

Address to the Town of Marion, April 29, 1989
- by C.J. Reynolds

We are here today in the name of an ideal an ideal that the U.S. government hypocritically claims to stand for in the world. That ideal is Human Rights, the inviolable dignity of every Human Personality. The philosophy of Human Rights teaches us that nothing is permitted which degrades the human personality, but we know that this happens on a daily basis at Marion Prison.

We come here today from many points in the Midwest in order to ask the people of Marion a question: Where is your sense of fair play, where is your sense of justice? How can you allow the name of your community, Marion, to come to stand for the worst prison in the U.S.A?

We want to ask Gary Henman, the warden of Marion, how long he will be a flunky for his boss, Michael Quinlan, the director of the Bureau of Prisons? When is Mr. Henman going to exercise his humanity and end the Lockdown of Marion Prison?

We are here to ask Henman and all of the personnel who work at Marion, who are you if you cooperate with the violation of Marion's prisoners? If you do not respect civilized conduct in your own behavior, how do you expect the prisoners to conduct theirs? Don't you know that when you conduct a rectal search you are a rapist and that when you beat a prisoner you are committing assault?

To the people of Marion: Marion Prison is in your community and therefore you have a responsibility about how it runs. We are here today to say that if you are supporters of the practices of Marion, you are a supporter of an oppressive institution. Shame on you if you support oppression!

We who demonstrate here today wonder if the people in Marion are in their right mind in allowing the prison to function the way it does.

You must be broken in your mind, broken in your conscience, if you have become accustomed to the cruel conditions at Marion.

The purpose of Marion is to break the human spirit, and yours too will be broken if you don't straighten this situation out. The prisoners submit because they are forced to, but we wonder why the Marion community submits.

CEML wants all people everywhere to be clear that governments exist to protect human rights, not to violate them. When the government violates or fails to protect human rights, that makes the government itself criminal. This makes Michael J. Quinlan one of the leading criminals of our time.

So we call on the people of Southern Illinois and the people of Marion, to RETHINK the situation at Marion Prison and above all to examine themselves. Don't be bribed out of your conscience, least of all for a paycheck. Keeping human beings in a small confined area 23 hours a day is a direct violation of human rights. And you know it. If you can't see what is wrong with Marion, there is something wrong with you.

One other thing we want to say. Keep your hands off the political prisoners. Leave them alone and let them be. They don't need any brainwashing or behavior modification from you. We like them just fine the way they are. You should understand their spirit better before you go trying to cahnge them all around. The very idea of using coercion to modify their principles is abhorrent.

So there has to be a new attitude and spirit all around. We of CEML were disappointed to learn that there has been harassment of lawyers and legal workers who address the issues at Marion. There were students and others who feared to speak at our march today. Prisoners who wished to say something had to use false names for fear of retaliation. Is this the climate you want around here? There has to be enough awareness so the issues about Marion can receive an open discussion. Anything other than a full dialogue reflects poorly on the Marion community.

Right now, we may look to you like just gadflies. But if we get enough gadflies together, we can deliver a mighty sting!