

Few among us really know what life in Attica prison, or any prison, is like, and no doubt many of us would have assumed that what the Attica inmates demanded was already granted as a matter of course in an institution that is supposed to return men to society as healthy, responsible members. For this reason we have included in this fund appeal a summary of the petition that Attica prisoners addressed to the Governor, the Department of Corrections, and others last July. It is through their demands that we get a glimpse of the conditions that were the seedbed for rebellion. But what is most striking in the statement of demands is what it reveals about the men who produced it. For it shows that the prisoners themselves are seriously concerned with their own rehabilitation. Thus the demands could be read as the conditions they see as necessary for producing that end, and their very formulation should be seen as an assertion of dignity and personal worth.

THE ATTICA LIBERATION FACTION MANIFESTO OF DEMANDS
AND
ANTI-DEPRESSION PLATFORM

WE, THE IMPRISONED MEN OF ATTICA PRISON, SEEK AN END TO THE INJUSTICE SUFFERED BY ALL PRISONERS, REGARDLESS OF RACE, CREED, OR COLOR.

THE PREPARATION AND CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN CONSTRUCTED UNDER THE UNIFIED EFFORTS OF ALL RACES AND SOCIAL SEGMENTS OF THIS PRISON.

IT IS A MATTER OF DOCUMENTED RECORD AND HUMAN RECOGNITION THAT THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE NEW YORK STATE PRISON SYSTEM HAVE RESTRUCTURED THE INSTITUTIONS WHICH WERE DESIGNED TO SOCIALLY CORRECT MEN INTO THE FASCIST CONCENTRATION CAMPS OF MODERN AMERICA.

DUE TO THE CONDITIONAL FACT THAT ATTICA PRISON IS ONE OF THE MOST CLASSIC INSTITUTIONS OF AUTHORITATIVE INHUMANITY UPON MAN. THE FOLLOWING MANIFESTO OF DEMANDS ARE BEING SUBMITTED: . . .

The inmates of this prison have vested the power of negotiation regarding the settlement of the stipulated demands within the judgement and control of these men: (five names follow)

All and any negotiation will be conducted by Prison and State Authorities with these five men.

These demands are being presented to you. There is no strike of any kind to protest these demands. We are trying to do this in a democratic fashion. We feel there is no need to dramatize our demands.

We, the men of Attica Prison, have been committed to the N.Y.S. Department of Correction by the people of society for the purpose of correction what has been deemed as social errors in behavior. Errors which have classified us as socially unacceptable until reprogrammed with new values and more thorough understanding as to our value and responsibility as members of the outside community. The Attica Prison program in its structure and conditions has been enslaved on the pages of this Manifesto of Demands with the blood, sweat and tears of the inmates of this prison.

The programs which we are submitted to under the facade of rehabilitation, is relative to the ancient stupidity of pouring water on a drowning man, in-as-much as we are treated for our hostilities by our program administrators with their hostility as a medication.

In our efforts to comprehend on a feeling level an existence contrary to violence, we are confronted by our captors with * as to what is fair and just, we are victimized by the exploitations and the denial of the celebrated due process of law.

In our peaceful efforts to assemble in dissent as provided under this nation's Constitution, we are in turn murdered, brutalized and framed on various criminal charges because we seek the rights and privileges of all American people.

In our efforts to intellectually expand in keeping with the outside world, through all categories of news media, we are systematically restricted and punitively offended to isolation on status when we insist on our human rights to the wisdom of awareness.

