

1 ability. This goes to the man who has the

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2 clerical ability.

3 Q Who makes the choice of job at Attica?

4 A Normally your assignment board has the great-
5 est influence on what particular type of job an inmate
6 is going to hold at Attica.

7 Q There is a job known as block clerk?

8 A Yes.

9 Q In each block, am I correct?

10 A Yes.

11 Q And that is considered by inmates to be a good
12 job?

13 A Yes, it is considered by inmates to be a good
14 job, right.

15 Q Did you have any role in the selection of the
16 block clerk for your block?

17 A When I was assigned to C Block, the block
18 clerks were already there. In other words, the assign-
19 ments had already been made.

20 Q If the post became vacant, would you have a
21 say?

22 A I have already considered what inmate who has
23 come to me and just happens to be black. Yes.

24 Q The block clerks you have in your block are
25 both white?

1 A At the present time they are, yes. 278

2 Q What about in the other blocks in the institu-
3 tion?

4 A I think A Block has one black and one white.

5 Q And the black inmate was just added as a block
6 clerk after he was elected to the Inmate Grievance
7 Council. I am not suggesting cause and effect but--

8 A In answer to that question I will say that
9 when I was in A Block towards the end of September, that
10 a black inmate was assigned as a block clerk. Did in
11 effect work in this capacity and then was transferred to
12 the metal shop where his particular talents could be
13 used in that area.

14 Q As a clerk there?

15 A Right. He is working there at this time as a
16 clerk.

17 Q Did you know him, that inmate?

18 A I knew him as well as I know most inmates.

19 Q Did you--

20 A He was capable.

21 Q Did he request a transfer to the metal shop,
22 do you know?

23 A I'm not sure whether he requested the transfer
24 to the metal shop or not. I think you would have to ask
25 him. He never mentioned to me whether they requested

1 him but I know he was satisfied at being

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2 over there.

3 Q Sergeant, you said that you knew him as well
4 as you knew most inmates.

5 I think it would be very helpful to everybody
6 if you would describe in your own words how well you
7 get to know inmates? You can give the different degrees.

8 A Primarily it depends on how closely you are
9 associated with the inmate. If you are working--if you
10 are a correction officer and you have a gang of men,
11 10, 15, 20 men and you work with these men every day in a
12 particular area, you get to know these men very well.

13 In other words, it's one thing if you are
14 working with a different group of people every day but
15 if you are working with the same group day in and day
16 out you get to know these people and they get to know
17 you.

18 I knew inmates this well. I knew other in-
19 mates just as passing individuals. I knew other in-
20 mates well because they were the type of individual that
21 seemed or felt that they had problems frequently and
22 they would come to me. You get to know these individuals,
23 yes.

24 Q I would like to know what you can do to help an
25 inmate with the problem. If an inmate comes to you and

1 tells you he has a family problem, his wife 280

2 isn't writing him, that must be a concern that you hear?

3 A This is a complaint I do get occasionally.

4 Q What can you do about that?

5 A The one thing I do is, number one, I talk to
6 the individual. I try to find out just what it is that
7 he is concerned about. If it involves family and it
8 frequently does, I relay this information to one of our
9 chaplains. We have a Protestant chaplain, a Catholic
10 chaplain and a Jewish chaplain and depending on the de-
11 nomination of the inmate, this would be the chaplain
12 I would notify of his particular problem.

13 Q Are you even permitted to try to contact the
14 inmate's family?

15 A I individually am not, no.

16 Q And yet you are the man that the inmate has
17 come to?

18 A Yes. I am the man that the inmate comes to but
19 also I would like to say that there is a great deal of
20 rapport between most inmates and most chaplains also.

21 Q Are there some inmates who now have adopted
22 faiths other than the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish
23 faiths?

24 A There always was. There always were individuals
25 that adopted faiths other than the three I just mentioned.

1 Q Well, you have had an increase in
2 the Islamic faith?

3 A That is correct.

4 Q Have any Moslems ever confided family problems
5 to you, Sergeant?

6 A To be perfectly honest, I can't ever recall a
7 man who I knew as being a Moslem actually coming to me
8 with family problems. There are Moslem ministers that
9 come into the institution normally every week. There
10 may be some possibility here. I'm not sure, though.

