



COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN

FACT SHEET ON THE TOXIC WATER AT MARION PRISON

Prisoners at the United States Penitentiary at Marion are forced to drink and shower in water that is drawn from Crab Orchard Lake. The prisoners and their supporters believe that the water is contaminated and that the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) should immediately find an alternative, safe water supply. The BOP refuses to do this. Marion, which has replaced Alcatraz as the end-of-the-line prison, incarcerates prisoners who have participated in work stoppages, written "too many" lawsuits, pursued their religious freedom, or otherwise stood up for their human rights. Notably, Marion imprisons more political prisoners than any other US prison. We in the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML) view the use of the toxic water as one more attack on those hated by the BOP. This is a one-page fact sheet that briefly summarizes the main points about the water situation. CEML has many documents available about this issue. Interested people are urged to contact us to find out more about this issue and to learn how you can help change the situation.

Although some matters are contested, the following are facts:

1. Crab Orchard Lake is located in the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge is a toxic waste dump so severe that it has been placed on the EPA's Superfund Priority Cleanup List.
2. Crab Orchard Lake contains huge amounts of PCBs, lead, etc. There are signs and barbed wire around many areas of the Lake indicating this and frequent articles on this topic in southern Illinois newspapers.
3. The city of Marion stopped using water from Crab Orchard Lake in 1982 when PCBs were found in its reservoir.
4. The prisoners at Marion are the only people in the world who are forced to use water from Crab Orchard Lake for all their needs, including drinking and showering.
5. The prisoners at Marion have filed a class action suit against the water at the prison. The lawyers for this suit have said that they would drop the case if they could come into the prison, test the water, and find it safe. The BOP has refused this offer and has fought tooth and nail in court against allowing this to happen.
6. A report written by two scientists in April, 1990 has revealed still another toxin in the water. It is natural for some chloroform to be generated when water is chlorinated. However, Crab Orchard Lake is so highly chlorinated that chloroform levels in the water are now *1000 times the allowable level!* Chloroform is a well-established carcinogen linked to bladder, kidney, colon, and rectal cancer. Robert Wyler, the prisoner at Marion who initiated the class-action suit against the water, has since died of cancer of the kidney.
7. Recently, the BOP has stated that they would change the water supply, even while continuing to deny that anything is wrong with it. But they maintain that this will take 18 months. Experts we have contacted have suggested that this should take two months. CEML has suggested to the BOP that the prisoners be given bottled water in the interim. Thus far, the BOP has refused to respond to this request.
8. J. Michael Quinlan, the Director of the BOP, is refusing to see a delegation of religious leaders who want to come to D.C. to meet with him about the water. The Delegation is going anyway, on May 4.

On May 3, 4, and 5 there will be demonstrations in several cities across the U.S. Demonstrators will be demanding a new, safe water supply for the prison and will be presenting copies of petitions containing thousands of signatures to public officials who share the responsibility for this obscene situation. Contact CEML if you wish to be involved in this effort.

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