* Word missing from the original text

MANIFESTO OF DEMANDS

- 1) WE DEMAND the Constitutional rights of legal representation at the time of all parole board hearings; and the protection from the procedure of the Parole Authority whereby they permit no procedural safeguards such as an attorney for cross-examination of witnesses, witnesses in behalf of the parolee, at parole revocation hearings.
- 2) WE DEMAND a change in medical policy and procedure, and in medical staff. The Attica Prison hospital is totally inadequate, understaffed, prejudiced in the treatment of inmates. There are numerous "mistakes" made many times, improper and erroneous medication is given by untrained personnel. We also demand periodical check-ups on all prisoners and sufficient licensed practitioners 24 hours a day instead of inmate help that is used now.
- 3) WE DEMAND adequate visiting conditions and facilities for the inmates and families of Attica Prisoners. The visiting facilities at this prison are such as to preclude adequate visiting for the inmates and their families.
- 4) WE DEMAND an end to the segregation of prisoners from the mainline population because of their political beliefs. Some of the men in Segregation units are confined there solely for political reasons and their segregation from other inmates is indefinite.
- 5) WE DEMAND an end to the persecution and punishment of prisoners who practice the Constitutional Right of peaceful dissent. Prisoners at Attica and other N.Y.S. Prisons cannot be compelled to work, as these prisons were built for the purpose of housing prisoners and there is no mention as to the prisoners being required to work on prison jobs in order to remain in the mainline population and/or be considered for release. Many prisoners believe their labor power is being exploited in order for the state to increase its economic power and to continue to expand its correctional industries (which are million dollar complexes), yet do not develop working skills acceptable for employment in the outside society, and which do not pay the prisoners more than fifty cents a day. Prisoners who refuse to work for the outrageous scale, or who strike, are punished and segregated without the access to privileges shared by those who work; this is class legislation, class division, and creates hostilities within the prison.
- 6) WE DEMAND an end to political persecution, racial persecution, and the denial of prisoners' rights to subscribe to political papers, books or any other educational and current media chronicles that are forwarded through the United States Mail.
- 7) WE DEMAND that industries be allowed to enter the institutions and employ inmates to work eight hours a day and fit into the category of working men for scale wages. The working conditions in prisons do not develop working incentives parallel to the many jobs in the outside society, and a paroled prisoner faced many contradictions of the job that adds to his difficulties in adjusting. Those industries outside who desire to enter prisons should be allowed to enter for the purpose of employment placement.
- 8) WE DEMAND that inmates be granted the right to join or form labor unions.
- 9) WE DEMAND that inmates be granted the right to support their own families; at present, thousands of welfare recipients have to divide their checks to support their imprisoned relatives who, without the outside support, can not even buy toilet articles or food. Men working on scale wages could support themselves and families while in prison.
- 10) WE DEMAND that correctional officers be prosecuted as a matter of law for any act of cruel and unusual punishment where it is not a matter of life or death.
- 11) WE DEMAND that all institutions using inmate labor be made to conform with the state and federal minimum wage laws.
- 12) WE DEMAND an end to the escalating practice of physical brutality being perpetrated upon the inmates of N.Y.S. Prisons.
- 13) WE DEMAND the appointment of three lawyers from the N.Y.S. Bar Association to full-time positions for the provision of legal assistance to inmates seeking post-conviction relief, and to act as a liaison between the Administration and inmates for bringing inmate complaints to the attention of the Administration.

- 14) WE DEMAND the updating of industry working conditions to the standards provided for under N.Y.S. law.
- 15) WE DEMAND the establishment of inmate workers insurance plans to provide compensation for work-related accidents.
- 16) WE DEMAND the establishment of unionized vocational training programs comparable to that of the Federal Prison System which provided for union instructions, union pay scales, and union membership upon completion of the vocational training course.
- 17) WE DEMAND annual accounting of the Inmates Recreation Fund and formulation of an inmate committee to give inmates a voice as to how such funds are used.
- 18) WE DEMAND that the present Parole Board appointed by the Governor be eradicated and replaced by a parole board elected by popular vote of the people. In a world where many crimes are punished by indeterminate sentences and where authority acts within secrecy and within vast discretion and given heavy weight to accusations by prison employees against inmates, inmates feel trapped unless they are willing to abandon their desire to be independent men.
- 19) WE DEMAND that the State Legislature create a full-time, salaried board of overseers for the State Prisons. The Board would be responsible for evaluating allegations made by inmates, their families, friends and lawyers against employees charged with acting inhumanly, illegally or unreasonably. The board should include people nominated by a psychological or psychiatric association, by the State Bar Association or by the Civil Liberties Union, and by groups of concerned, involved laymen.
- 20) WE DEMAND an immediate end to the agitation of race relations by the prison administration of this state.
- 21) WE DEMAND the Department of Corrections furnish all prisoners with the services of Ethnic Counselors for the needed special services of the Brown and Black population of this prison.
- 22) WE DEMAND an end to the discrimination in the judgement and quota of parole for Black and Brown people.
- 23) WE DEMAND that all prisoners be present at the time their cells and property are being searched by the correctional officers of state prisons.
- 24) WE DEMAND an end to the discrimination on against prisoners when they appear before the Parole Board. Most prisoners are denied parole solely because of their prior records. Life sentences should not be confined longer than ten years as seven years is the considered statute for a life-time out of circulation, and if a man cannot be rehabilitated after a maximum of ten years of continuous, constructive programs, etc., then he belongs in a mental hygiene center, not a prison.
- 25) WE DEMAND an end to the unsanitary conditions that exist in the mess hall; i.e., dirty trays, dirty utensils, stained drinking cups, and an end to the practice of putting food on the tables hours before eating time without any protective covering put over it.
- 26) WE DEMAND that better food be served to the inmates. The food is a gastronomical disaster. We also demand that drinking water be put on each table and that each inmate be allowed to take as much food as he wants and as much bread as he wants, instead of the severely limited portions and limited (4) slices of bread. Inmates wishing a pork-free diet should have one, since 85% of our diet is pork meat or pork-saturated food.
- 27) WE DEMAND that there be one set of rules governing all prisons in this state instead of the present system where each warden makes the rules for his institution as he sees fit.
- 28) WE DEMAND four (4) months per year off our maximum sentence for good behavior time

