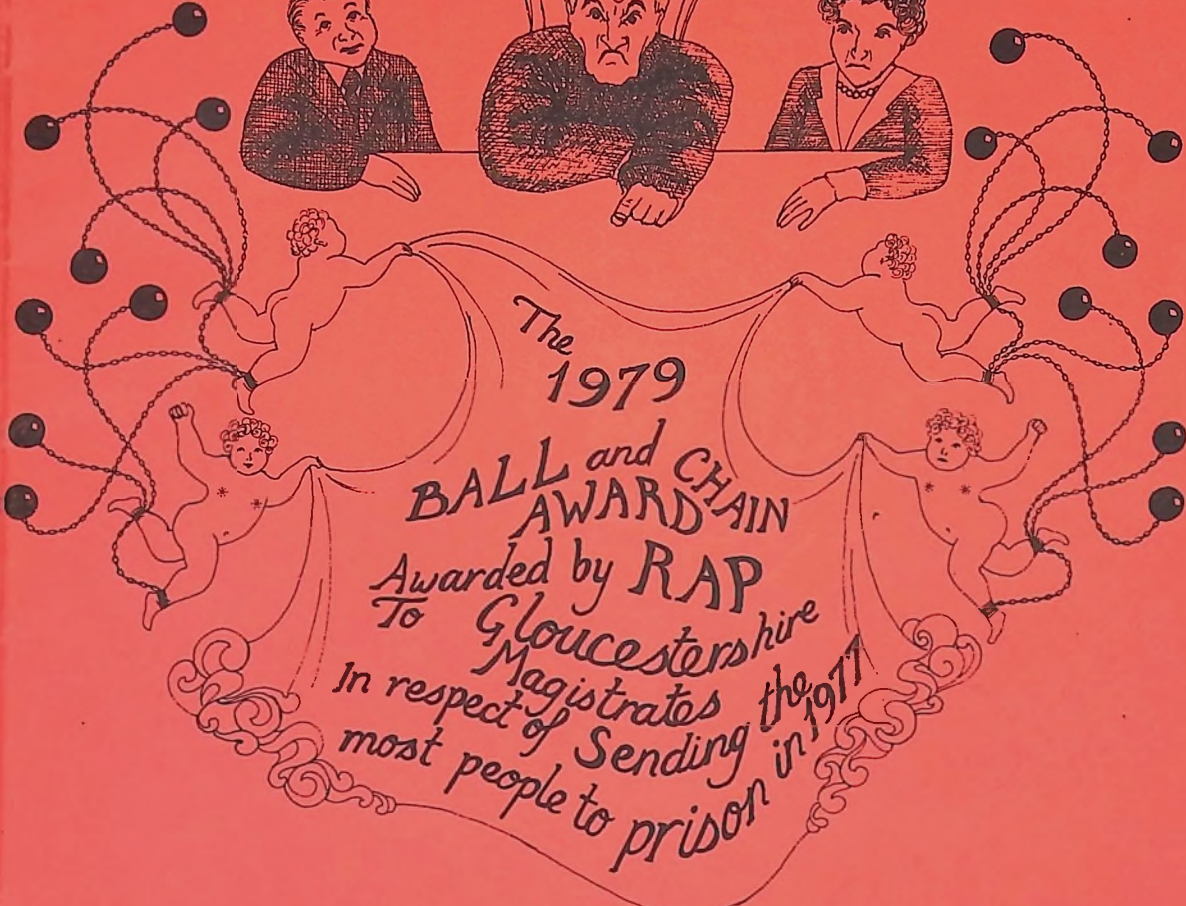


THE ABOLITIONIST

a quarterly journal from Radical Alternatives to Prison



Bristol League Tables
 RAP's Season of Prison Films
 RAP's Evidence to the May Enquiry

summer 1979

double issue 50p

EDITORIAL

Firstly, apologies for the late appearance of this double issue of the Abolitionist. This is 2 & 3 combined and we think the charge of 50p is a good bargain.

Unfortunately we are having to move again as the rent is too high for us to manage. We are in a desperate financial position and are currently in debt to the tune of several hundred pounds. We are asking members to renew subscriptions and to bring more people into RAP - if you can donate a small sum that will be a great bonus. Our new address is 182 Upper Street, Islington, London N1. The telephone number is 01-359-3785.

Everyone is feeling uneasy about the Thatcherite Government although a fair proportion of us don't give a damn which party is in power as the State remains its oppressive self whatever the political complexion of the Government. Nonetheless it is extremely important that we organise around issues so that the vulnerability of prisoners and other sectors of the population is lessened to some extent. We think RAP helps in this sphere and we want to see RAP groups forming all over Britain. You can start a local group by getting a speaker along to explain our ideas, we also have the 'Open Door' film available. Fund raising comes hard but if a gig can be arranged as a benefit for RAP that can help us, help the band get better known and provide a worthwhile evening. Or why not get your local union or association to affiliate to RAP like Sussex University's Students Union have. In this issue you will find evidence of our impact and we would especially draw your attention to the Memorandum to the May Inquiry. Another very important event has been the publishing with an introduction of Prof. Stanley Cohen's three articles which appeared recently in New Society as one pamphlet entitled 'Crime and Punishment'.

One explanation: Part 2 of Ian Cameron's review of Mick Ryan's book 'The Acceptable Pressure Group' has been held over so that Mick can reply in the same issue and points raised by Martin Wright in this issue of the Abolitionist can also receive attention. The Howard Journal (No 2 1979) has a Review Symposium of Mick's book (£3.50 to non-members from Prof A E Bottoms, 8 Hardwick Crescent, Sheffield S11 8WB). There are contributions in the Symposium from Martin, Hugh Klare, Nicholas Hinton, Stan Cohen and Gavin Drewry together with a reply from Mick - who is incidentally a much valued member of RAP's Policy Group.

Jerry Westall
Co-ordinator R.A.P.

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KEN MURRAY

As we go to press we are waiting to hear the result of Jimmy Boyle's parole release application and the outcome of pressure to urge the prison department to allow Ken Murray to remain working at the Special Unit at Barlinnie Prison.

Ken Murray has been a member of the Scottish Prison Officers Association and is Chairman of Glasgow District Labour Party. He is a Principal Nursing Officer with 20 years service. Since the inception of the Special Unit in 1973, Ken has put a great deal of personal commitment into its success. In doing so he has had to criticise his superiors, both at Governor level and Prison Department level.

The Unit is run on a Community basis, and as such produces alternative leaders. Ken Murray is one. He has the respect of all his prison officer colleagues, also of the inmate population within the Unit. In 1975, the prison authorities issued a transfer notice on Ken but he fought this and won. But on 17th June this year he was served with another notice which he is now challenging.

If this transfer is effective then it destroys a vital, basic principle on which the success of the Unit has been built - staff continuity at senior officer level.

THE ACCEPTABLE PRESSURE GROUP

Hugh Klare describes Mick Ryan's book as 'a carefully researched study of the Howard League and RAP with the facts presented fairly....It caused me pain to read' he continues 'because here, through its pages darkly, I saw again how large a part of my life's work had failed. My most cherished dreams had come to nothing. What is more, I had to recognise that what I had most ardently desired was based largely on a (hopeful) illusion - a sad but common experience.'

The Acceptable Pressure Group is published by Saxon House, 1 Westmead, Farnborough, Hants and costs £8.50. Get it for your library

In the first issue of The Abolitionist, we explained the annual "Lock-em-up-League" published by Bristol RAP. In January of this year, Bristol issued the latest available figures (for 1977).....

BRISTOL LEAGUE TABLES

Where the Wye Valley winds down into the Severn Estuary it forms the border between England and Wales. Each year, thousands of tourists visit it to admire its natural beauty. But in 1977, the Lower Wye acquired a new and more sinister significance; it became, in fact, one of the most bizarre legal boundaries in the country, dividing the counties with the highest and lowest rates of imprisonment in England and Wales - Gloucester and Gwent respectively.

For six years now, The Bristol Group of RAP has been publishing a "League" of the number of defendants sent to prison (as a percentage of all sentences for men over twenty-one) by

2 the magistrates in each police force area. This year, as in 1975, Gloucester heads the list, whilst last year it was Dorset, with Sussex third both years. Magistrates in these counties have been very critical of RAP's comments that they are extra vicious and are relics of the days when the country squires could get poachers deported to convict hells and expect everyone to touch the forelock. Devon and Cornwall, North Yorkshire and Suffolk are also areas in the top ten and areas that are very 'county' and Conservative - not a Labour MP amongst them.

