

'Drugs Here for Price,'

By Carl Zeitz

RAHWAY (N.J.) — (AP) — His eyes were penetrating as I took notes. Every time I looked up from my notepad, they were fixed on mine.

"I learned it all in here," the middleaged white convict said in a voice that reminded me of a lawyer arguing his case clearly and articulately in court.

"It all starts in the courts. They give us exces-

Associated Press newsman Carl Zeitz was one of three reporters permitted

inside Rahway State Prison to hear the grievances and demands of inmates before

they ended a 24-hour rebellion last night. This is his first-person account:

sive sentences, illegal sentences. They don't give us the opportunity to remake ourselves."

And finally, he said, almost spitting out the words:

"It's not just a prison,

it's a failure, the men were kidnaped to jail."

He didn't say why he was in Rahway State Prison and I didn't catch his name.

The inmates crowded to the bars, shifting from one

reporter, then to another an then to the last of the three of us who had gone into the prison as part of an agreement to end their rebellion.

"I got two to five years for possession of 75 cents worth of marijuana, for having a reefer," said Miguel Soto.

Cons Tell Newsman

"Just for that?" I asked. "Yes," he said, "just for that."

Another inmate, Leroy Bunting, rolled up the sleeve of his olive drab prison work jacket to show what he said were tracks from taking injections of heroin.

"You get it from the police," the lean, bearded black man said. "It's just like being on the street. Anything you can get in here you can get out there."

Price of Heroin

He said prison narcotics pushers got their supply from state corrections officers.

"It's \$10 and five cartons of cigarettes for a bag of heroin," he said.

He said that anything else, from pep pills to wine, could be purchased behind the walls of Rahway.

Those to whom I talked denied that racial tension existed among the inmates themselves, but they accused guards of racism and provocations.

One after another they described beatings, arbitrary confinement in solitary — even the drowning of pet cats by guards.

'Slave Labor'

Most of the inmates were black. Nearly all of them were young. Those to whom I talked were united in their hate of the prison and its masters, the guards.

Behind the bars the stairs were barricaded with linen, wrecked furniture, clothing, towels and metal objects that had been ripped from the walls and cells. A fire blazed.

Officials anxiously listened as inmates complained of bad wages and a price-gouging commissary.



COMMITTEE OF NEWSMEN WHO HEARD PRISONERS' DEMANDS
John Needham, UPI; Stanley Terrell, Newark Star-Ledger; Carl Zeitz, AP
---AP Photo

They said they received \$13.50 a month for working six days a week in what one man called "a slave labor camp," a regional prison laundry.

The commissary, they said, charges prices twice those of retail stores on the outside. They said they had to buy all the necessities — including toothpaste and razor blades — and out of their \$13.50 still have something left for cigarettes and an occasional can of corned beef costing 68 cents.

Asked why they had released the seven hostages they had taken, inmate Herbert Smith said:

Expect Reprisals

"We released them for the love of human life."

Many said they expected physical reprisals despite assurances by Gov. William T. Cahill that there would be none.

"You couldn't live here and not see the use of clubs," said Smith.

Before we were allowed to talk with the rebels, they released one of the five hostages they still held, as they had promised to do if three newsmen were allowed to talk with them.

We saw the hostage first behind the bars. I can only say I really saw a frightened man, a scared man, before me.

Later, while we were still talking to the inmates, they released their final four hostages, including the injured superintendent of the prison, U. Samuel Vukcevic.

When I started to leave I was handed a list of the demands the inmates were making. Folded inside the list was my press card, which I had surrendered to the prisoners, who sought credentials as we entered their stronghold.

The last words I heard from one of the inmates was:

"Hey man, tell 'em what you saw."