



Prison scene from Leonard Freed's book, "Black in White America"

'New Directions'

By RUSSELL G. OSWALD

ATTICA, N. Y.—Since assuming the office eight months ago, we have been working toward development of a re-direction in over-all programming for state correctional facilities. Many of you are aware of my philosophy in new directions and some of the steps already taken. Many of you have written favorably with reference to some of the changes already made. The main impact of the new direction for the department is the recognition of the individual as a human being and the need for basic fairness throughout our day-to-day relationships with each other.

Many of the things that you want and many of the things that we want are the same and at first glance would seem easy to do. It is unfortunate that at a time when the Governor, Legislature and administration of this agency are looking for new directions in correctional services that we are faced with the worst fiscal year in state history.

Additionally, this department has been fiscally starved over the years which only adds to the difficulties of our budget crisis. Nevertheless, we have made considerable changes and anticipate continuing in the direction of progressive change.

Let me tell you some of the things planned for this department. We were fortunate in obtaining substantial Federal funds allowing us to implement new programs and projects. Some of these are:

ods of all institutional and parole personnel.

- Funds were received to set up four community treatment centers throughout the state to help bridge the gap between institutional life and your homes and working lives outside.

- We will initiate a program for encouraging community volunteers to join us in modernizing our program.

- Academic and vocational programs will be extended into the evening hours in four of the major facilities on an experimental basis.

I am sure you are interested in the normal routine changes that we are hopeful of bringing about.

Some of you are interested in work-release programs. We are formulating for budget presentation an extension of work release, not only here but also in other correctional institutions.

I am already on record as recommending the changing of the law to allow home furloughs and additionally for educational and vocational training. We have started a procedure to review the reading materials and are exploring the entire area of censorship. On the subject of censorship it is important for you to know that with the change in policy allowing field mail to and from public officials I have received numerous protests about the kind of mail sent to various officials.

It is unfortunate that there are some who take unfair advantage of rule changes meant to benefit all of you and it is equally unfortunate that many of the officials who have supported me in bringing about rule changes are having second thoughts as to whether these changes are wise in view of the indecent and abusive mail they have been receiving from a few who have misused this policy.

Let me get back to the positive. We are concerned with the quality of liv-

ing in our facilities and chief among these concerns is to bring about a measure of fair and uniform consistency throughout this system. Visits to the facility verify that we have inconsistencies between institutions.

These fall in the following areas: authorized personal possessions; personal state-issued items; problems relating to food service; standardized cell furnishings; health and dental service; standardization of a code of personal appearance; issues relative to recreation, sports activity and visiting, and issues relating to recognition of mutual rights and responsibilities of both staff and inmates.

I want you to know that we are reviewing the numerous aspects of each item under these broad headings and will implement them as soon as possible in light of manpower needs and as money is available. You should know that I am not using lack of money as an excuse for not doing things and where possible will initiate changes by adjusting priorities and budgeting more effectively.

Many of you have voiced confidence in me and in the directions I have talked about, and I appreciate this. I am certain you realize that change can't be accomplished overnight, but I can assure you that changes will be made just as some change has already taken place in the brief period of eight months. Some of your suggestions have been helpful in formulating new policy and Superintendent Mancusi and I welcome your constructive suggestions and views. Let me conclude by saying that I appreciate your patience, trust and confidence in what we are trying to do together.

Russell G. Oswald, State Correction Commissioner, taped these remarks for broadcasting Sept. 3 at the Attica Correctional Facility.

- We will install full law libraries in six of our major institutions. These libraries will be for the use of inmates who need and desire access to legal reference materials.

- We'll conduct a program for training in meaningful rehabilitative meth-