But two factors remain. One is the regular appearance of particular areas either at the top or, commendably, at the bottom of the table. The other is that the magistrates are so haphazard in their policy that literally thousands of defendants, committing similar offences, are thoughtlessly sent to prison just because they appear in certain courts rather than others that are prepared to use alternatives to prison - alternatives that are, in fact, available to all of them.

MALE OFFENDERS AGED 21 AND OVER SENTENCED TO IMMEDIATE IMPRISONMENT BY MAGISTRATES' COURTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES DURING 1977, AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL SENTENCES IMPOSED.

COURT AREA	% imprisoned	COURT AREA	% imprisoned
1 Gloucestershire	13.83	23 West Mercia	6.76
2 Dorset	13.20	24 Cleveland	6.72
3 Sussex	12.76	25 Lincolnshire	6.65
4 Devon and Cornwall	11.19	26 North Wales	6.64
5 Lancashire	10.51	27 Nottinghamshire	6.46
6 North Yorkshire	10.40	28 Surrey	6.35
7 Suffolk	10.36	29 Wiltshire	6.26
8 Greater Manchester	9.63	30 Cheshire	6.23
9 West Midlands	8.56	31 Northamptonshire	6.20
10 Thames Valley	8.50	32 Leicestershire	6.15
11 Avon and Somerset	8.40	33 Cambridgeshire	6.07
12 Norfolk	8.38	34 Northumbria	5.85
13 Kent	8.32	35 Humberside	5.61
14 London City	8.03	36 Warwickshire	5.60
15 Cumbria	7.87	37 Staffordshire	5.55
16 Essex	7.53	38 South Yorkshire	5.55
17 Hampshire	7.50	39 Merseyside	5.52
18 West Yorkshire	7.47	40 Hertfordshire	5.33
19 Met. Police District	7.24	41 Durham	5.29
20 Bedfordshire	7.18	42 Dyfed Powis	4.84
21 Derbyshire	7.04	43 Gwent	3.90
22 South Wales	6.96	<u>NATIONAL AVERAGE</u>	7.65

SOURCE: Home Office Supplementary Criminal Statistics (Unpublished)

It can get very involved to account for positions in the table and the variations from year to year, or from one side of the Wye to the other. Public opinion is naturally influenced by the more serious crimes and RAP is well aware of all that is involved and the need to protect society. We would, however, ask the public to consider the circumstances of the far greater number of very minor offenders who get sent to prison. The League Table quite clearly exposes one of the unjust ways that prison is used. There are many others: prison on remand, for maintenance default, for small fines, for mental and alcoholic reasons, for very petty theft, etc.

With all the evils associated with locking people up, often completely destroying homes and the chance of living useful lives, and at a cost of £108 per week (while supportive organisations are so short of funds) it is very necessary to question the negative attitudes associated with prison, and to attempt something more positive, not just regarding penalties, but questioning why some people who do harm society are not considered criminals. Also, it is essential to question many of the shortcomings around us that encourage people to take short-cuts to overcome social disadvantages inflicted upon them.

Nick Fuller

Full details of the League Tables, other literature and information about speakers can be obtained from Nick Fuller, 70 Novers Park Road, Bristol, BS4 1RJ (SAE please!)

STATEMENT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

To prevent any public health risks both inside prisons and to the communities living nearby, the EHA strongly feels that environmental health officers should have a right of access to prisons which now have a Crown immunity from local authority inspections.

In view of the Government inquiry now going on into prisons conditions, the Association, which has not been consulted, says it is most unsatisfactory for local authority environmental health departments to be kept unaware about the conditions in prisons relating to food hygiene, health and safety at work, pest control and communicable diseases. Many prisons are densely packed communities set down in the middle of residential areas. It is most important therefore that local authority environmental health officers should be able to carry out inspections and to have responsibility for taking reasonable practical public health precautions when required, to protect the inmates and the outside community.

3 JOHN McCLUSKEY

We received the following anonymous letter under the heading for publication please:

The enclosed petition says something of the dirt in Wormwood Scrubs. The prisoner concerned told me when I visited him recently that there were other small insects creeping around regularly and then finally the cockroaches as he describes.

The state of affairs in these old prisons will have to be highlighted as best possible by outsiders as the authorities inside the prisons will refuse a prisoner facilities to bring such matters to the notice of outsiders. This was the case with this prisoner but he finally managed to get this petition out for publication. Thank you. The petition was from 136282 McCluskey, Wormwood Scrubs. It read:

"On the morning of 29.4.79 between 3 and 4 am I was awakened from my sleep by a cockroach which was crawling over my face.

When I got out of bed and switched the light on I found that there were lots more of these insects crawling around the floor of my cell.

I then rang the bell and told the night officer. He said all he could do was to put my complaint in the complaints book.

As my cell is infested with vermin I had to remain awake until morning.

Could you please investigate this complaint. I would like to draw your attention to what the Environmental Health Officers Association recently had to say about cleanliness and hygiene in prisons.

They said most prisons would face compulsory closure if they were subject to normal public health standards.

In my opinion any cosmetic exercise such as painting over cracks in walls will not get rid of this vermin.

Could you please confirm that until such time as adequate steps can be taken to get rid of the vermin here that this segregation unit will be classed unfit for human habitation.

2.5.79 Yours sincerely,
John McCluskey

I would also like to draw your attention to the conditions in which some of these cells are in and have been for the past six months or more.

The dampness is so severe that the paint is peeling off the walls both inside and outside of the cells.

This can cause a serious health hazard especially when we are locked up for 23 hours a day.

I have already been in the segregation unit for more than six months.

2.5.79 John McCluskey"

Roger Todd of the *Daily Mirror* took an interest in these allegations and after our own enquiries we established that John had been moved to Hull prison on 22nd May and was not in the segregation unit there. We also established that a resident of a cell in the segregation unit at Wormwood Scrubs could switch on his own light. It was clear that John did want publicity about the hazards to health in the Scrubs.

Roger Todd informed us that the Home Office admitted there were cockroaches in most of Britain's older prisons (most of our prisons are Victorian). The cell John had complained about had been fumigated.

It was in 1974 that the Director of the North West Metropolitan Blood Transfusion Service stopped visits to Wormwood Scrubs because the "sanitary arrangements are medically disgraceful".

RAP PRISON FILMS

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As part of an attempt to arouse interest in prison movies, RAP arranged a small season of them in January 1979. The Greater London Arts Association gave us some assistance with the project, and the films were shown on four consecutive Saturdays at the Scala Cinema in London. Speakers from RAP and PROP led discussions after each film, and overall we thought it was a success. Our thanks are due to Liz, Steve and Gary at the Scala, Maureen McCue at GLAA and Colin McArthur at the British Film Institute who helped us with the publicity.

All the films we showed shed different sorts of light on the prison question. As far as this country is concerned, *Riot in Cell Block 11* is still topical as an expose of conditions. Punishment Park is inclined to be shrill, but shows clearly that some 'alternatives' to prison could be worse than the real thing. If the Tories ever do hold a referendum on capital punishment, *I Want To Live* should be shown on television because its scenes of a gas chamber execution are horrifying beyond belief. It is a miracle that *Attica*, the documentary, was made at all; by coincidence, Nelson Rockefeller, the State governor who ordered the police assault on the rebel prisoners, died on the same day we showed the film. A fitting end to the season.

To go with the season we also published a pamphlet, *Notes On The Prison Film*, which costs 30p (inc. postage) from the office.

It seems to us that prison movies are a useful vehicle for getting RAP's ideas across and we hope to get involved in future screenings (see Brighton Conference). If there is anyone who could lend a hand with organising screenings please get in touch. Also, if anyone knows a film producer who would sponsor a RAP/PROP prison disaster movie, we'd like to hear from them too. Meanwhile MIKE NELLIS takes a closer look at the 'prison movie'....

MIDNIGHT EXPRESS AND THE RETURN OF THE PRISON MOVIE.