11 Q I have been talking up to now about inmate
12 problems. I would like to turn to the subject of correc-
13 tion officer problems. Let's start with the question of
14 whether the correction officers had problems and frus-
15 trations of their own before the uprising.

16 A Certainly. Certainly correction officers had
17 problems and concerns and anxieties before, during and
18 after. I mean, it's a tough job. It's a tough way to
19 make a living.

20 Q Would you tell us what these problems are?

21 A Well, believe it or not, one of the bigger
22 concerns that many employees confide in me with and I
23 feel the same way, is most employees are disturbed by
24 the usual poor light that the news media puts us in.

25 There are many occasions we have been concerned

1 about this.

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2 Also there is an awareness on the part of
3 most employees that there is a certain danger involved
4 in this type of a job.

5 It creates a certain anxiety. This is one of
6 those things which we learn to live with. It's not easy,
7 but we learn.

8 Q Could you stop for a moment, Sergeant?

9 The court reporter has to change his tape.

10 (Continued on page 283.)

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1 Do you recall where you were in

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2 listing the frustrations of correction officers? You
3 mentioned--

4 A The two important ones. The level of danger
5 that they feel is involved in the job and the bad press
6 that most of us feel we're getting. I have already men-
7 tioned this.

8 In the institution, itself, there were two areas
9 that most officers related to me a feeling of frustration.
10 Communication and what they call backing.

11 First, communications. Many officers felt
12 that they were not fully or adequately informed as far
13 as what was going on in the facility. In time past it
14 may have been a complaint and a strong one.

15 I have seen recently improvement in this direc-
16 tion. There are what I feel effective means and efforts
17 put in this direction, as far as staff meetings, top ad-
18 ministrators relaying information to us, explaining the
19 different types of things that need explaining. I have
20 definitely seen improvement in this area. I'm glad to
21 see it.

22 Backing. There was a feeling on the part of
23 many officers that inmates could get away with almost
24 anything. The administration did not support the en-
25 forcement of their own rules.

1 I would like to say that this is a
2 matter of degree that would depend on the situation.
3 It would also depend on the officer you happen to be
4 talking to. It was valid to a degree. I have also
5 seen improvement, steady improvement in this direction
6 to correct this problem.

7 I am satisfied that they are going in the
8 right direction.

9 Q What do you mean about not being backed up?
10 Would you describe that in a little more detail.

11 A Many officers would feel that an inmate would
12 disobey a particular regulation. Your officer would re-
13 port this individual who he--which he understood was his
14 job anyway.

15 The information would go through the normal
16 channels and then, boom, the next day the inmate would
17 be right back there facing the very same officer, doing
18 the very same thing he was the day before. No changes
19 have been brought about in the individual.

20 Q What effect did that have?

21 A Well, it was very frustrating.

22 Q Was it embarrassing?

23 A I don't know if it was embarrassing or not,
24 but it made the job of an officer difficult, more diffi-
25 cult.

1 Q We've heard from inmates about the 285
2 fact that when decisions were made which affected them
3 on parole and sentencing, they were not given explana-
4 tions.

5 Were officers given explanations when they would
6 write up an inmate as to why the board did not punish
7 the inmate?

8 A I don't recall specifically whether this was
9 done or not, but I do know that supervisors were inform-
10 ed to inform the officers that when you report a mis-
11 behavior, your responsibility ends. In other words, you
12 report the individual, the individual goes before a
13 disciplinary group, either one individual, which it was
14 before the disturbance, and now they've got it set up
15 where they have three or four employees.

16 Once you make the report, your responsibility
17 is over. We will try to effect a change in the man's
18 behavior. In this respect, yes.

