

C O P Y

Durham, N. C.
April 16, 1939

Mrs. W. T. Bost,
Supt. State Welfare Dept.,
Raleigh, N. C.

Dear Mrs. Bost,

I am writing you in regards to the unfair conditions that exist here at the Durham County Work House. A big majority of us prisoners feel that we are not getting the consideration that is due us. Inasmuch as this, as we understand it, is supposed to be an honor camp, we naturally feel that we are entitled to a great deal more than we receive.

We go to work here at the break of day and work till dark, and some nights when we have hauling to do, such as coal and fertilizer, we get in around mid-night very often it is daybreak. The menu is very poorly prepared and balanced. For instance we have the same kinds of food every day practically the year around. Some few weeks ago in hog killing time we were served liver pudding that was sour and every prisoner here was sick from it and laid in two days. Now there is several of us here that have served time at the State Camp and we consider the prisoners there get much better breaks than we do. I know the food is better and the working hours shorter.

We regret to bother you with such matters, but inasmuch as Mr. Nichols, the Supt., here takes an indifferent attitude when we complain to him and always answers us with "he didn't send for us" you are the only one we know of to come to with our troubles.

We will indeed be very grateful if you will look into this matter and try to establish a reasonable amount of work hours and food to meet the requirements our work calls for.

Thanking you in advance for your expected consideration and cooperation,

Prisoners at the
Durham County Home,
Durham, N. C.

P.S.: The reason we are not signing our names is we would probably be persecuted in an indirect way for such action.

Durham County Home

Durham, North Carolina

April 28, 1939

Mr. D. W. Newsom, County Manager,
Durham, N. C.

Dear Sir:

Complying with your request for a statement of the Policy pursued at the County home with reference to the feeding and the working hours of prisoners at the County Work House, I submit herewith the facts as to our program of operation.

We call the men at 5:00 A.M. and serve breakfast at 5:30 A.M. and try to leave the camp by 6:00 A.M. We stop for lunch at 11:30 A.M. and eat promptly at 12:00 noon. We leave the camp at 1:00 P.M. and work until 6:30 P.M. These are the hours during summer months. The hottest part of the summer we stop at 11:00 A.M. and resume work again at 2:00 P.M., then return to camp at 6:30 P.M. During the winter months we are one hour later going to work, and return one hour earlier in the evening.

We have hauling to do such as coal and sludge at night whenever it becomes necessary for following reasons:

1. When we start hauling coal we do not stop until the car is completed, in doing this it is better to finish the car at night because the traffic is not so heavy. We try to use all precaution that is necessary in using prison labor.
2. We haul sludge from the City of Durham Disposal plant. We have to move this sludge from the beds at a certain stage of maturity. When it rains, we are delayed from one week to ten days.

When we haul coal or sludge after working hours, we give the prisoners extra time off their sentences. When we work at night, we call for volunteers. We do not compel them to work at night.

Sometimes it becomes necessary to bury pauper people of the county on Sunday. When we do bury bodies on Sunday, we give the prisoners extra time for that work. Also there are several similar occasions that call for extra work and we always give extra time off sentences.

The County home has a Steward that is employed by Durham County. He looks after and plans all meals that is served to Inmates, Infirmary patients, and prisoners. The Matron helps to prepare the menu for each meal that is served to all departments.

Respectively submitted,

Robert B. Nichols

Supt. Durham County Home.