

Burger Asks Prisons to Let Inmates 'Regulate Some Limited Part of Lives'

By LESLEY OELSNER

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Chief Justice Warren E. Burger called upon the nation's prison administrators today to start "communicating" regularly with their prisoners and to let the prisoners "regulate some limited part of their lives, however small."

"We cannot turn the management of a prison over to the inmates," he said in a speech prepared for delivery here tonight, "but society, as represented by the 'keepers,' can listen to what the inmates have to say."

And to the extent that it is "feasible and consistent with orderly administration," he said, prisoners should be allowed to exercise some measure of "de- liberation and choice."

"If we tie a person in a chair for a long time, we can hardly be surprised if he can't walk when we let him loose," Justice Burger said. "Within limiting regulations necessary

for basic order, inmates should be allowed to think and walk and talk as we will demand that they do when they are released."

The Chief Justice's address to the 350 penal experts invited by the Justice Department to a national conference here also called for the separation of "in-prone inmates" — from other prisoners.

Holding that the recent riots at Attica and San Quentin had forced the nation to "re-examine" the attitudes and techniques of its prison system, Justice Burger said that it was "particularly important today" to give "very high priority" to improving the classification of prisoners.

"Those who would disrupt and destroy a penal institution must be separated to protect those who are trying to learn and to prepare themselves for the future," he said. "Every inmate has a right to be insulated from those who are bent on lawless acts."

He said that the prison prob-

lem was of "terrifying magnitude" and that he hoped the delegates would address themselves to "just a few of the most urgent but soluble problems." "We must be content with modest progress and small victories," he said.

Among other "urgent needs" that he cited were speedy disposition of cases in the courts, careful training of personnel and adequate compensation and "decent living conditions" in the prisons.

Mitchell's Plan Applauded

On the subject of better living conditions, he said that the prison riots had demonstrated that more was needed than "good plant and equipment."

On the need for a better trained correctional staff, he applauded Attorney General John N. Mitchell's announcement yesterday of plans for a national corrections academy.

The Attorney General, who convened the conference at the direction of President Nixon, appears to be giving priority to this plan. Today, he asked that

the conference delegates try in their workshops to develop ideas, such as curriculum, for the academy.

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Federal judge offered one note of cheer.

Speaking of prisoner rights, Judge William B. Bryant, district judge in the District of Columbia, said:

"The assertion of these rights to their very limits is probably the most meaningful step in the business of rehabilitation," for if the prisoner is "aware that the navel cord which connects him to the human race hasn't been severed, there is a chance the prisoner can still be reached."