

Decision's Mixed Reaction

Associated Press

Public officials, penologists and private citizens reacting to the bloody end of the inmate insurrection at Attica Prison have divided sharply over whether the use of force was necessary.

President Nixon, in a telephone conversation with Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, expressed support for the governor's response to rebellion that ended with nine hostages and 28 inmates killed.

Nixon particularly supported Rockefeller's refusal to grant the prisoners' demand for complete amnesty for any criminal acts committed during the uprising, aides to the two men said.

Massacre

One authority on prisons, Dr. Vernon Fox, who once spent four days "talking down" a riot at Michigan State Prison, charged that New York officials mishandled the situation.

"What happened at Attica was despicable," said Fox, now a criminologist at Florida State University. He called the move "an appalling massacre."

"The state was legitimizing murder," he said. "There was no reason to kill anybody. Another 24 hours of talking wouldn't have done any harm and it might have saved the lives of 28 inmates and nine guards."

Create Image

"The primary reason for the use of force is always to create an image for the public."

Mayor Kenneth Gibson of Newark said:

"The use of coordinated, organized violence in overcoming the inmates at Attica State Prison stands as one of the most callous and blatantly repressive acts ever carried out by a supposedly civilized society on its own people . . ."

Rep. Herman Badillo (D-N.Y.), one of a committee of observers who tried to mediate at the prison, said he regretted that Rockefeller had not allowed the negotiations to continue.

"There's always time to die," he said. "But time to negotiate is what is essential in these circumstances."

Not the Time

Sen. James Buckley (R-N.Y.), said: "There are times when the law ought to be merciful. This is not one of them."

Gov. Ronald Reagan of California said the percentage of violent inmates is increasing. He added that some revolutionaries who had been active on campus now are fomenting trouble in prisons.

Bobby Seale, chairman of the Black Panther party and a participant briefly in the negotiations at the prison, blamed state Correction Commissioner Russell Oswald for the deaths.

Clergymen

Seale said, "They (the officials) are guilty of murder. The best thing to do would be to charge Oswald and the

others with first-degree outright mass murder."

Some clergymen also denounced the governor's action.

"Even a long stalemate would have been preferable to the violent route the state chose to take," said the Rev. Dr. Robert Moss, president of the United Church of Christ.

The Rev. Gilbert Caldwell,

executive director of the Ministerial Interfaith Association, which represents about 200 Harlem clergymen, said Rockefeller "disregarded the humanity of the prisoners . . . especially when they happen to be black and Puerto Rican."