature has the authority under the agreement simply to stop appropriating money, thereby canceling the contract and closing the prison. The Senate committee also heard from parents of former juvenile inmates, who decried the treatment of their children at Tallulah, which houses only boys, and other lock-down institutions. Mary Fontenette of Breaux Bridge, whose son was released from Tallulah this week, said he was knocked down by a guard in March. Grace Bauer of Sulphur said her son was always injured -- whether a broken nose, a black eye or bruises -- when she visited him at Tallulah.

March 28, 2002 *The Advocate*

The question of how to reform Louisiana's juvenile justice system played out Wednesday before the state Senate Judiciary B Committee. Should the state close the juvenile prison in Tallulah and spend \$20 million to buy and expand the empty prison at Jena? Or, should the state close Tallulah and redirect funding to community programs? David Utter, executive director of the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, said the Tallulah prison -- officially known as the Swanson Correctional Center for Youth, Madison Campus -- remains an unsafe place for juveniles. The Juvenile Justice Project, a nonprofit law firm, represents some of the plaintiffs in the civil-rights litigation over the state's operation of the juvenile prisons. Stalder said the state is meeting most of the settlement's prison improvement requirements. Utter, however, said violence at the Tallulah prison remains a concern. He said more than 25 percent of the 408 juveniles at the Tallulah prison report to the prison infirmary each month with violence-related injuries. Stalder challenged Utter's assertion, but said he'll investigate it further. The private 700-bed Tallulah prison opened Nov. 18, 1994, but serious problems led to a number of state takeovers before a final, permanent takeover on Sept. 21, 1999. Last year, a state legislative audit report revealed that the prison's private owners received more than \$8.7 million in dividends and salaries since 1995. That report led to the Legislature's decision last year to slash \$1 million from the \$4.4 million proposed for the Tallulah lease. The \$3.4 million "barely pays the principal, interest and taxes" that the investors owe on the prison, Verdi Adam of Baton Rouge said last week. Adam, George A. Fischer of Metairie and James R. Brown of Tallulah are the principal investors in FBA, the firm that owns the Tallulah prison. The Legislature can end the contract by voting down the appropriation. "A logical, common-sense decision would be to close

the place down," Committee Chairman Cravins said after Wednesday's meeting. During the 2001 regular legislative session, Cravins and state Sen. Noble Ellington, D-Winnsboro, introduced a resolution requesting Stalder to enter into good-faith discussions on the suitability and cost-effectiveness of buying the Jena prison. The 276-bed prison, owned by Wackenhut Corrections Corp. of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., opened in December 1998 and closed April 5, 2000, after serious problems led to a temporary state takeover. Cravins said he originally supported buying the Jena prison because it would be cheaper in the long-run than leasing the Tallulah prison. He has since changed his mind. "When we have to use juveniles as an economic development tool, it's disgraceful," Cravins said of the studies examining the effect of the prisons on the economies of Madison and LaSalle parishes.

July 1, 2001 *Sunday Advocate*

The three politically connected owners of the juvenile prison at Tallulah may find themselves hauled before a state Senate committee to explain how they reaped millions of dollars in fees and profits from the prison. The prison owners received more than \$8.7 million in dividends and salaries since 1995, at a time when mismanagement led to the eventual state takeover of the prison, according to a May 16 state Legislative Auditor's report. "I was absolutely sickened to see the profiteering that took place at the state's expense," said Sen. Jay Dardenne, a member of the Senate Judiciary B Committee that oversees corrections issues. The audit report also reveals that the day after Trans-American refinanced its debt for an additional \$7.6 million in 1997, the company paid the three owners \$2 million in dividends.

May 27, 2001 *Sunday Advocate*

The juvenile prison at Tallulah is still a monument to bad Louisiana politics and proof that the private sector doesn't always perform better than government. It shows how difficult it can be to undo political shenanigans, even when they're revealed to the public, and how costly they can continue to be, even after it becomes clear the public's interest has not been served. State corrections officials had to step in and take over the troubled private juvenile prison at Tallulah in 1999. Now, two years later, three politically wired allies of former Gov. Edwin Edwards still own the place, and it's still making them richer at the state's expense. This is a rip-off, pure and simple. George Fischer, James Brown and Verdi Adam got the contract to build and operate the prison in the mid-1990s, during Edwards' last administration. Fischer served Edwards as a campaign manager and head of the state highway department, where Adam was a chief engineer. Brown, from Tallulah, was a supporter of the former governor. The three didn't have any experience or background in running a prison. Imagine that. Three politically connected characters got a contract to build and run a private prison for the state, and nobody seems to know exactly who picked them to get the pact. Is this a great state, or what? We continue to believe that privatization of public prisons is very bad public policy. We hope, though, that any future efforts to privatize state government functions will be structured to prohibit the privatizers from continuing to rip off the public if privatization fails.

May 21, 2001 Associated Press

Although the department of corrections now operates the Tallulah juvenile prison, the private owners of the facility are still raking in money from the state. The three owners, all tied to former Gov. Edwin Edwards, have made nearly \$9 million since 1995 and will make \$600,000 this fiscal year despite the state takeover of the troubled facility in 1999. In addition, once the construction bonds are paid off with state dollars, the three men will retain ownership of the facility, Legislative Auditor Dan Kyle. The owners, George Fischer, James Brown and Verdi Adam, got the contract to build and operate the private prison in 1994-95 during the last administration of Edwards. No current or former official will take responsibility for selecting those three men to get a contract to build the prison. Also involved in the contracting process was Richard Stalder, who has served as secretary of corrections under Edwards and Gov. Mike Foster.