

Prison Reform Being Pressed by Liddy

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HARTFORD, Aug. 19—G. Gordon Liddy, who is serving a prison term for his part in the Watergate burglary four years ago, appears to be making substantial progress on prison reform from the inside.

In April, representing himself in a United States District Court in Hartford, Mr. Liddy won a court order from Judge Jon O. Newman prohibiting officials at the Danbury prison from opening inmates' mail from their lawyers or from court officials, governors, members of Congress or, in the cases of foreign nationals who are in prison, from their consulates or embassies.

Sheaf of Affidavits

Mr. Liddy won another order from Judge Newman in the same court that day, imposing conditions under which inmates may be given solitary confinement.

The order also required that inmates being put into "the hole," as they call it, first be told the reasons they are being put there.

Today Mr. Liddy was before Judge Newman again with a sheaf of affidavits from other prisoners petitioning for a contempt order against the prison authorities for ignoring the court's orders.

"We've had a lot of new developments, your honor," Mr. Liddy said. "The warden has seen fit to revise and update the regulations and they are still in conflict."

The prisoner was the same erect, impeccable, stern-looking figure he was on his quixotic route through the Watergate proceedings.

Judge John J. Sirica gave the uncooperative Mr. Liddy a term to range from six years and eight months to 20 years for his role in the burglary at the Democratic campaign headquarters in the Watergate office complex four years ago.

When Mr. Liddy refused to answer questions before a grand jury, Judge Sirica gave



The New York Times

G. Gordon Liddy after appearing in Federal court in Hartford yesterday.

him 18 months more, and directed that he interrupt his 20-year sentence to serve the other one first. He has just finished the 18-month term and is again serving out his original sentence.

He reportedly has not always been a model prisoner at Danbury, despite a relatively soft clerical assignment in the prison's power plant. In a prisoner count just after midnight on Feb. 21, Mr. Liddy was said to have been insolent toward a guard, and to have been put in "the hole" then until it was decided at a disciplinary hearing four days later that he was not guilty of the charge.

Wide in Shoulders

In court today he was studiously correct, phrasing his questions jolately and waiting patiently for the answers. He kept his left hand in his jacket pocket and waved the other dramatically when he talked.

When he listened, or stood silently in thought, he stroked his mustache pensively, or squeezed his broad chin.

His pin-striped, pale-blue summer suit had just been pressed, but seemed a bit wide

in the shoulders and long in the trousers for him. When he walked from the witness stand to consult with the legal assistance attorneys appointed by the court to help him, his highly polished black shoes squeaked on the tile floor.

A reporter tried to ask Mr. Liddy if the shoes had been issued in prison, but a United States Marshal jumped between them and blocked all conversation.

Although Mr. Liddy has been disbarred in New York and is also no longer allowed to practice before the Supreme Court, he has been allowed to represent himself in these proceedings.

He called himself to the witness stand twice today, once in the morning for 12 minutes to contend that supposedly privileged mail was still being opened and read. The warden had said that mail had to be opened to look for drugs and other contraband, but that anything seen of a message inside it, according to the newly written policy, was to be kept in confidence.

"I don't know how they would keep it in confidence if they didn't read it and know what it said," Mr. Liddy contended.

In the afternoon, the prisoner-advocate called himself to the stand for two minutes at the start of the discussion of the rules of administrative detention—limited now by the judge's order to cases involving the security of the prison.

The judge seemed upset by the case of a prisoner allegedly put in solitary confinement for unauthorized use of a telephone. "The risk here, I'm sure, is pretty obvious," the judge said. "The risk is that administrative detention becomes summary punishment."

He gave Mr. Liddy 10 days in which to present further arguments. Peter A. Clark, the United States Attorney, said he would like 10 days after that in which to prepare whatever new arguments he would need.