

Editorial

BY: PHIL SCOPELITE



Ms Gibes—You're Wrong!

Ms Gibes took violent exception to our April editorial, "End Lockdown at Marion Penitentiary" (See Letters to the Editor department). In the editorial we stated, among other things, that the guards at Marion were sadistic, that the prisoners were treated worse than animals, that the prisoners were locked in cage-like cells for 23 hours a day, and that they were subjected to finger waves (rectal examinations) and other debasing practices if they dared to protest their treatment.

In her letter Ms Gibes tells this editor she can't believe he has sympathy for the prisoners most of whom have "committed brutal crimes such as murder and rape." May we tell Ms Gibes that most of the prisoners at Marion are not there because they committed murder or rape but, rather, have committed offenses like bank robbing or counterfeiting or other federal offenses.

The reason most of the inmates find themselves serving time at Marion is because they have created waves at other penal institutions. The federal courts have given federal and state prison authorities the power to initiate transfers to Marion for ANY REASON. Ostensibly, a man is sent to Marion for failure to adjust in another prison. This could mean killing another inmate or guard. In practice, it means he's been disruptive, someone who organizes work strikes, leads religious services or files too many legal writs. Many of the inmates are not even told why they've been transferred and, in all cases, the prisoners have had no chance to appeal their transfers before being sent to Marion.

Ms Gibes tells us, "end the lockdown so two more guards can be killed. You must be crazy!" Ms Gibes, do you know why the two guards were killed in the first place, the reason why Marion so eagerly embraced the sadistic practice of permanent lockdown for the prison?

Here's what Randy Gomez, fellow prisoner, had to say about the guard's murder. "Tommy Silverstein was an artist. His guard did not approve of his artistic sensibilities. Silverstein would spend weeks painting a picture. Through the guise of a shakedown, the guard would enter Silverstein's cells and smudge up his artwork or even tear it to pieces. The guard took Silverstein's regular mattress and replaced it with a piece of cardboard for no logical reason. The guard finally came to the conclusion that his blue shirt was a shield and that he could do anything he wanted. Silverstein had been locked in his cage for five years. His few possessions were precious to him. Finally, he couldn't take it anymore and

exploded in a fit of rage."

Ms Gibes, listen to what David Hale, a guard, had to say about the incident. "You had two inmates kill the two guards and the general population was locked down, taken out of their cells one by one, stripped down naked, and beaten. You've never seen such beatings. One inmate was beaten unconscious and while lying on the floor a guard, about 215-230 pounds, put the heel of his shoe on the unconscious man, put the heel of his shoe on his ear, then sat there (sic) and spun in circles, ripping his ear out. Guards was bragging about how far they shoved a riot baton up a certain inmate's rectum.

"False teeth were destroyed, eye glasses, legal material, clothing, anything of value to the inmates, pictures, letters, was destroyed in front of the lieutenant. Now them inmates didn't kill no guards, but they was treated like this because two other inmates did kill guards."

It's almost an exercise in futility to continue listing the litany of brutal offenses committed by the guards on the persons of their helpless victims. Ms Gibes tells this editor, "So what if they beat the prisoners and make their lives unbearable... I believe an eye for an eye as they say."

Ms Gibes, you are citing a quotation from the Old Testament. Do you know what the greatest Teacher in the world had to say about that injunction? He told us that that scriptural mandate is no longer in force, that we are to be constrained by a spirit of love and forgiveness. He told us that we do not live by the law of the jungle but are to be guided by a spirit of compassion. Matt. 5:38,39.

One more thing before we end, Ms Gibes. You tell this editor "not to worry about the prisoners—just lock them up and throw away the key." In other words, to forget about them. But, you see, we can't. Each prisoner requires three guards. The price tag for the guards' salaries and other incidentals costs the taxpayer \$74,000 a year for each prisoner! And there are 351 prisoners locked down at Marion. Add it up!

We say, as we did in last month's editorial, end the lockdown! Everyone of us has a God-given responsibility to take an interest in the welfare of the 351 prisoners at Marion.

If you would like to take an interest in the plight of the prisoners who so desperately need the help of their fellow Americans, contact: Marion Prisoners' Rights Project, 343 S. Dearborn, Chicago, Illinois 60604. Phone (312) 663-5046.