19 Q The officer won't appear before the board?

20 A No. The officer that made the report did not
21 appear before the disciplinary proceedings, no.

22 Q And the officer who made the report did not
23 make a recommendation as to punishment?

24 A He could put recommendations either on the
25 report or with a supplemental report. He could recom-

1 mend, yes.

2 Q Did you have any say over whether or not your
3 men would write up a report?

4 A I never interfered with, you know, as far as
5 saying you can or you cannot make a report, unless I
6 felt that there was, you know, a distinct wrong, as far
7 as the inmate being locked up.

8 In other words, if this was a mistake and it
9 was apparent to me that it was a mistake, then, certainly,
10 I would intercede. There were several occasions. Not
11 many, but a few.

12 Q How would you even know that it was a mistake?

13 A How would I know that it was a mistake?

14 Q Yes.

15 A Normally, if a man is accused of something
16 that he knows of his mind that he definitely did not
17 do, he is going to holler and get to somebody. In my
18 particular position, about the first man he hollers for
19 is the sergeant of the block.

20 Most every sergeant, I am sure, operates the
21 same way. Go down and talk to the individual. Oc-
22 casionally--and I say occasionally--he would shed light
23 on the situation, which would mean that, hey, you got to
24 make a slight adjustment here.

25 Q Would it help if this was an inmate in whom you

1 had confidence?

2 A Possibly this might help. But every individual
3 that I went to, I would listen to what he had to say.
4 This is the most important thing.

5 Q You said that officers feel unhappy about the
6 treatment that they had received from the press.

7 A Absolutely.

8 Q Would you amplify on that.

9 A Well, mainly recently these charges of bru-
10 tality. I realize they are only charges, but it has
11 been said so many times, it has been brought to the
12 attention of so many people that these accusations have
13 been made that there is a feeling that possibly these
14 things are believable and it certainly makes a difference
15 how something is written.

16 Also, I would like to say this: I have been
17 in this business 14 years--

18 MR. LIMAN: Has the amplifier gone
19 off?

20 You were about to continue your statement
21 that you have been in the business for 14 years.

22 A (continuing) Right. I have been in this
23 business for 14 years and I can honestly say I have never
24 seen brutality on the part of any officer towards any
25 inmate.

1 There is brutality in these facilities
2 but every case of what I consider brutality has been a
3 situation of brutality perpetrated upon one inmate by
4 another inmate. This is the only brutality I have
5 seen and I can say this honestly.

6 Q Sergeant, the officers feeling badly about
7 their press coverage are really saying that they feel
8 they are not being afforded the respect that they are
9 entitled to for this difficult job; isn't that so?
10 That's a fair description?

11 A It's got to a point where they no longer even
12 expect to get this, but they ask one thing: try to put
13 us in a better light.

14 In other words, when these charges are related
15 in the news media, make it absolutely certain that these
16 are charges made by individuals within the facility.

17 Q What I was trying to find out is whether in
18 this feeling about the fact that correction officers are
19 no longer afforded due respect, you can sympathize with
20 the feelings of some of the inmates that conditions ought
21 to be such that they can have feelings of respect.

22 A Are you talking about two things now? Are you
23 talking about--

24 Q I am asking you whether or not it gives you
25 some better understanding about these feelings that they

1 express so many times.

2 A Certainly. Both inmates and officers relay
3 feelings of lack of respect to themselves, certainly.

4 Q Sergeant, you mentioned security. Were the
5 officers at Attica concerned about their security prior
6 to the uprising?

7 A Are you referring to mechanical security?

8 Q All types.

9 A Well, let's take it one at a time.

10 Mechanical security, we had a great deal of
11 faith in mechanical security at Attica prior to the
12 disturbance.

13 Q Are you saying that you placed reliance in the
14 fact that the locked gates would hold?

15 A Yes, I am. Yes, I am.

16 As far as security--in other words, the in-
17 dividual, the way he utilizes the tools that he has
18 available to him, I felt it was quite good.

19 All officers were concerned about security.
20 Most did a pretty good job. The type of thing that
21 concerned many officers prior to the disturbance was
22 the change in inmate mood prior to the disturbance.