Alan Parker's film *Midnight Express* has been the centre of a mild controversy ever since it opened in London in August 1978. Its critical reception was mixed but those who did not like it stated their case in unusually blunt terms; Tom Milne of *The Observer* headed his review 'Repelled By Midnight' and spoke of the film's 'rabid racism', on the basis of the anti-Turkish sentiments expressed by its central character when he is sentenced to thirty years imprisonment merely for attempting to smuggle four kilos of hashish out of Istanbul airport. Other reviews such as in *Time Out* objected to the brutality of some scenes, and even the critics who praised technical aspects of the film and conceded that it had 'force and conviction', felt that ultimately it was no more than an exploitation movie, trading on audiences' 'fascination with fear and oppression' but giving no more than 'the thrills of vicarious travel' in return. The milder criticisms of the film are valid, but the racist allegation misrepresents the film's purpose, while the Turkish Embassy's denial, in London, of brutality in their prisons should be read with the same scepticism that is required when dealing with similar statements from the Home Office in this country. Both Release and Amnesty International are less than happy with conditions in Turkish jails.

Despite continuing opposition to the film - the Turkish government opposed its showing at the Belgrade Film Festival earlier this year - *Midnight Express* has been an immense commercial success. Above all it is being hailed as a breakthrough for the moribund British film industry and much of the publicity it has received has been in terms of this, rather than the social and political interest of its story, and the plight of Turkish prisoners.

But there is a third and hitherto neglected way in which *Midnight Express* is a significant film. It represents a renewal of film-makers' interest in the subject of imprisonment, a trend which actually began several years ago but has only recently been consolidated. For despite its contemporary feel and obvious topicality *Midnight Express* trades fairly explicitly on conventions of film-making which go back at least fifty years; it is merely the latest addition to the old, Hollywood-based genre of prison movies. This genre is currently showing signs of revival in several countries after two decades of relative quiescence, which is a matter of interest to prison reformers as well as film critics.

The critics themselves disagree as to the exact meaning of 'genre' but most of the film going public are aware that popular films tend to fall into one of several broad categories; Westerns, Crime Thrillers, Musicals, etc. The categories are somewhat arbitrary and vague, they often overlap, they encompass films which vary enormously in quality and which apart from having certain the mes in common bear no comparison to each other. Gangster movies make up a large part of the crime thriller genre and have recently received a considerable amount of critical scrutiny that references to prison movies are found, although so far no one appears to have designated them a sub-genre, which is essentially what they are.

IMAGERY

Since the 1920s more than 200 movies dealing either wholly or in part with imprisonment have been made, most of them in America, mainly during the Depression and pre-war years. They exhibit a consistent narrative and visual style and invariably contain set-pieces and imagery which are as unique to them as saloon brawls and street showdowns are to the average Western. *Midnight Express* is no exception to this: the panoramic shots of the prison yard, the forbidding walls of the institution itself, the perpetual tension between the inmates, the characters of the brutal prison guard and the stool pigeon, the visiting parent figure, the meeting between an imprisoned man and his girlfriend, the abortive escape attempt and the final successful escape - all these items figured in the prison films of the thirties and forties.

Perhaps the most striking feature of prison movies as a whole⁵ and once again *Midnight Express* is in keeping with tradition - is their almost complete sympathy with the inmates, often regardless of the crimes they have committed, and their tendency to view the prison authorities - guards more than governors - as brutal and evil people. At times this sympathetic portrayal has been taken to extremes, as in *Numbered Men* (1930) in which the warden gives guns to the convicts so that they can capture or kill the only 'bad' inmate in the film! More generally it has meant that all prison films contain an intrinsically subversive, anti-prison element which reverses the good-cops and bad-robbers morality of the average crime thriller. According to Jack Shadoian, this the key to the ideological significance of prison films: 'The prison is always the real star of any prison film, an oppressive arena in which bits of action are devised to keep the movie moving. The meaning of any prison film is always a variation on what prisons mean and are. The prison film is also invariably humanist in content, inescapably committed to assert the value of human life, however wretched. No one shoots a prison film in order to applaud or delight in the misery of life behind bars.' (*The Journal of Popular Film* Vol 2, No 2, Spring 1973):

The subversiveness of prison films is, however, two-edged. Some films, like *Numbered Men*, are so unrealistic that the portrayal of convicts as sympathetic characters carries no political weight at all, and provides no basis for a criticism of prisons. A great many American prison movies operate in this way, as prison fantasies, and it is not unreasonable to assume that some of them were deliberate attempts to whitewash the existing prison system. But even the subversiveness of serious prison films like *The Big House* (1930) and *The Mayor of Hell* (1933) can have a contradictory effect, insofar as it serves to reassure audiences that the good guys do win, that prisoners can take care of themselves, that they can escape, vindicate themselves or have a say in the constructive administration of their institution. To be fair, the most famous, and greatest, of all prison movies, *I Am A Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932) was anything but reassuring; the good guys didn't win and its overall message was one of the bleakest ever put across in the American cinema. But no other prison movie has matched the standards of criticism set by *I Am A Fugitive...*, although it has become usual for reform-oriented movies like *Riot in Cell Block 11* (1954) to end pessimistically, with a sense of unfinished business and a challenge. To the extent that this challenge is taken up - and this is the crucial question - these films are genuinely subversive, but there are few precedents for assuming that people will act on what they see in the movies, at least in regard to issues of this kind.

REFLECTION OF OPPRESSION

The main way in which critics and film historians have explained the popularity of prison films in America during the thirties, has been in terms of their reflection of the sense of confinement and oppression experienced by millions of people because of the Depression. Everyone was a 'prisoner', and the few lucky ones who 'escaped' were an inspiration to the rest. Escape meant 'success'. But other factors were also important in the genesis of the prison movie - the Warner Brother's quest for 'social realism' and 'stories from the headlines', competition between the studios and their tendency to copy each others' financial successes, and finally the occasional cooperation of the prison authorities, who needed a certain kind of publicity. By the end of the thirties these factors had helped to establish prison films as a genre in their own right and when such films continued to be made in the forties it was more with reference to their own internal aesthetic conventions than to the real social world. *Brute Force* (1947) and *White Heat* (1949) were the key prison movies of the forties; both emphasised that prison bred violence, and had no rehabilitative potential whatsoever. In the fifties only the documentary-like *Riot in Cell Block 11* stands out; its equivalent in the sixties was *Birdman of Alcatraz* (1962) which, like so many of the genre before it, criticised the injustice of one particular man's imprisonment, rather than the institution of prison itself. *Midnight Express* works in the same way; it shows clearly that prison is hell but, in line with all of the genre except *I Am A Fugitive...* it tends not to question the society which requires such institutions, but concentrates instead on the injustice of sending one particular individual there, for such a great length of time.

THE 70's

Until the arrival of *Midnight Express* few people could have named a prison film of the seventies, but in fact there have been several, starting perhaps with *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) which contained scenes of a future prison and dealt with the application of behaviour-modification techniques to prisoners. An American made-for-TV-movie *The Classhouse* (1972) was based on a short story by Truman Capote, filmed in Utah State Penitentiary and reviewed as the most authentic prison movie ever made. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* (1971) tried to convey on screen the novel's successful attempt to capture the passage of time in prison, something which most 'action-packed' prison movies conspicuously fail to do. More recently *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1976) dealt with the transfer of an inmate from a prison to a psychiatric hospital, an event brought about because, in the inmate's own words, he 'fights and fucks too much'. It was this film which triggered the revival of the prison movie; although by virtue of its hospital setting it is technically an asylum movie, it took the traditional themes of prison films and cast them into a more modern mould showing how ECT, drugs and ultimately lobotomy could be used to control anti-social behaviour (so-called eds). The truncheon-wielding, black-uniformed guard has been superseded by the syringe-carrying, white-coated nurse. But the film was about more than institutions. Most critics noted that it was a thinly-veiled criticism of the forms of repression characteristic of democratic societies; its success was partly due to the fact that, implicitly, it addressed key political issues of the seventies, in the same way that earlier prison movies touched on the concerns of the thirties. A sense of confinement and restraint has returned..

To date, though, the prison movie revival has got off to a slow start and the films which are already completed have found difficulty getting shown. On *The Yard* (Director: Ralph Micklin Silver) was shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival but does not appear to have found an English distributor. It deals more with the inmate hierarchy than with relationships between prisoners and guards, both of which are equally viable ways of portraying prisons as brutalising institutions. *Short Eyes*, another American film, has been advertised in London but has not yet been released; it deals with the segregation of a sex offender. A West German film about imprisonment, *The Brutalisation of Franz Blum* (Director: Reinhardt Hauff) should be 'coming shortly'.