We further demand that the Commissioner of Correctional Services direct the Superintendents of all Correctional Facilities to abolish all archaic rules and policies now in effect, and to update such rules and policies to present-day standards. At present, each and every Correctional Facility in N.Y.S. is run by the Superintendent as he so desires, and without question, e.g., Attica Correctional Facility the following ills exist which require immediate correction:

- A) If an inmate buys and/or orders an item in one prison and is subsequently transferred to another the item brought may not be permitted in the second prison due to the new prison's policies. For example, inmates are allowed to purchase aerosol shaving cream in the Clinton C.F. commissary, order linoleum for his cell floor and purchase a jacket to wear. If he is transferred to Attica, these will be confiscated by the authorities here and the inmate is faced with the choice of having his property "destroyed" or sent home at his own expense, without any reimbursement.
- B) Food packages from home containing cooked fowl are only allowed on certain holidays instead of monthly, and cigarettes are not allowed in through packages. Items that will spoil when opened if not refrigerated are opened in the package room. If an inmate receives a canned ham during the warm weather (naturally we are not supplied with refrigerators!), he must eat the whole ham before it spoils.
- C) Inmates are provided with only one roll of toilet paper every five weeks, and we cannot get any additional toilet paper until the next issue date, unless we steal it or spend what little money we have in purchasing this item in the prison commissary.
- D) Nor is toilet tissue provided in the recreation yard toilets.
- E) Inmates can get haircuts only once a month, yet cannot grow their hair to whatever length they want to. Nor are inmates allowed to grow mustaches unless within a few weeks of release and beards are outlawed completely.
- F) Razor blades are not provided by the institution. Inmates must buy razor blades, have them sent in a package, or go to the institution barbershop to be shaved.
- G) When razor blades are purchased in the commissary or received in a package are held by the authorities. They are issued (5 blades) every 3 weeks in exchange for the used blades.
- H) Lockers are not provided in certain cell blocks.
- I) Blown cell fuses (3 ampere, which blow easily!) are only replaced twice a week.
- J) Hot water for drinking and washing in the evenings is brought around to the cells in unsanitary and rusty buckets.
- K) Showers are allowed only once a week to the mainline population including the metal plant workers who sweat and get dirty daily.
- L) Commissary prices have risen along with inmate pay increases so that our buying power remains static. Certain items sold for holidays and certain items being bought in large volume (instant coffee, for example) have heavily marked up prices.
- M) Foods and beverages which require cooking are sold at the commissary but no stoves are provided for cooking these items.
- N) Institutional issued coats are not allowed in the mess hall; one must leave them in the hall on the floor before entering the mess hall.
- O) Inmates are required to respond to the banging of the officer's billy on the walls on the command to march, stop, or to be quiet.
- P) Sugar is non-existent in the mess hall.
- Q) One television is placed in the recreation yard, to be viewed there the year round. Programs are chosen by the administration instead of by the inmates.
- R) Typewriters are not allowed to inmates in order for them to perfect their appeals or to type up petitions concerning their case, nor is there any institutional process (except to pay) for them to get legal work typed.
- S) Body builders and weight lifters are not provided with regulation weights, instead they must use make-shift weights with cement encased in vegetable cans and use any iron bar that can be gotten.
- T) There is no running hot water in the cells.
- U) Movies are stopped in April and begin again in October instead of being shown the year round. When movies are shown the inmates desiring not to attend are penalized by having to stay in their cells until the movies are over.