23 Certain activities were assigned which made
24 officers and staff feel that something wasn't right. I
25 am referring to more incidents where inmates would chal-

1 lence authority of officers and other members 290
2 of the staff. I'm talking about the particular makeup
3 of the type of groups that would meet in the yard. They
4 have four yards at Attica. And normally before the dis-
5 turbance, groups of inmates would meet, but it would
6 be like a group of inmates from New York, or a group of
7 black inmates that may belong to a particular religion,
8 or a group of Spanish inmates who felt they had some
9 thing in common.

10 Prior to and I'm not sure how long a period,
11 all of a sudden the particular makeup of these groups
12 changed. In other words, a group would have three or
13 four of the different factions involved within that par-
14 ticular group, which, you know, wasn't normal.

15 There was a change and, gee, what did this
16 mean?

17 Q Did you regard this unity as a threat to your
18 security?

19 A We felt it did.

20 Q Did you regard these groups, themselves, such
21 as the Muslims or Panthers or the Young Lords as threats
22 to your security?

23 A Some groups are more militant than others.
24 Some groups preach violence. Some don't. Some are
25 closer together than others.

1 Q How did you know that a group was
2 preaching violence?

3 A It was difficult. The only way you would
4 know was if you could stand right next to this particular
5 group. There were incidents where officers overheard
6 conversations that were related at these meetings.

7 There were situations where written material was
8 actually appropriated which indicated that there was
9 strong thoughts and feelings in this direction by
10 certain factions of the inmate population.

11 Q Did you understand, did you think that you un-
12 derstood what would bring an inmate who belonged to no
13 group when he entered the institution to become a Muslim
14 when he entered there, or join the Young Lords when he
15 entered there?

16 A Well, it was an influence type of things. In
17 other words, a particular man would come to prison and
18 all of a sudden he is thrown in among the group of men
19 that come from different surroundings, different politi-
20 cal philosophies or what have you.

21 Q Did you think that the institutions provided
22 a substitute in terms of programming or relationships
23 that would--

24 A There were programs available in the facility.
25 There was room for improvement, but also there were

1 programs available which individuals did not
2 avail themselves of to the fullest extent. In other
3 words, a lot of these programs, these men are not
4 actually forced into. There is a certain amount of
5 individual decision involved.

6 Q Were you apprehensive, yourself, about the
7 fact that Attica might explode?

8 A I was apprehensive to the extent that I felt
9 we were going to have serious difficulties. I never
10 felt that it could be of the extreme level it finally
11 turned out it was.

12 Q Did you manifest that apprehension in a way?

13 A Did I manifest this apprehension? Just what
14 do you mean by manifest--

15 Q Did you bring your wallet into the facility
16 with you?

17 A Before the disturbance, I, myself, would
18 carry my wallet into the institution, that's right.

19 Q Did you continue--

20 A No, I stopped.

21 Q Did you have any riot training at Attica?

22 A I never had riot training at Attica, no.

23 Q Was there any such course available at Attica?

24 A There were attempts at riot training. I, as
25 an individual, had not gotten involved in it.

1 Q Do you in any way identify your
2 security with the well being of the inmates? Do you
3 know what I mean by that?

4 A Security, you know, it goes a long way. It
5 covers--

6 Q Let me be more specific.

7 A Go ahead.

8 Q You are in contact at any time of the day with
9 many, many more inmates than there are correction of-
10 ficers around.

11 A Absolutely. Absolutely.

12 Q And your nightstick, as you have indicated
13 before, is not more than a symbol.

14 A Right.

15 Q My question really was, did you feel that the
16 security of correction officers in the institution in
17 which there is inevitably a larger number of inmates, many
18 with histories of violent crimes, than there are correc-
19 tion officers depends on your developing in these inmates
20 a sense of respect and a feeling that all of the legiti-
21 mate grievances which you, yourself acknowledge, are being
22 attended to?

