

Prison Warden Denies Plea Of War Objectors' Leaders

Asserts He Cannot Recommend Release of All Those in Danbury F. C. I.

After two earlier attempts to force their way onto property of the Federal Correctional Institution in an effort to gain a conference with Warden Milton Kennedy had been repelled by guards, leaders of the group of about 50 men and women calling themselves "Families and Friends of Imprisoned Conscientious Objectors" were admitted to the warden's home early Tuesday afternoon.

There, the leaders, Julius Eichel and Paul Goodman, asked Warden Kennedy to recommend to Federal officials the immediate release of conscientious objectors and political prisoners confined in the Danbury prison. They were informed by the warden he can make no such blanket recommendation but that he is empowered to take such action in special cases. However, the warden made no promise of any move to aid their cause, although he asserted that, in his opinion, imprisonment was not the solution of the country's problem of handling such offenders.

The three-hour demonstration carried on by the group, composed of members of the War Resisters' league, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Workers' Defense league and others—no Jehovah Witnesses being present—broke up shortly after the two leaders had conferred with Warden Kennedy.

Three Skirmishes

Three brief skirmishes between the group members organized under the leadership of Mat Kauten marked the day's activities which opened with the formation of a picket line at the entrance to the prison grounds on Pembroke road at 11 a.m. The first came when the group led by Kauten started to march up the road leading from the main highway to the prison and were repelled by the guards and ejected forcibly from the grounds. Then, upon learning that Warden Kennedy was at his home on the Federal reservation, about a quarter of a mile south of the prison, the group divided and one-half marched to the warden's residence. Here again they were met by a detail of guards and repelled when they attempted to enter upon the government property.

While the guards were engaging the group at Warden Kennedy's home, two of the demonstrators, Kauten and a man who identified himself as Jim Peck, 32, of the Claremont Hotel, New York city, managed to elude the custodial staff cordon down on the highway and made their way to the top of the hill near the main prison buildings where they were sighted by other guards. Kauten eluded the guards and made his way back to the highway, but Peck was overtaken and carried bodily back to the warden's house where the guards inquired of the warden if he wished to have the man arrested. Warden Kennedy said no.

Peck was covered from head to foot with mud and said that he had been knocked down by the guards and complained of an arm and hand injury which he asserted resulted from his being "bounced around" by the guards. This was denied by the custodial officers.

Praise Kennedy

Goodman, who told reporters at the scene, of what had transpired during the short conference with Kennedy, said the present warden is considered a "liberal" by those persons fighting the cause for the CO's and imprisoned political prisoners.

"Alexander, (referring to Warden Myrl Alexander who preceded Kennedy), was very much a prison man," Goodman said. "He was a stern disciplinarian but we had few complaints against his treatment of the prisoners," he added.

"But," continued Goodman, "the warden most disliked by members of our group was Edgar Gerlach who was placed in charge here when the prison was built. He was always inciting the other prisoners against the CO's and in general was forever giving our brothers confined there a bad time. Of all the officials in the federal prison system, Gerlach is the most disliked of any by conscientious objectors."

Goodman claims to be one of New York's leading pacifists and was arrested in World War I when he failed to register for the draft. After six months confinement at Camp Upton, he said yesterday, he was tried and convicted and received a sentence of 20 years in prison at hard labor. The next 12 months he spent in the federal prison at Leavenworth and then he was transferred to Fort Douglas, at Salt Lake City. Later he was paroled, he said.

Again in World War II he did not register and on April 28, 1942, was arrested by FBI agents. He later was freed.

Talks To Press

Warden Kennedy, in a conference with press representatives after he had talked with the group leaders, said that a demonstration had been held within the prison walls by CO's. The press was barred from the earlier conference. Warden Kennedy said that no changes were made in the usual routine within the prison yesterday although the personnel had expected the demonstrations. First word of the group's plans for yesterday, he said, came to him from the News-Times.

The inside demonstration lasted about 20 minutes, Warden Kennedy said. There was no disorder, the prisoners confining their activities to marching around the hall, he said. They carried placards reading "Free Us Now." The warden would not say how they had procured the placards but a member of the demonstrating group outside said the material had been smuggled into the prison long ago in preparation for such a demonstration as was held yesterday.

