

Film records kids' glimpse at prison life

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

"Scared Straight" is a prison movie to end all prison movies.

"The Longest Yard" and "The Big House" don't do prison life justice, but a group of "lifers" at New Jersey's Rahway State Prison do. And they are trying to scare juvenile delinquents off the road leading to the nation's prisons.

And local people who deal with youth problems think it will work.

The convicts' efforts have fostered similar programs in other prisons including Southern Michigan Prison for Men at Jackson.

The prison tour has been captured in "Scared Straight," a 52-minute documentary to be televised locally at 10 p.m. Saturday, March 11 by WKBD, Channel 50. The film has been nominated for an Academy Award as 1978's best documentary.

THE SCENARIO is simple.

Seventeen teenagers are taken to Rahway State Prison to serve "three-hour sentences." They find out what prison life is really like.

Their tour guides are a group of non-sensory guards and cold convicts. Together the convicts are serving sentences totaling more than 1,000 years.

Their language is explicit, crude, profane and to many people generally offensive. Physical and sexual threats are routine. It is not a film for the faint of heart or ear.

A convict, who struts about flashing his scrapbook of newspaper clippings, tells them matter-of-factly how one inmate committed suicide. "He went out the back door with a green sheet over his head with a tag around his toe," he said.

The teenagers — 14 boys and three girls — are baby-faced hoods, tough and cocky, coming into the prison. Leaving, most are shaken and scared. Ten months after their Rahway visit, only one of the 17 had got into trouble, New Jersey corrections officials said.

STATE AND LOCAL school, government and judicial leaders praised the documentary following a special preview recently. Some called it the best

Road board reaches union pact

The board of Oakland County Road Commissioners and the 10-member District Superintendents' union signed their first contract last week, culminating 30 months of negotiations.

Provisions are similar to those in other contracts settled with three other unions of road commission employees, said John L. Grubba, managing director.

"It does take a while to reduce ev-

erything to contract language the first time," he said. "Negotiations began Aug. 18, 1976 and have continued ever since."

The highlight salary provisions call for lump sum retroactive payments to each member of \$3,400 and a new salary for this year of \$22,500 for those classified superintendent I or \$24,000 for those classified superintendent II.

"The contract is for three years, extending to Dec. 31, 1981."

Wayne and Oakland County officials said the film reinforced their belief in the potential of Project JOLT, the Jackson State Prison visitation program. Youths from Wayne County have been making trip to the maximum security prisons for about six months.

Four Oakland County juvenile delinquents and their parents are expected to make the county's maiden trip to Jackson later this month.

The youths going to Jackson, said Oakland County Chief Probate Judge Eugene Arthur Moore, "are youngsters that have heard they're going to wind up going to Jackson (State Prison) from everyone. Their family has told them. Their teachers have told them. Police tell them. And finally judges are telling them. But they just don't believe it."

"Maybe a trip to Jackson, a talk with the prisoners and spending some time in a cell will wake them up," he said.

THERE ARE differences between Rahway's program and Jackson's.

"That program is similar but importantly different from Jackson's," said Jack Haynes, who is coordinating Oakland County's participation in Project JOLT.

Jackson's inmates do not threaten their visitors with immediate bodily harm, Haynes said.

In New Jersey, the convicts repeatedly threaten the teenagers: "If you move your head one more goddamn time, I'll bite your nose off and spit it back in your face," said one convict.

Another at Rahway said, "I'm had, you see me, boy, I'm had. You see them pretty blue eyes of yours? I'll take one out of your face and squish it in front of you so you can watch."

Still another said, "I'll bite your nose off your face. And if you think somebody's going to stop me from doing it, you're wrong. By the time they got here, it'd be too late, it'd be all over with. I got so much time, they can't give me no more."

THE PRODUCER, five-time Emmy winner Arnold Shapiro, said the in-



An inmate at Rahway State Prison in New Jersey tells a group of juvenile delinquents how he got to be where he is in a scene from "Scared Straight," a one-hour documentary to be televised locally Sunday.

mates have never hurt one of the teens, but the threats help to scare them.

"Sitting here," he said, "we can reason out that this prisoner is not going to bite somebody's nose off. But when he (a teen) is sitting there with a 200-pound, crazed-looking prisoner stand-

ing six inches away from his face, he's thinking, 'This guy just might do it.'"

Haynes said that allowing prisoners to threaten the youths with immediate violence was a "negative aspect."

Jackson inmates, he said, also use threats. "I've listened to tapes where convicts have told them, 'Look, if you wind up coming here, don't expect me to be your friend. I'll be waiting for you with a bottle of Vaseline.' That's not a present threat."

Haynes said the object of Jackson's program was not to "scare" the teens, but to "present them with the cold hard facts of prison life."

OAKLAND COUNTY Sheriff Johannes Spreen called Rahway's program "excellent," but said more needs to be done.

"What they're doing there is good. It's important. It needs to be done. But it's a drop in the bucket," Spreen said.

Youths should be taught respect for the law and efficient, effective criminal justice operations early in life, Spreen said.

Speaking with reporters following the "Scared Straight" preview, Spreen said he would try to get the Oakland County Board of Commissioners to approve more personnel for a sheriff's youth division. Earlier youth division staffing requests have been denied.

Spreen even said he would help to finance "talking tours" of the Oakland County jail.

"I'll put my money where my mouth is," he said.

County spends less on road maintenance consultants

For the second consecutive year, the Oakland County Road Commission is reducing its reliance on outside consultants for operation of its computer assisted maintenance program.

"We are taking the second step to self-operate the program. We were the first county to use in 1969," said John R. Gnau Jr., vice chairman of the board of county road commissioners.

"We are purchasing the program

from the Roy Jorgensen Associates, Inc. of Gathersburg, Md. Our long-standing contract with them will be reduced from \$1,400 per month to \$500 for 1979. They will continue to assist us in the conversion," said Gnau.

He noted that the computer system has produced an overall cost savings in road maintenance operations while also increasing crew productivity.

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HEALTH UPDATE by DR. AARON M. GRAY



Your spine is made up of twenty-four movable segments known as vertebrae. These vertebrae often slip out of place pressing on sensitive nerves. Every organ and tissue in your body is controlled by nerves. These nerves run from the brain, down the spinal cord and out through openings between your vertebrae to a specific organ or tissue, whether it be your heart, lungs, thyroid, liver, kidney or stomach. When the Chiropractor adjusts the vertebrae off the soft nerve, the nerve energy is restored, allowing the organ or tissue to repair itself and function properly. When the proper nerve supply is not getting through to an organ you will experience symptoms such as headaches, loss of sleep, allergies, numbness or burning sensations down arms or legs, backaches, painful joints, etc. These symptoms are your body's way of telling you there is a problem within.

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