

Protestors

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of U.S. Rep. Don Kastenmeier, who is chair of the Congressional committee that oversees the BOP, and USP-Marion.

In the letter, Kastenmeier said that he was very concerned about the situation at USP-Marion and said that he would be visiting the prison within a short time.

At the end of the demonstration, the group presented Jack Crosley, executive assistant to Warden John Clark, petitions that they said con-

tained over 6,400 signatures concerning the water supply.

Crosley accepted the petitions on Clark's behalf.

After the protest, Crosley said "we're glad it was peaceful as they had promised."

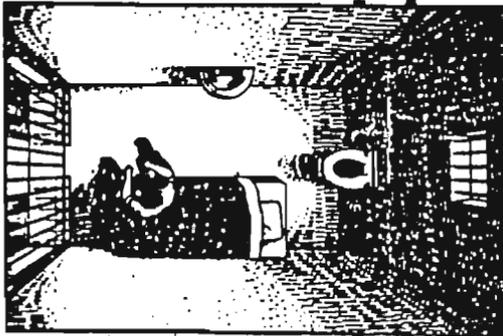
He added that "naturally we continue to refute their statements about the water."

He said that the water system is continually checked by all concerned departments, and it is found to be safe.

Daily Egyptian 5/4/90 ad

STOP THE BRUTALITY AT MARION PRISON! NO MORE CONTAMINATED WATER!

- Crab Orchard water, contaminated with PCB's and heavy metals, is consumed by prisoners who have no choice.
- Marion is the only U.S. Prison to be condemned by Amnesty International
- Marion is the only U.S. Prison that does not meet the UN Minimum Standards for the treatment of Prisoners.



**PROTEST THE INJUSTICE THAT EXISTS IN
OUR BACKYARD!**

TODAY

FRI. MAY 4, 8pm: Video and Speakers, Faner Museum

SAT. MAY 5, 9am-10am: Rally Free Forum Area
(Car Pooling Organized)

9-11 am: Protest at Post Office

11-1 pm: Protest at Crab Orchard

1-3 pm: Demonstration at Marion Prison

Apathy is as evil as oppression. Be just and speak up.



MARCHING — A number of protestors begin their march Saturday on the United States Penitentiary-Marion. The group was protesting the water that prisoners drink because they claim it is too contaminated with PCBs to be healthy. (Photo by Rob Wick)

Protestors express concerns over water supply at federal prison

By Rob Wick
of the Daily Republican

"Toxic water is a crime, the BOP should drink the slime!" Chants of protestors at the United States Penitentiary Saturday.

Though their numbers were fewer than last year, a more vocal group of protestors made their way to the United States Penitentiary in Marion Saturday to challenge prison officials over what they see as inaction concerning the water supply. There were around a hundred people chanting slogans, carrying signs and listening to lectures. This, like a protest at the ferry that carries people to the Alcatraz island in San Francisco Sunday, culminated in protests that began April 24 concerning the water supply at Marion.

The events were sponsored by the Chicago-based Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML) and National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and the Southern Illinois Marion Prison Task Force.

"We declare ourselves to be in solidarity with the prisoners locked up in that institution," said Steven Whitman, of the CEML.

He called the Bureau of Prison officials "prison-crats", and challenged them to end the lockdown that has been in effect since 1983 when two guards and a prisoner were murdered, and after a near-riotous situation developed.

Troopers from the Illinois State Police and members of the staff at USP-Marion stood by stoically, insuring that nothing would get out of hand at the demonstration.

"Marion is about creating repression," Whitman said and added that

it had no reason to exist other "than to brutalize."

He received numerous cheers from the crowd, which ranged in age from infants to senior citizens.

Whitman distributed a letter from BOP director J. Michael Quinlan which he said proved that Marion officials were concerned about the water.

The letter, dated February 14 of this year, said that "Although the drinking water meets all standards and is safe to drink, the water supplied by Crab Orchard Lake is often discolored and has a peculiar taste.

"In an effort to improve the water supply to the institution, the Bureau of Prisons is presently selecting an engineering firm to drill a series of wells at the Marion facility which will provide a new domestic water source for the prison," the letter continued.

Completion of the tests was expected within the next 18 months, the letter said, and it assured the group that the water would still be "monitored and tested for purity and compliance with state and Federal standards."

Whitman wrote a letter back to Quinlan that said the group was still "very concerned about the situation and are especially disappointed that you could not promise that the project will be completed 'within the next few months.'"

Whitman said at the protest that a pair of engineers both told him that the project should take one to two months at the greatest. He added that at any rate during the intervening time, bottled water should be provided to the prisoners.

A letter was read from the office

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Protest set today at prison

By Larry Davis
Of The Southern Illinoisan

Activists plan to march on the U.S. Penitentiary at Marion today to demand that the government obtain a new water supply for the prison.