In this country *Scum*, a film about the inmates of a borstal, has just been completed. The screenplay has an interesting history, having been commissioned by the BBC as a Play for Today from a writer called Roy Minton. The play was filmed but never shown, apparently because the BBC decided that it followed too closely on *The Prisoner's Tale*, which aroused the hostility of the Prison Officers' Association, who claimed it misrepresented them. *Scum* is a catalogue of brutalities practised by the inmates on one another, occasionally with the collusion of the guards, and always with the indifference of the governor. On television it could have prompted serious discussion of borstals, but the BBC's director arranged for the play to be taken on by the Royal Shakespeare Company and have raised the money to remake it as a feature film. Minton has also published it as a novel and hopefully the combined impact of these presentations will equal the status of a Play for Today.

COMEDY

A superficially similar story is to be told about the BBC comedy series *Porridge*, episodes of which have also appeared in paperback and which is now being turned into a feature film by Lord Grade's new film company, Black Lion Films. Both as situation comedy and as a sympathetic portrayal of a prisoner it has to be admitted that *Porridge* and its sequel *Going Straight* are not too bad, but it is unlikely that the prison authorities ever wished to censor them, because such political points as they made were muted into non-existence. The significance of the movie version of *Porridge* is its continuation of a British tradition of prison comedies starting with *Will Hay's Convict 99* (1938) and leading to Peter Seller's *Two Way Stretch* (1961). The first of these concerned a prison run as a holiday camp, the second a prison so un-secure that a gang of thieves could come and go at will, using their imprisonment as the perfect alibi for their crimes. Both films appeared at a time of concern for law and order and *Porridge* is no exception; it is perhaps unsurprising that moviemakers capitalise on public interest in imprisonment, but it is quite another thing to assume that they advance discussion in constructive directions.

Apart from the prison films already mentioned there are rumours of still more, planned or in production, which lends further support to the view that this Hollywood sub-genre is undergoing a renaissance, as part of a wider cultural concern with the prison question and the control systems of the nineteen seventies. As in the thirties it is doubtful if the majority of the films will be anything other than frivolous, but one can always hope for a modern equivalent of *I Am A Fugitive...* which will arouse the same amount of interest and outrage. This hope may be in vain, because even *Superman* (1979) ended in a prison, with our hero delivering Lex Luthor into the prison yard and calling over to the governor that he is 'part of the same team', presumably the same team that, some years ago caused the Attica rebellion. What chance have prison reformers got if *Superman* is on the other side?

MOVIES AND POLITICS

The production, screening and criticism of prison movies is not as politically crucial as many other issues faced by prison reformers and abolitionists, but to the extent that such movies contribute to the public understanding of imprisonment it is important that their relationship to social reality is fully understood. Movies are part of the mass media and as such they can either inform or mystify: they are simply one element in a literary and artistic network which disseminates information about social issues, albeit as 'entertainment'. Ultimately, prison movies cannot be studied in isolation; they derive from novels, plays and autobiographies, and even from the memoirs of prison officials. They fit into, and sometimes complement, prison stories in the news media, and inevitably they colour peoples' attitudes in debates on law and order, and on the function of imprisonment. For this reason they warrant some attention by prison reformers and if *Midnight Express* generates a wider interest in prison movies, particularly in the forthcoming ones which are about British prisons, the furore which has surrounded it since its release will have been worthwhile.

FROM REFORMER TO RADICAL from Community Care March 29, 1979.

Prison reformers have failed. This is the verdict of Hugh Klare who was director of the Howard League between 1950 and 1971.....Contributing in the Howard Journal to a symposium review of Mick Ryan's book about the Howard League and Radical Alternatives to Prison (The Acceptable Pressure Group, Saxon House) he admits that his most cherished dreams about prison reform came to nothing.

DREGS OF SOCIETY

The description used by left wing MP Joe Ashton for those residents of Rampton who he condemned as 'the dregs of society' comes oddly from the politician who helped to make the sole worthwhile gesture by the unlamented Labour Government in the television programme attacking the National Front. The phrase 'the dregs of society' could have been used by Adolf Hitler.

We hope brother Joe won't mind an atheist reminding readers of this journal that Jesus Christ reportedly remarked that those things that are done to the least of people are done unto him. In this nominally Christian land perhaps compassion for those suffering in Rampton rather than contempt could be expected.

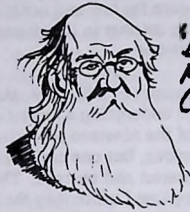
As an established dreg of society could I look forward to the day when politicians are no more.

Francis Drake

7
RADICAL ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON
A MEMORANDUM TO
THE INQUIRY INTO THE UNITED KINGDOM
PRISON SERVICES

'Are our prisons worth the enormous outlay in human labour yearly devoted to them? Do they guarantee Society against the recurrence of the evils which they are supposed to combat?'

From Peter Kropotkin, 'In Russian and French Prisons', 1887



'DON'T FORGET
MUTUAL AID,
COMRADES!'

'As one reads history, not in the expurgated editions written for schoolboys and passmen, but in the original authorities of each time, one is absolutely sickened, not by the crimes that the wicked have committed, but by the punishments the good have inflicted; and a community is infinitely more brutalised by the habitual employment of punishment than it is by the occasional occurrence of crime'. From Oscar Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', 1891



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The Inquiry into the United Kingdom Prison Services was established in November 1978 under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice May, with the following terms of reference:

To inquire into the state of the prison services in the United Kingdom; and having regard to:

- a) the size and nature of the prison population, and the capacity of the prison services to accommodate it;
- b) the responsibilities of the prison services for the security, control and treatment of inmates;
- c) the need to recruit and retain a sufficient and suitable staff for the prison service;
- d) the need to secure the efficient use of manpower and financial resources in the prison services;

The Inquiry was also asked to examine and make recommendations upon various aspects of the internal administration of the prison service, such as conditions for staff and their families, their remuneration and the effectiveness of their industrial relations machinery. It was not asked to consider questions of sentencing policy or the philosophy of punishment.

It is no part of RAP's brief to assist the government in the running of its prison system and we do not believe that meaningful changes in policy can be discussed within the limited terms of reference of the May Inquiry. Nonetheless, in the interests of full and open discussion of the prison question we are prepared to submit evidence to the new Inquiry, where we hope that our belief in the inseparability of organisation and philosophy will be given due consideration.

Policy Group

Radical Alternatives to Prison

May 1979

(1) Radical Alternatives to Prison (RAP) was founded in 1970 in response to the perceived political shortcomings of the existing prison reform movement. Its declared aim is the complete abolition of imprisonment for all but the most violently dangerous offenders, who are said to comprise no more than five per cent of the current prison population. We do not know if this figure is accurate; we do not believe that it could be greater than this.

The strategy of abolition ultimately presupposes changes in the economic and political organisation of society but we recognize the need for setting medium term goals and for assisting those in prison to overcome the worst effects of their custodial environment.

Where we differ from the existing reform movement is in our belief that prisons are part of a class-based system of control, and in the belief that merely tinkering with the prison system, as previous reformers have done, simply serves to make it more acceptable and to consolidate its power.

The main strands of our approach are as follows:-

- a) a moratorium on all new prison construction.
- b) a reduction in the existing prison population by means of short sentences, the decriminalisation of minor, non-dangerous offences and the provision of genuine and humane alternatives to custody.
- c) an end to prison secrecy; the scrapping of the Official Secrets Act.
- d) an end to the drugging of prisoners.
- e) an end to the use of segregation units ("cages") and solitary confinement within prison.

(2) We do not believe that our views are "soft" or unrealistic. They derive from the traditions of libertarian socialism in which there is a long and respectable history of scepticism and hostility towards imprisonment. Many of the contributors to the tradition, people such as Oscar Wilde and Peter Kropotkin were in the forefront of the debates on prisons which took place in their times and RAP is the only organisation which has carried their ideas forward to the present day. These ideas are of greater relevance now than they have ever been before, because the power of the state is steadily increasing and "law and order" is being used to extend its influence.

(3) The phenomenal growth of the British prison system since the end of the Second World War, during the time we were supposed to have been a Welfare State, leaves no room for complacency. Furthermore, it cannot fail to be of interest to the Inquiry that Hugh Klare, a respected establishment figure who was a Secretary of the Howard League for Penal Reform for twenty one years has recently said that he regards his life's work in this field as a failure.