Shortly after the conference with Warden Kennedy had ended, the group returned to the center of the city to distribute literature, explaining the aims of their action. They were not disturbed by city

policemen. Likewise, earlier in the day, state policemen who were at the prison scene, did not participate in the skirmishes between the visitors and the guards, inasmuch as these took place on government property.

At the railroad station where the group waited for a return train to New York, the demonstrators were stopped from distributing their literature by railroad policemen. They offered no argument.

Issue Circular

One of the circulars being distributed was entitled, "Is Thinking A Crime?"

Addressed to "Men and Women of Danbury" it read: "As you go about your daily life; as you hurry off to your job; as you cook and sleep; as you worry about doctors and bills; as you listen to the laughing shouts of your children; as you get a little relaxation or enjoy a day's vacation—do you ever give a thought to that drab-walled city—the Federal penitentiary—that lies in the shadow of Danbury.

"There are men inside those walls—men just as you or I. Do you wonder why they are there? "Some of these men are in jail for their thoughts. Not in Dachau or Buchenwald. Yes, here in Danbury penitentiary and jails throughout the country—more than 3,000 men. These men were put there for terms ranging up to five years.

"Why? Because they refused to accept the authority of the government to conscript them into the armed forces. Because they knew the government could not be trusted to build a better world, free from Fascism. Starvation in half the world, large areas held by the dictatorial forces of Stalin, the murder of colonial peoples by the British, the use of the armed forces by the government of the United States to break strikes, show they were right.

"The war is over, but the government still fears these men. The government fears that if these men come out, they will influence others to resist the government's power to bring us into war, a war in which your children will be sacrificed.

"Wars are not stopped by preparing for them. The building of bigger armies and navies, conscription of men by the state is one sure way of starting war. Only such action as these men have taken, joined by workers who refuse to produce any war materials, can secure peace. Those of us who are against another war with the atomic horrors it will bring should join in trying to free these men from jail; men who were courageous in resisting the overwhelming power of those who make war.

"Workers in Danbury can help by showing solidarity with the men through sympathetic strikes, by picketing the penitentiary, by forming 'Open the Jails' committees. Pass the word along in your union local. Discuss it with your friends. Let's stop the State before it takes us into war again!"

Veteran Dies of Wound

Torrington, Feb. 13 (AP)—August A. Rocher, 51-year-old veteran of World War I, died at a hospital Monday shortly after he had been discovered in his home unconscious from a bullet wound in the head. Dr. Harry B. Hanchett, medical examiner, said he had been unable to determine how Rocher was shot, but no foul play was involved. Police Lieutenant Domenico Tremp said the wound was inflicted by a .22 calibre rifle. Rocher, employed by the Torrington company, was home alone at the time, and was found unconscious by a friend who had come to call.

Yes, you can buy candy at Sunnitsky's, 110 White St., opp. R. R. station.—adv.

Recap in time. Paul Kovac's Tire Shop, 40 South St. Phone 3092.—adv.

TO DISCUSS CONSERVATION

County Land Owners to Meet in Danbury Next Wednesday Morning.

An organization movement of Fairfield county land owners and operators for the purpose of founding one or more soil conservation districts is being sponsored by the Fairfield County Extension Service. The first meeting is scheduled at Concordia hall Wednesday, February 20, at 10 a. m.

It will bring together a number of people who have individually accomplished much in soil management. These owners believe that pooling their resources in an organized way will make it practical for drainage, brush clearing and other land improvement work to be extended to all farms in a given community. It is visualized that this project also will tie together all agencies and individuals interested in the many and varied phases of soil conservation.

The day's program will be in charge of L. M. Chapman, county agent. Speakers will include: N. Paul Tedrow, Extension Soil Con-

servationist of the University of Connecticut staff; Frank H. Peet, commissioner of agriculture, and George C. Waldo, member of the State Park and Forest commission. These men are all appointive members of Connecticut's Soil Conservation Advisory committee, established by action of the last session of the Legislature, with Commissioner Peet as chairman. It is announced that all persons interested in any problem related to soil conservation will be welcome.

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