

# **FOP LODGE #34**

## **Atlantic County Correction Officers**

### *STATEMENT TO FREEHOLDERS*

*JUNE 16, 2009*

Good Afternoon – My name is Myron Plotkin and I am the labor relations consultant for FOP Lodge #34, which represents the rank and file correction officers at the county jail.

My purpose of addressing the full Board of Freeholders is to inform all of you of the situation at the jail and our attempts to address and rectify problems that exist. First, let me say that I am here today to be completely above board with you. As some of you may be aware, the FOP has voiced numerous concerns regarding working conditions at the jail as well as the anti-union attitude exhibited by the jail administration. Following the advice of Mr. Del Rosso, we have attempted to go through the proper channels and chain of command relative to these issues, but to no avail.

The most recent suggestion was that representatives from the FOP meet with the Jail Committee to inform them of our concerns. That meeting was held on March 17, 2009. We met for approximately 1 and ½ hours and provided to the Committee a full package of documents and supporting documents relating to our concerns. We reviewed with the Committee the most recent grievances and arbitration results as well as current pending grievances, arbitrations and unfair practices. In addition we reviewed health and safety issues. At that meeting we also requested a follow-up meeting as well as inviting the members of the Committee to tour the jail with FOP representatives.

On March 18, 2009, Mr. McDevitt, Chairman of the Committee wrote to the FOP stating that they would be conferring with the jail administration for the purpose of finding ways to make amends between the Union and the administration. It was also stated that any solutions would be forwarded to the FOP and that it was his hope that they would be able to rectify any and all issues causing a rift between the FOP and administration.

As no response or further communication was received from the Committee, a letter was sent on May 11, 2009 to Mr. McDevitt, Chairman of the Committee asking for a response to their investigation as well as pointing out that no Freeholder had availed themselves of the offer for a tour of the facility with FOP representatives.

On May 26, 2009 Mr. McDevitt responded by letter that the Committee had met and addressed our concerns with the administration. He stated that the administration had a different point of view on the matters, which of course came as no surprise. He concluded the letter by stating that both sides had legitimate arguments and that the Committee planned to work with both entities to facilitate harmony between the parties.

On May 29, 2009, the FOP responded by letter to Mr. McDevitt again stating that no solutions had been forthcoming, no follow-up meeting was scheduled and again no Freeholder took a tour of the jail with the FOP representatives.

Today is June 16, 2009, almost three months after our meeting with the Jail Committee, and conditions and attitudes are no different than they were prior to our meeting with the committee. Additional grievances and unfair practice charges have been filed. Retaliatory actions against FOP representatives, specifically the President and Vice-President continue.

As it appears that the County and Jail Committee have no real interest in resolving the problems that exist, the FOP has taken other actions to attempt to rectify the working conditions and health and safety issues at the jail. Last week the FOP Vice President along with myself and Mr. Waldman, Labor Counsel to the FOP, met with the highest officials from the Governor's office, to review the numerous health and safety issues at the jail. Following that meeting, the Governor's office immediately arranged for a meeting with FOP representatives and the Department of Corrections to review these matters. This meeting will be held on Thursday.

One of the issues to be discussed is that of the triple bunking at the jail. In the past, the administration has requested from DOC on numerous occasions to install three permanent bunks in a cell instead of two. These requests were denied over and over again. This year, the administration went ahead and installed the bunks anyway, creating a safety issue in the jail, not to speak of out and out defiance of the DOC's position on triple bunking.

Other issues that will be discussed involve the inadequate security of cells and officer stations, the peeling of the rhino coat in the showers and the resultant extensive mold growth, the allowance for officers to bring personal hygiene products to work with them and the backup of drains in front of cells allowing for flooding. Finally, as the attempts by FOP representatives to accompany DOC representatives when they conduct an inspection of the jail have been thwarted, the FOP is requesting to accompany DOC inspectors on their tours.

This is only a small sample of the problems that exist at the jail. You, as the Board of Freeholders can no longer look the other way. The responsibility of the overall management of the jail and the conditions therein ultimately is yours and you cannot shirk your responsibility. The FOP will not back down and will not go away. We will continue to take whatever actions necessary to insure a healthy and as safe as possible work environment in the jail. Acts of retaliation toward union officials from the jail administration will not deter us from doing what is right.

As I stated, the buck ultimately stops with you. The State is now aware of these conditions. You can no longer put your heads in the sand and claim none of these things are happening. Come see for yourself. I again ask you each to take a tour of the jail. Not the 5 cent tour usually conducted by management, but a tour with the FOP representatives and see for yourselves the real conditions that exist in the facility.

Thank you for your time.