The following table of imprisonment rates, taken from a written Parliamentary answer of 20th April 1978 shows clearly that Britain is a far less "liberal" country, in comparison with much of Europe, than it sometimes likes to claim:-

PER 100,000 OF TOTAL POPULATION			
Country	Convicted Prisoners	Unconvicted Prisoners	Total
United Kingdom	78.3	9.0	87.3
Belgium	63.8	15.2	79.0
Denmark	40.9	17.7	58.6
France	41.9	17.1	59.0
West Germany	69.0	23.4	92.4
Rep. of Ireland	34.5	3.4	37.9
Italy	30.3	30.2	60.5
Luxembourg	62.7	11.5	74.2
Netherlands	9.4	13.2	22.6

(4) Prisons cannot be looked at in isolation. Not only must the other components of the criminal justice system, the police and the judiciary, be subject to the same sort of critical overhaul but the society in which the criminal justice system is set also requires constant scrutiny. The links between crime and inequality, unemployment and the pervasive values of the acquisitive society have long been recognized, for how else can one explain the preponderance of the poor in the population of our prisons, and the increasing number of prisoners who come from oppressed ethnic minorities? Imprisonment is used most in those societies which value freedom least and the growth of a prison system is the sharpest indicator of the political direction which a society is taking.

The abolition of imprisonment could not be accomplished without massive social change, but experience in other countries suggests that

significant reductions can be brought about in the size of the prison population without corresponding changes in the rest of society. Holland, for instance, has a prison population which is proportionately four times smaller than ours, more than half of which serve sentences of less than six months, compared to only seventeen per cent in this country. Yet the crime rate in the two countries is just about the same - a point which shatters the argument of those who persist in believing that the incidence of criminal behaviour is affected by changes in sentencing policy.

(5) We believe that there are radical alternatives to prison and to the existing methods of controlling anti-social behaviour. The last decade has been "the age of alternatives" and the state has itself provided things like Community Service Orders, intermediate treatment and to a much lesser extent, detoxification centres, all of which have a certain value to the people who participate in them, but which have not reduced the prison population at all. As such, they are better regarded as adjuncts to the prison system, and not as alternatives to it.

We would distinguish between "State alternatives" and "radical alternatives". The State has a vested interest in monopolising the means of punishment and control because in this way it can preserve its image as the protector of ordinary people. But the methods it has used so far, including the non-custodial methods, have not protected the people - recidivism rates are high and crime is still on the increase. One could be forgiven for thinking that the punishments which the State inflicts on offenders are simply gratuitous, for apart from being inhumane they appear to have no practical effect whatsoever.

The radicalism of "radical alternatives" lies in their populism - they are organised by ordinary people rather than by officials of the State. They are based on the principles of self-help and mutual aid, applied among people who have themselves been in contact with the criminal justice system - people on deferred sentences and ex-offenders. The Newham Alternatives Project is one such example. Such projects are few and far between and if finance is to be available for alternatives it is to groups like NAP that money should be given, without strings. That is not to say we are totally opposed to all State alternatives, and the recent rescinding of funds for a planned S.E. London Detoxification Centre, together with the financial difficulties of the existing two centres, cannot be criticised too strongly.

(6) The struggle among prisoners to resist oppression within prison, and to understand the social forces which led them there (in the manner described in Jimmy Boyle's book "A Sense of Freedom") must be supported. This does not mean that we wholeheartedly endorse the provision of telephones, the right to private spending money and the right to wear one's own clothes; in the past such palliatives have sidetracked reformers from more crucial issues and led them to claim victories when they have in fact lost wars. We agree with the French prisoners who said "You could have gold plated bars and chicken every day, but it would still be the nick".

Within prisons, it is desirable that prisoners should be allowed to organise their own union and to be consulted about conditions and proposed changes in penal policy. It would be useful for them to have adequate library and reading facilities and to have access to any information which is publicly available outside prison. The right to organise their own education, according to what they see as their needs, is fundamental if the men and women concerned are to change, and if they wish to communicate with the inmates of other prisons this too should be facilitated.

Changes in the grievance procedures within prisons have become necessary because of the failure of Boards of Visitors to act impartially in disputes between prisoners and staff. All prisoners should have independent legal representation in any dispute in which they become involved - their rights in this respect should be no different from that of any other citizen.

(7) The opening up of prisons to various sorts of public scrutiny would diminish the power of those who control and administer them and give the media less scope for creating myths about what goes on inside them. The British public is ill-informed about its prisons and one reason for this is the deliberate policy of official secrecy followed by the Home Office. It is difficult to get information out of prison, and even harder to get it in. Access for relatives, journalists, lawyers, welfare workers and medical experts should be made much easier, and prisoners should be allowed to write and say whatever they like, to whoever they like. If the Official Secrets Act were repealed there would be no point in maintaining a complex system of rules and regulations governing the ways in which prisoners can communicate with the world outside.

The importance of having independent medical staff going into prisons has been demonstrated by the way in which tranquillising drugs were secretly used by the Prison Medical Service in a manner somewhat akin to the way they are used in Russian "prison-hospitals". The Prison Medical Service should be abolished and all medical work in prisons undertaken by ordinary NHS practitioners.

Even if journalists had greater access to prisoners - and on balance we believe this would be a good thing - we are not optimistic about the uses to which the media would put its information. Their record on crime reporting generally is not good, and they perpetuate many myths about the deterrent and rehabilitative effects of imprisonment. Organisations such as our own are concerned to correct the image of prisons which is continually presented to the public but inevitably the greater resources of the official media mean that their message predominates.

(8) It goes without saying that the relatives of serving prisoners would appreciate greater access to them and while RAP has no particular policy on reforms which would facilitate this, such as conjugal visits and weekend leave, believing them to be of the same order as the palliatives mentioned in Para 6, we would make the point that imprisonment has a most destructive influence on family life. It deprives children of parents and stretches relationships to breaking point, even among couples who were close, and it actually contributes to the so-called problem of "one parent families". It punishes the relatives of people involved in crime, not just the offenders themselves, and it reduces the possibility of a family being financially independent, which in this day and age is not easy for the poor.

(9) One of the major obstacles to the reduction of the prison population is the claim that ^{all} prisoners are dangerous and that if they were released they would endanger public safety. Quite apart from the fact that this is not true it is also worth pointing out that public safety is threatened more systematically by many social institutions and practices which are not regarded as criminal - the production of nuclear weapons, the abuses of factory legislation and the extensive reliance on motor vehicles. The pursuit of profit has always meant that the safety and welfare of ordinary people has been neglected and in addition it has created the social conditions in which people turn to criminal behaviour to achieve the goals which society has set for them. It is absurd to think of prison as something which reduces risk in some areas of our lives, rather it is a menace in itself, an institution which habitually brutalises people and returns them to society far more embittered than when they went in.

(10) This is not to deny that there are violently dangerous individuals, but it is clear that society's response to them is ridden with contradictions. The publicity which still surrounds the Barlinnie Special Unit in Scotland has brought crucial issues of the law and order debate to the fore. Not least of these was the stated aim of some Scottish politicians to see discipline within the unit tightened immediately it became apparent that some prisoners had been able to benefit from it. The Barlinnie Unit is the one prison in the country which gives some semblance of working properly and the hypocrisy of the politicians who wanted to impose restrictions on it makes us sceptical of the official backing which is allegedly given to the ideal of rehabilitation.

The Barlinnie Unit was set up by liberal-minded prison officers who had come to believe, despite opposition from some of their colleagues in the Scottish Prison Officers Association, that the existing prison system only exacerbated the violent behaviour exhibited by many inmates. In particular they were opposed to the use of the solitary confinement cages in Porterfield Prison, which represented the most barbaric development in penal policy in this country since flogging was abolished in 1946. For a while after Barlinnie was opened the cages were not in use but pressure from the SPOA has recently led to them being reopened, in the face of all the evidence - as if evidence was needed - that units like the one at Barlinnie are far more effective in reducing violent behaviour.

(11) It is not just the SPOA which gives us cause for concern. Recent experience of industrial action by the POA in this country has drawn attention both to the degree of power which prison officers have within the prison system as a whole and to the racist ideology which is prevalent among a good many - though not all - of them. While the question of "who guards the guards" - the problem of accountability within the prison system itself - preoccupies the other groups who work in the field of penal reform, we would suggest that the attitudes and practices of the prison officers are the inevitable byproduct of the dehumanising work which the state asks them to do; the institutions in which they work corrupt everyone inside them, staff as well as prisoners. For this reason we do not anticipate that an improvement in the working conditions of prison officers will make their task any easier or their attitudes more liberal - and yet this sort of improvement is the only likely outcome of the May Inquiry.