23 A This is a very fair statement. Absolutely.

24 Q You said that as you sat there, you took your--
25 you left your wallet home. There was no riot training

1 being given at Attica. There wasn't really any
2 change being made at that time in the conditions, was
3 there?

4 A I wouldn't go so far to say there were no
5 changes in the conditions.

6 Q But they were minimal for the inmates?

7 A Right. I would go along with you.

8 Q Did you feel you were just sort of sitting
9 there impotently waiting for the inevitable collision?

10 A It's always a possibility when you are in a
11 correctional facility. Whether it's one individual or
12 more than one, once this individual gets the urge to
13 do harm to you, he is going to do harm to you. This is
14 something that you have to live with in this business.

15 Q I just have a few more questions.

16 First, you have seen inmates come and go from
17 Attica?

18 A Yes.

19 Q You have seen inmates leave and then return for
20 violating parole or for a new crime?

21 A Yes, I have.

22 Q Does that affect you in any way?

23 A It affects me to the effect that over the
24 years I worked closely with many inmates and they would
25 approach their day of release from the facility and they

1 would look me in the eye and they would, believe 295
2 me, they would convince me, "There's no way that I'm
3 coming back," and I was convinced.

4 I mean, a month later, two months later, here
5 this man comes walking back through the front gate.
6 This is one thing that puzzled me over the years. Why
7 they keep coming back.

8 Q After you see this over and over again, do you
9 believe in rehabilitation?

10 A I believe that rehabilitation has to come from
11 within, provide the tools, but understand that rehabili-
12 tation is an individual decision, to come from within
13 more than anything else.

14 Q These individuals are in the prison because
15 they couldn't make it on their own.

16 A Yes.

17 Q Do you think you are doing enough to motivate
18 somebody so that it can come from within?

19 A I think that there is room for improvement
20 in this area. I think that we can give them more.

21 Q Do you believe, having been in this system
22 for this period of time, that all inmates belong in a
23 maximum security institution who are now at Attica?

24 A I can only speak of Attica. It is my feeling,
25 and only mine, that there are some inmates within Attica

1 that could get by with less than maximum security, 296
2 as there are many inmates within Attica that need maxi-
3 mum security.

4 Q Sergeant, what recommendations would you make
5 for change at Attica?

6 A I am really not prepared to make any recom-
7 mendations for changes at Attica. I have a feeling
8 that the department at present is working in this direc-
9 tion.

10 Q How is Attica different today from pre-September
11 9th?

12 A There are attempts at more programs. There
13 is changes either in the process of being effective or
14 have already been effected, as far as things that in-
15 mates are allowed to do, things that they are allowed to
16 have. The mechanical type of thing within the institution,
17 it's been shored up as far as mechanical security is
18 concerned.

19 We have, when you consider the inmate-to-
20 officer ratio, we have more employees now than we had
21 before, but also there is more activity involving the
22 institution today that draws officers from the facility,
23 where they are not working with the inmates. Things
24 like court appearances which require officer escorts.
25 Your own Commission requires officers every day to work

1 with you. This type of thing. All officers 297
2 are not involved specifically with the inmates.

3 Q Sergeant, you said that there was more program-
4 ming, but you also have said over and over again that
5 more could be done. Do you think that you have enough
6 support from the public to obtain the funds and the
7 tools to give the inmates more programming, more
8 counseling and better conditions?

9 A There is no doubt in my mind that there never
10 was and at this particular date there are not enough
11 funds. There has not been enough funds appropriated for
12 the Department of Correctional Services. This is my
13 opinion as an individual. The department has always
14 been treated as a stepchild.

15 In other words, we are a low one on the rung
16 of priorities. We get what's left over.

17 Q Do you feel jeopardized by this public apathy?

18 A I feel jeopardized by this apathy, certainly,
19 if this is where the problem is.

20 MR. LIMAN: I have no further questions.

21 MR. MC KAY: Sergeant Cochrane, I
22 have just one question, myself, and then perhaps
23 other members of the Commission have questions.
24 But before I ask my question, I want to remind you
25 of your opportunity to make a statement, if you wish,
