

3 Citizens Express Sentiments On Prisons at Attica Hearings

By MICHAEL T. KAUFMAN

The McKay Commission investigating the events surrounding last September's uprising at the Attica Correctional Facility heard yesterday from citizens who asked to address the panel after the conclusion two weeks ago of 13 days of public hearings.

Leonard Guthrie, a correction lieutenant from the Essex County jail in Newark, lamented what he called "the geographic psychology" of correctional staffs, which holds that a guard gains in status the more removed from contact with prisoners he is in his assigned duties.

A second witness, Michael McPhilony, a 24-year-old paroled inmate from Attica, commended the institution as being free of brutality. He said Governor Rockefeller was right in not going to the prison during the riot. "If he had come," he said, "the inmates probably would have wanted President Nixon."

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Probably the angriest witness was Ray Machado, a 30-year-old college student who said he had spent 16 years as an "inmate, a junkie and an animal." He characterized the commission hearings as a safety valve to release community hostility, but said he doubted that it could accomplish anything.

"We don't need money for prison reform," he said. "You need a change in attitude. You take a man, take away his identity, tell him he's got to live by 86 rules that have nothing to do with who he is or where he came from, and then you forget about him. And you call that rehabilitation. Well it is. Rehabilitation is returning a man to his previous

state. And we know what that was."

Mr. Machado said that there was now a sufficient staff in the prisons but that there was a reluctance to deal with inmates on an individual basis. "They keep a man in civil confinement for five to 20 years and they don't deal with him," he said.

The session final citizen witness was Tamar Benamy, a second-year law student from Rutgers, who read a statement calling for the destruction and immediate replacement of the entire prison system with almost any alternative.

"The master-slave relationship is at once implicit in our penal system," she said. "It is simultaneously its bedrock, its stone and its steel. Such an environment debases all who are entombed in it. Ultimately, both keeper and kept are destroyed, always cruelly—sometimes violently."

The commission will continue to take testimony in private, and its staff members say they will release some of this testimony to the press. In the meantime, the nine commissioners are drafting a report setting forth their findings and conclusions. The report should be ready this summer.