(12) The recent return to power of a Conservative government means that the future for constructive prison reform, let alone abolition, is very bleak. The Conservatives made it clear from the outset of their election campaign that they stood on a law and order platform and that their approach to crime would be blatantly punitive. It is worth reminding them that the most distinguished member of their party once held very different views on the treatment of criminals and while in no way wishing to align ourselves with the rest of Sir Winston Churchill's utterances we do believe that he had a point when he said, in a parliamentary speech during his time as Home Secretary:-

"The mood and temper of the public in regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilization of any country. A calm dispassionate recognition of the rights of the accused and even of the convicted criminal against the State; a constant heart-searching of all charged with the deed of punishment; tireless efforts towards the discovery of regenerative processes; unflinching faith that there is a treasure, if you can find it, in the heart of every man. These are the symbols which in the treatment of crime and criminals make and measure the stored-up strength of a nation and are sign and proof of the living virtue in it."

July 20th, 1910, House of Commons.

Such sentiments are far removed from the minds and hearts of the new British government, but if they do not heed Churchill's remarks they stand to produce a penal system as large and repressive as that of West Germany, and one which stands in the same relation to the class structure of British society as the Gulag Archipelago does to that of the Soviet Union.

'Bleak times' for penal reform

Morning Star Reporter

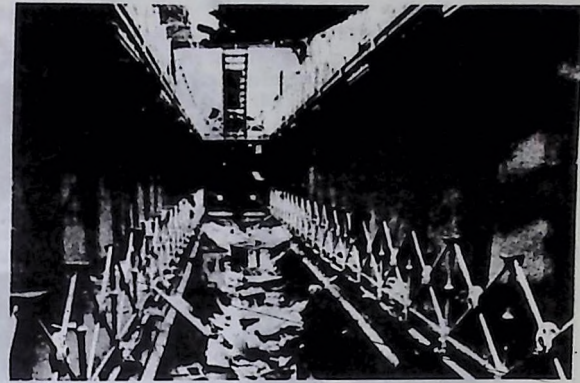
THE return of a Tory government means the future for penal reform is very bleak, says the Radical Alternatives to Prison group (RAP) in its evidence to the May inquiry into British prisons.

Its memorandum says: "The Conservatives made it clear from the outset of their election campaign that they stood on a law-and-order platform and that their approach to crime would be blatantly punitive."

RAP quotes Sir Winston Churchill to back up its scathing

approach to "deterrent" punishment and its long-term aim of abolishing prisons except for violently dangerous offenders. In the short term the group call for no new prisons to be built or extended and a reduction in the existing prison population by means of short sentences, the decriminalisation of minor offences and genuine and humane alternatives to jail.

Tory blow to prison reformers



CAMPAIGNERS in the Radical Alternatives to Prison group (RAP) warned that the return of a Tory government would mean a 'bleak' future for constructive prison reform.

RAP, whose warning comes at the end of the campaign that they stood on a law and order platform and that their approach to crime would be blatantly punitive.

The return of a Thatcher government is a setback for the abolition of imprisonment for all but the most violent and dangerous offenders.

The group believes that this section of the prison population in Britain — comparatively one of the highest in Europe — could not be more than 5 per cent.

RAP says its aims and the abolition of imprisonment 'presupposes changes in the economic and political organisation of society'.

The inquiry to which RAP is submitting its views was set up in November last year under Mr Justice May. Its terms of reference prevent it from considering issues of sentencing policy by judges or the philosophy of punishment.

In putting forward a case for certain changes, RAP makes its own position clear when it says: "It is no part of RAP's brief to assist the government in the running of its prison system and we do not believe meaningful changes in policy can be discussed within the limited terms of reference of the May inquiry."

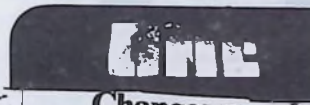
"Nonetheless, in the in-

terests of full and open discussion of the prison we are prepared to submit evidence.

RAP explains that it differs from other reform groups in its class-based system of control and they also 'merely tinkering' with the system.

RAP demands things in its approach: a moratorium on prison construction; a reduction in population through the scrapping of alternatives to imprisonment; an end to prison and the scrapping of the Official Secrets Act.

An end to the detention units ('cages') and solitary confinement. RAP acknowledges



Changes urged in prison service

Sweeping changes in the prison service have been urged by Radical Alternatives to Prison. In evidence to the committee of inquiry to examine prisons — headed by Mr Justice May — the group calls for:

- a moratorium on all new prison construction;
- a reduction in the existing prison population by use of shorter sentences, decriminalisation of minor offences, and alternatives to custody;
- the scrapping of the Official Secrets Act;
- an end to the use of drugs, segregation units and solitary confinement.

RAP's submission claims that the percentage of prisoners per head of population is higher in the UK than any other European country but West Germany. The group says that Holland, with a crime

HOME NEWS

Radical alternatives to present system urged

Prisoners should 'have right to their own union'

By Tom Sharritt

Prisoners should be allowed to form their own union and should be consulted about prison conditions and proposed changes in penal policy, Mr Justice May's inquiry into the prison service has been told.

Radical Alternatives to Prison, an organisation founded in 1970 with the aim of abolishing prison for all but the most violent and dangerous offenders, says in its submission that prisoners should also have access to any information available outside prison and should be able to communicate with their families.

Rate comparable to the UK, has a prison population proportionately four times smaller.

RAP says that prisoners should be allowed to form their own union, and be consulted on prison conditions and proposed changes in penal policy. "The opening up of prisons to various sorts of public scrutiny would diminish the power of those who control and administer them and give the media less scope for creating myths about what goes on inside them."

The group says that relatives, journalists, lawyers, welfare workers and medical experts should be allowed to visit and that prisoners should be allowed to write and say whatever they like, to whoever they like.

RAP's evidence is available from 104a Brackenbury Road, London W6, 50p.

of imprisonment could not be accomplished without massive social change, but the experience of other countries suggests that the prison population could be reduced without changes in the rest of society. "Holland, for instance, has a prison population which is proportionately four times smaller than ours, more than half of which serves sentences of less than six months, compared to only 17 per cent in this country."

"Yet the crime rate in the two countries is just about the same — a point which shatters the argument of those who insist on believing that the incidence of criminal behaviour is affected by changes in sentencing policy."

RAP says that the State's methods of controlling antisocial behaviour have not protected the public because recidivism is high and crime is increasing. "The radicalism of 'Radical Alternatives' lies in their populism — they are organised by ordinary people rather than by officials of the State. They are based on the principles of self-help and mutual aid, applied among people who have themselves been in contact with the criminal justice system — people on deferred sentences and ex-offenders."

RAP calls for prisons to be opened to public scrutiny and for relatives to have greater access to prisoners. It also advocates the abolition of the prison medical service, with medical treatment provided instead by National Health Service doctors.

"Changes in the grievance procedures within prisons have become necessary because of the failure of boards of visitors to act impartially in disputes between prisoners and staff."

"All prisoners should have independent legal representation in any dispute in which they become involved — their rights in this respect



abuses of factory legislation and the extensive reliance on motor vehicles. The pursuit of profit has always meant that the safety and welfare of ordinary people has been neglected and in addition it has created the social conditions in which people turn to criminal behaviour to achieve the goals which society has set for them. It is absurd to think of prison as something which reduces a risk in some areas of our lives, rather it is a menace in itself, an institution which habitually brutalises people and returns them to society far more embittered than when they went in."

RAP also refers to the effect that the dehumanising work demanded by the state of prison officers has on their attitudes and practices, and that a mere improvement in the working conditions of prison staff will not lead to change in this respect.

RAP's memorandum on prisons is available price 50p, from: Radical Alternatives to Prison, 104a Brackenbury Road, London W6. And it is well worth reading. For further information, the RAP Project Coordinator, Jerry Westall, can be contacted at (01)-748 3778.

ALEXEI KHAVIN (NEW LEFT OPPOSITION) ARRESTED

READERS interested in the emergence in the USSR of the 'New Left Opposition', reported on in our last issue, should note the arrest of another member of the group, Alexei Khavin, who was arrested on 19 April after refusing to give evidence against Aleksandr Skobov and Arkady Taurkov, members of the Leningrad commune arrested last year. Police searched him and took away his clothes at the police station during his absence from home, drugs were 'discovered' there and he is likely to be charged with drug offences, the maximum sentence for which is 10 years' imprisonment.

