

TV: 'Like It Is' Plans Special Tomorrow on Attica

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR
 "Like It Is," moderated by
 Gil Noble and Geraldo Ri-
 vera, is a weekly series on

WABC-TV aimed primarily at
 the black and Puerto Rican
 communities in New York.
 Using a blend of interviews,

entertainment and news re-
 ports, it attempts to provide
 material that is in scarce
 supply on the rest of com-
 mercial television.

Tomorrow at 2 P.M., "Like
 It Is" is presenting a special
 hour-and-a-half edition titled
 "Attica: The Unanswered
 Questions." Produced by
 Charles Hobson and written
 by an associate producer,
 Richard T. Watkins, it is
 special—for several reasons.

In full agreement with
 Assemblyman Arthur O.
 Eve's conclusion that "we
 are living in a system that
 does not value human life,"
 the program extensively re-
 views the events of Attica,
 the fates of the "men of
 Tent City" (who are never
 referred to as convicts or
 prisoners), with an attitude
 that might best be described
 as simmering outrage.

That outrage is directed at
 all elements of the Amer-
 ican "power structure," in-
 cluding Governor Rockefeller
 and President Nixon. And it
 explodes in a final segment
 in which a black minister de-
 livering a funeral eulogy con-
 demns, with the roaring ap-
 proval of his congregation, all
 of those elements to "burn
 in hell."

In one section labeled
 "commentary," Mr. Rivera
 recalls having read a news-
 paper story titled "I Saw
 Seven Throats Slashed," and
 including graphic eyewitness
 descriptions. One notable
 "eyewitness" who provided
 other stories to various offi-
 cials, the program recalls,
 was Commissioner Russell G.
 Oswald's deputy, Walter Dun-
 bar.

Many of the reports were,
 it turned out, not true. Mr.
 Rivera argues, though, that
 they had given a color of jus-
 tice to the assault on 'Times
 Square' made murder seem
 justifiable homicide, and al-
 lowed the men who ordered
 that massacre to say: 'My
 men killed those animals, be-

cause the animals had brutal-
 ly and barbarically murdered
 the hostages, who were their
 friends.'

He adds: "It's taught me
 one thing. I'll never write a
 story based on an official
 account again. Attica is the
 low-water mark the dark age
 of journalism."

Covering developments
 since the Attica uprising,
 "Like It Is" has recorded
 interviews with a variety of
 officials and with the fam-
 ilies of prisoners. Since deep-
 seated bitterness still pre-
 dominated on all sides, the
 program poses still another
 potentially explosive ques-
 tion: "How many men actu-
 ally did die at Attica?" It
 suggests — on the basis of
 several defined points — to
 the National Lawyers Guild
 that a court order be ob-
 tained to demand a super-
 vised head count—including
 the men prison officials say
 have been transferred to
 other institutions.

A balanced report? No. In
 another "commentary," Gil
 Noble explains that "to those
 viewers who don't like the
 positions we have stated, and
 feel that there should be more
 'balance' from a white view-
 point, we say this:

"'Like It Is' is the only
 program this station airs that
 is an expression of the black
 and Puerto Rican opinion.
 Everything else on Channel 7
 comes from a white psyche.
 This single program can hard-
 ly be called equal time, be-
 cause at least 30 per cent of
 our viewers are black and
 Puerto Rican. It then follows
 that it would be indeed fool-
 ish to divide this already
 inadequate time between our
 opinions and those of whites.
 We view 'Like It Is' as being
 in itself a rebuttal."

For commercial television,
 the strong opinions are un-
 usual. For anyone interested
 in the tragedy of Attica and
 its possible lessons, they can-
 not be ignored.