They say the water pumped from Crab Orchard Lake is toxic and that it is used as a way to terrorize and control inmates.

Warden John Clark says the water is safe and that he would not permit its use if it were not.

The demonstration outside the prison is scheduled between 1 and 3 p.m. as one of a series of events in Southern Illinois and around the nation. There will be a rally in the Free Forum area on the campus of Southern Illinois University-Carbondale beginning at 8 a.m. today, as well as activities between 9 and 11 a.m. outside the Carbondale post office and between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the lake.

Nancy Kurshan, a member of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, was one of four speakers who met with reporters Friday afternoon in Carbondale to discuss the water and other concerns. She said forcing inmates to drink and bathe in the water is "a form of psychological and true terrorism for the prisoners."

But Clark said he refuses "to take a back seat" about the welfare of the 370 inmates in his charge.

"I've dedicated my whole adult life to the safe and humane treatment of inmates," he said by telephone after the activists' news conference.

"If the water were unsafe, I would not tolerate its use by inmates for drinking, bathing or any other purpose."

Kurshan referred to reports about toxic wastes dumped on the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge and to the fact that the city of Marion stopped using the lake as its backup water supply.

She suggested that if the water is as safe as prison officials say it is they should allow independent testing, and she questioned why the U.S. Bureau of Prisons is seeking a different water supply.

Clark said prison officials have hired a firm to explore two possible sources of water — sinking wells and digging a reservoir — because the prison will lose the lake as a supply when the refuge itself switches to a new water source sometime during the next year to avoid anticipated expenses in updating its water treatment plant.

The prison also wants its own supply.

Kurshan said inmates who have filed a class action lawsuit about the water have agreed to drop it if an independent test shows the water to be safe. But prison officials won't permit anyone to enter the facility to do the test.

Clark views that move as an offer to settle the lawsuit — something he will not do. The government will prove in court what the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the state Department of Public Health and a private laboratory already have reported — that the water is safe, Clark said.

John McHale, another speaker at the news conference, said the public remains unaware that the prison has been "condemned" by Amnesty International.

That is incorrect, said Clark. He praised the group, which monitors human rights violations, but said its representatives "did not do their homework" regarding the prison.

Clark said he invited an Amnesty International representative to talk with inmates and review records. The invitation was declined.

The demonstrators plan to give Clark petitions signed by more than 6,000 people who want the water changed.

"That's definitely the route that we think we should go," Kurshan said. "I mean, we've watched the courts here around other conditions of confinement issues and they've been supremely reactionary. We don't expect that much out of them, frankly."

Clark said the water is simply the only issue left to a group of people who don't like the Bureau of Prisons and who have lost every other issue they've raised.

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PROTESTORS — Four representatives from groups that will be protesting at the United States Penitentiary today were in Carbondale to discuss their concerns on the prison. The group, from the left, are Janet Bifield, whose husband Daniel is incar-

cerated at USP-Marion, Lourdes Lugo of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War, John McHale of the Mid-American Peace Program and Nancy Kurshan, of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown. (Photo by Rob Wick)

Group challenges prison on 'toxic' drinking water supply

By Rob Wick
of the Daily Republican

CARBONDALE — A group of protestors have plans to make their way to the United States Penitentiary-Marion today to protest their claim that prisoners at the nation's most secure prison are forced to drink "poison water".

Representatives from the Chicago-based Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War, and the Southern Illinois Marion Prison Task Force are expected to come from around the country to protest the conditions at Marion—something they have done for a number of years.

"At a time when people around the world are becoming free, right here in southern Illinois there are

major human rights violations," said Nancy Kurshan, a spokeswoman for the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown.

She said that the group would present petitions that they said contained over 6,000 signatures to Warden John Clark, Federal Bureau of Prisons director J. Michael Quinlan and to U.S. Rep. Robert Kastemeier of Wisconsin, who sits on the House committee that oversees Marion and other prisons.

A group of the protestors were in Carbondale yesterday to discuss their concerns over the water, and to answer questions from the press.

They claimed that because of the low-level PCB contamination of the Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge, the prison was using "torure" by forcing the inmates

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to drink the water from the Refuge.

When asked about why the others who live on the prison grounds, and drink the same water, haven't been complaining about health problems, the group challenged the statement that prison officials drink the same water.

They claimed that the prison officials drink bottled water, and that corrections officers bring in their own water in thermoses.

Part of the group was Janet Bifield, whose husband Daniel Bifield has been at USP-Marion for 3½ years.

She said that her husband has lost 31 pounds since coming to Marion.

She said that it was "really depressing" for her to see her husband because she said he feels helpless incarcerated at Marion.

The group called for an immediate change in the water system from the Crab Orchard Lake, and also demanded that in the time it takes to change over, bottled water be provided.

"Our best chance is to continue the pressure," Kurshan said. "We will continue to do that."

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