Alexei Khavin, who is 20 years old, had been put in a psychiatric hospital while still at school, for circulating the works of Kropotkin in 1977. Metro stations and Russian streets may bear Kropotkin's name, but anyone who reads him is obviously insane!

the present system, and the rule of the commodity. And of course into the realm of action based on this critique. For many May 68 symbolised the advances that have been made in the development of this critical consciousness, but also the problems we face in attempting to transform it into large-scale self-activity.

On the other hand, we must go even beyond the areas suggested by the new class analysis that I have just mentioned. For

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RAP points out that, contrary to the liberal image, Britain compares unfavourably with many other European countries as

of the value of a prison system is the sharpest indicator of the political direction which a society is taking."



JIMMY BOYLE



JENNY LACEY PROGRAMME—LBC
Tuesday 15 May — 10-11 pm (edited)

18

Jenny Lacey: With the publication this week of Radical Alternatives to Prison's submission to the May Inquiry, we have Jerry Westall, who works for Radical Alternatives to Prison, here now to outline the evidence that RAP submitted and to hear your reaction to it.

Initially when you were asked to submit evidence to the May Inquiry you refused—is that right? You've now submitted it—what changed your mind?

Jerry Westall: It wasn't anything quite so certain as a refusal, it was an inclination not to. But with the submissions by the NCCL and NACRO we realised the narrowness of the terms of reference were really being ignored by people who made submissions and we felt we could do the same. We don't have a part in running prison services, we're not involved in trying to assist the State in running its prisons. Our idea is to abolish prisons. We wanted to give our views in terms of how we felt about prison, for the general public as well as the May Inquiry.

JL: We'll be looking at the recommendations in just a moment but can I pick you up on what you've just said because I think that's one thing people will certainly want to talk about. You want to abolish prisons altogether? Yes?

JW: Long term yes.

JL: Altogether?

JW: I would like to see a society in which there is no prison. I recognise at the moment there are some violent and dangerous people who would probably need to be restrained for a reasonable period of time. Our view really is that if you decrease the prison population substantially—and I think that can be done without any risk to the general public—then you have much more time to consider the problems of the individuals who are dangerous and violent.

JL: You call yourselves Radical Alternatives to Prison. You presumably have some idea of the alternatives you would use on, for example, the people you've just mentioned. The violent and dangerous people who society wouldn't want wandering in the streets?

JW: Yes. At the moment there is a Unit in Barlinnie Prison where people who have long sentences are being treated in a very different way from the normal prison population. Jimmy Boyle has written a book about it—his experiences in it, in fact he's still there and we feel he should be released. He was a hardened criminal but he has been changed by the experience of this Unit.

JL: It is a unit within a prison?

JW: Yes. But it does show the sort of potential there is.

JL: So again when you talk about the abolition of prisons you're not thinking of saying that if someone commits a crime: "Well there, there, don't worry, off you go. There aren't any prisons there is nothing we can do about you." You are suggesting alternative ways of dealing with them and that there would be some kind of judgement made which would say: "this is what you have to go through, this is the programme you have to go through rather than go to prison.

JW: Yes. Other means of dealing with anti-social behaviour. Our idea of what is anti-social behaviour may not conform with what the State at the moment considers to be anti-social behaviour. There are certain things that you can get away with in our society, we tend to feel that perhaps people shouldn't get away with. There are other situations where we don't think people should be criminalised. Areas like drugs, people who are tramps, people who are mentally ill, practically any crime committed by women—generally speaking we feel these areas should be decriminalised and could be without a danger to the public. These are people who have got problems and they're not being sorted out by a prison sentence.

JL: Yet when you're saying we don't need prisons or we shouldn't have prisons because prisons have failed in some way

or may have even made the situation worse—or that you could do better...

JW: I think society could do better. The people could do better. I think prisons do fail. They fail in several respects. They don't succeed in rehabilitating a large number of people who go to prison. You can tell this by the recidivism, that's the return to prison by a large number of people. Depending on the age it's from 50% to 80% of people who go to prison return to prison. That seems to me a startlingly high figure. To get it into some sort of perspective Britain has got the biggest population of prison residents in Europe, per 100,000 of the population. For every four people in prison in Britain there's only one in prison in Holland. It's this sort of difference between one community and another that underlines the fact that you can reduce the prison population.

JL: Does that mean there are less people committing crimes in other European countries or do they send less of those who commit crimes to prison?

JW: If they do send them to prison it's for a much shorter term. Over 50% of those sent to prison in Holland have short prison sentences. Weeks or months. A similar figure for this country is 17%—instead of 50% in Holland.

JL: You're saying that the prison system doesn't work. Are you also saying you don't like it because it's inhumane?

JW: Yes. That as well. It doesn't work and it's inhumane. It's been described as organised vengeance and it's called justice. Justice seems to be a wrong word to describe a system that has failed to protect the public. Because people who go to prison come out far better crooks than when they went in—they've learnt a great deal inside. It's quite common for someone to be a failed crook having gone to prison and become much more successful as a result of the training received inside.

JL: We're going to get on now to talking about the recommendations in your report and the things which, given that we have to have prisons might possibly make life, I hesitate to say, easier but better for prisoners and I suggest you might be up against people who would say why should they have life any better—they deserve what they get. Now to get onto the main recommendations. There's been a lot of interest in your view that prisoners should be able to have a union. And also that they should be consulted, presumably through this union, about things like prison conditions and any proposed changes in penal policy. Now I would guess that there would be quite an outcry about that. Why do they need a union?

JW: Like any other union, to protect their members from the situation in which they find themselves. If a prisoner is beaten up in prison—as happened in Hull, as has been proved—there seems to be a need for some sort of means by which they can feel protected.

JL: Yes. I think there are all sorts of questions raised there. Can I just ask you very briefly to run through some of the other recommendations, the one's which you perhaps consider most important.

JW: The main point is to reduce the prison population and to build no more prisons. We would like to end prison secrecy, we don't want to see drugs used in prisons as a means of discipline or segregation units used as a means of control inside. This is the outline of the short term aim of our ideas. But abolition is the long term aim. We would like to see a smaller prison population and reduction in the number of prisons in this country. The prison population in Britain has increased since the war from about 15,000 to about 45,000. At the same time the crime rate has gone steadily up. In fact the crime rate in Holland and the crime rate in Britain have risen at the same time as they've had different penal policies.

JL: This demonstrates that neither of them, presumably, is doing very well.

JW: No, I don't think they're working very well but at least in Holland there are proportionately fewer people in prison.

JL: Just finally on the recommendations. One of the other things which I picked up out of that was the greater access by relatives—people visiting in prison. Is this something you feel to be important or not?

JW: All we'd like to do is point out that prison is destructive of family life. It punishes the wives and sometimes the husbands of people who are inside and it punishes the children. This cannot be seen as just, because the wives and the children have not committed any offence. The people who are in prison have committed the offence, they have been deprived of their liberty.

JL: Rita, hello.

Rita: Hello. Although I think this idea is a very good one, it wouldn't be so much of a deterrent to people. Because at the moment the people who are contemplating crimes are taking into consideration that they could go to prison. It is to a certain extent a deterrent, but I think that if this plan were implemented then people would simply go ahead.

JW: I don't think prison does deter a lot of people at the moment. Those who go to prison when they come out often commit crimes again. In fact they've been encouraged to be criminals by the prison sentence they've had. They've been given training by the other residents in prison. They've been made dependent rather than independent. It's very difficult for someone who has been in prison, with a prison record, to get a job afterwards.

JL: And yet we're talking now about people who have committed crimes. What about those that Rita talks about who may consider it but who may say "No, because I simply couldn't stand being sent to prison" and that's what keeps you on the straight and narrow. Do you not think there's an argument for that?

JW: I think this brings us to the wider aspect of RAP which I haven't mentioned really. This is our attitude towards class society. Where we are different from penal reform groups is that we take a look at society as a whole not just at prison. We see prison as part of the class structure, which is maintaining an unequal society. We would point to things like inequality, acquisitive values, unemployment and poverty as some of the causes of crime. We would go much further than just saying someone has offended. We would ask questions about the causes of anti-social behaviour.

JL: Rita, do you want to come back on any of that?

Rita: Yes. I'd like just to ask you, you've been concentrating more on rehabilitation than punishment?

JW: That's right, yes.

