



COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN

MEDIA RELEASE

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On Thursday, August 9, 1990, at 3 pm, a press conference will be held in front of the main post office in Chicago, at Dearborn and Adams. The purpose is to protest the toxic water being supplied to prisoners at the United States Penitentiary at Marion. As part of the protest campaign against this use of toxic water, the press conference heralds the delivery of several cartons of bottles to J. Michael Quinlan, Director of the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and John Clark, the warden of USP Marion. Labels will be placed on these bottles demanding that the BOP fill them and others like them with safe water for the prisoners at Marion. Many individuals from across the country have already mailed bottles to Quinlan and the BOP. This mailing will complete one more phase in the campaign to convince the BOP to immediately stop using toxic water for USP Marion.

In 1982 the city of Marion stopped using water from Crab Orchard Lake when PCBs were discovered in the city reservoir. The PCBs come from industrial waste dumps in the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge so severe that the entire refuge has been placed on the EPA's Superfund Priority Cleanup List. Ever since then prisoners at Marion and their supporters have demanded that a new water supply be located for the prison. This the prison officials refused to do, claiming that the water was safe.

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In 1989 the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown instituted a national campaign to force the BOP to change the water. CEML was able to gather over 6,400 signatures on petitions and to take a demonstration of over 100 people to the gates of USP Marion in May, 1990. During that interval CEML received a letter from Director Quinlan informing us that the water supply was being changed even though, he continued to maintain, there was nothing wrong with it. However, prisoners will still be drinking contaminated water for at least eighteen months. We in turn asked that, in the interim, bottled water be made available to the prisoners. The BOP has still not responded to our request. Thus the labeled bottle part of the campaign has been implemented.

In a startling new discovery, in the midst of the campaign, Alan Berkman, M.D., a physician who has been imprisoned at Marion, and Richard Clapp, Sc.D., an environmental researcher, assembled government documents that showed that the level of chloroform (a well-known cancer causing agent) in the water being used at USP Marion was 1000 times the allowable limit. Although the BOP has not responded to yet another charge of toxic water, their general counsel called the office of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown to ask us how they could find Richard Clapp, one of the authors of this new report.

Charles Dress, a member of CEML, notes: "Amnesty International has condemned Marion for violating almost every one of the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. The use of toxic water at the prison cannot be separated from the other brutal conditions there. Although the BOP has not created the toxic conditions, they are using it to psychologically destroy the prisoners there—prisoners from around the country who are hated by the prison system."