Rita: But then doesn't it seem as though criminals, people who commit crime will be treated as children in a sense. They'll be treated as 'perhaps you didn't know better or we want to teach you better', instead of being reprimanded for what they've done. Some people might have done it because they wanted to not because their backgrounds were unfortunate or some other reason.

JW: Take the example of the Newham Alternatives Project, where people have been given deferred sentences. They can go to our project there and they are encouraged to face up to the issues of why they're committing various offences. What is the cause? Help is provided. Discussion is provided. This is amongst other people, some of whom are also offenders, who are part of the project and others who are working full-time with the project. The idea is not a soft option, it's sometimes very difficult for people to face up to exactly why they have committed various offences. But we also point to the wider things: for instance, it's more serious in our society it seems to steal a car than to kill somebody with it. We're not being protected from the motor vehicle in British society. More people in Northern Ireland have been killed by motor vehicles than have been killed by bombs in the last few years. So there are factors in society that are a danger to the public and not a great deal is being done about them.

19 JL: Rita, thank you. Sylvia, hello.

Sylvia: Hello. In a way I agree with what he's saying and in a way I don't. I believe that when a person goes into prison the rougher the treatment is the more, when he comes out, he won't want to go back in. You know what I mean?

JL: Do you speak from any kind of personal experience Sylvia or not?

Sylvia: No, but there are so many people going into prison and coming out. If the treatment they were getting in there was hard. . . .

JL: You think it should be harder than it is at the moment?

Sylvia: Yes, but they shouldn't stay in there that long. If they get a rough treatment in there I think that would stop them going back in again.

JL: What do you mean by rough treatment?

Sylvia: I think they have it too easy these days and I think that if the treatment they are getting is not so comfortable then they won't go back in.

JW: I think Sylvia's been watching 'Porridge'. I think a lot of people have seen 'Porridge' on TV and think that's how it is. In fact prisoners will tell you that it's not like that. It's not easy in prison, it's not pleasant, it's very unpleasant to be in prison. The basic deprivation of liberty is just part of it and that's pretty bad. But being locked in a cell, 2 or 3 to a cell, one toilet for 80 people, something of this sort. The general conditions of prisons are not easy. The idea that if you're rougher and tougher with people they'll suddenly improve is just not born out by the facts.

JL: No. Sylvia's not saying they'll improve. She's just saying they'll have such a bad time they won't want to go back under any circumstances whatsoever and that's what will frighten them off committing more offences.

JW: It depends how inhuman you're prepared to be. If you're going to cut people's hands off they won't steal again that's for sure. But what sort of civilised values are you going to try and maintain in society? How far are you prepared to go in order to uphold what you think are civilised values?

JL: I think it depends very much what your fundamental ideas are about what you expect it to do. If you expect it to reform that's different. But I don't think Sylvia does. I think all she's expecting is that it will be so horrible that no-one will want to go back there. Don, hello.

Don: Jerry, I understand what you're saying. I don't believe in capital punishment. . . I don't think it can be enforced especially with terrorism. Having said that I totally disagree with you on what you're saying on prison. I suppose I could go back to service training, the last thing I ever wanted was the glass house in the army and I kept myself in line with that. I've got a 16 year old son and a 14 year old son and they're at the age when they're very impressionable. They go out in the streets at night. They go to youth clubs and different things like that. They themselves will admit that they have a fear. It is a fear of being arrested and going to prison. It comes back to: Is it a deterrent? I think the answer is yes—prison is a deterrent but I also think to make it a deterrent it has got to be rough and tough. Let's face it, if a man steals off a firm somewhere in the region of £2-£3 million, I'm not the kind of person who can say he got away with it so far and then he got caught.

JW: The thing about this is that there's one law for the rich and another for the poor. I think there was some bank or something (Keyser-Ulman) that made £21 million. The Great Train Robbers were involved with a sum less than a quarter of that and those people were given 20 year sentences. This is where we'd look at society and say is this fair? Is it a fair and equal society in the first place? The only secure basis you're going to have to a society is if you have social equality and social justice. And there isn't any social justice when one group of the population that's wealthy can get away with things like that and another group commits a robbery, gets

caught and gets long sentences. This is the basic unfairness and injustice of the system.

JL: The only thing which I think was important about what Don is saying is whether the only reason that people behave themselves is that they're terrified of going to prison or because they've been taught by somebody throughout the years how to behave and what's morally right and what's morally wrong and they don't need to go round in terror of going to prison and that's the only thing that keeps them on the straight and narrow. Don, thanks.

JL: Ernie, hello.

Ernie: Hello. My first reaction to people like your guest tonight is how much profit are they going to get out of it. I'm very cynical about these people.

JL: What do you mean by that?

Ernie: Well, they write books. . . .

JL: What do you mean, they write books?

Ernie: They're expecting to make money out of it.

JL: What do you mean they're expecting to make money out of it? Never heard anything more ridiculous in all my life.

Ernie: I bet your fellow has written a book.

JW: I haven't actually. Good idea though you've put in my mind Ernie.

JL: Ernie, let's get things straight. This is about an enquiry into the prison services.

Ernie: Can I ask the feller if his family have been involved in a mugging or a murder?

JW: No, fortunately they haven't. I think you are a bit biased if you think I'm into this for my own gain. It's like saying you're only interested in ringing up because you want to hear the sound of your own voice on the radio. I wouldn't imply that. I would say that you rang up to talk about an issue.

JL: Can I also say, Ernie, that I think what you're about to suggest is that the only people who are qualified to talk about prisoners rights and about prisons are those who have suffered at the hands of criminals. Now I think that's perhaps an interesting point and I wonder how many people held a certain view and maybe changed it after an experience that had happened to them. Are you saying that something has happened to a member of your family Ernie?

Ernie: Yes I am. My brother-in-law was murdered for £400. Shot through the head. Now there are too many good people in the world to worry about the likes of the baddens that ought to have their heads chopped off or their arms chopped off for thieving and the rest of it.

JL: Have your views changed at all? Were you perhaps more tolerant towards prisoners before?

Ernie: No I wasn't. I've always believed that murderers and thieves ought to be dealt with in a summary way. Murderers ought to be put down and thieves ought to be eliminated from society by having their hands chopped off so they can't do it again.

JW: I'm very sorry Ernie had this experience with his brother-in-law being murdered. I think it's a terrible thing that's been done but the majority of prisoners are not in that category. Perhaps 5% are in the category of dangerous or violent individuals. The vast majority of people are in that category he mentioned who have stolen. I think there's a very big difference between stealing someone's money and killing someone.

JL: Samuel, hello.

Samuel: A propos your decision that you'd like a trade union for prisoners. Do you mean a special trade union for murderers, a special trade union for rapists, a special trade union for child bashers? I know I'm being a little sarcastic. There are so many people concerned not with the victim but with the aggressor. Since capital punishment was abolished

20 there have been more murders taking place than ever before. It may well be that we don't help criminals to cease activities if we put them in prison but what do you do with them?

JW: You try and do something that is going to be effective. We are also concerned with the victims—we are not just concerned with the people who are in prison. We don't approve of the acts that people have committed which have injured people or hurt them or when money has been stolen. We don't approve of that, we just want to do something that is going to assist the individuals who have committed the anti-social acts to change. And prison doesn't do that. Prison just punishes.

JL: In a sense it's just a different way of looking at the same aim. You're obviously trying to help victims because you're trying to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

JW: The present system doesn't help victims. If you take the issue of motor vehicles in society. There's a greater chance of being killed by motor vehicles than by being hit by an axe or something like that. We live with risk and danger in our society from all sorts of things, whether it's at work, where you can have an accident or whether its insufficient protection against people who pollute the country. Basically these

One out of every four readers of this magazine will contract cancer, and one in five will die from it. Treatment procedures have barely improved in more than 30 years of massive research efforts. Yet the disease is eminently preventable: if its fundamental mechanisms remain to be unravelled, its immediate causation through a handful of environmental carcinogens (cancer-inducing substances) is now beyond dispute. Regulate those carcinogens, and screen each new chemical and drug, and the material basis of cancer will wither away.

This was the message propounded forcefully by Professor Samuel Epstein, in London last week for a symposium on the Politics of Cancer sponsored by two unions, GMWU and ASTMS. Epstein, who is Professor of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the School of Public Health, University of Illinois, is a recognized authority on cancer. He has been closely associated with the rise of the health and safety movement in the US, serving on several Congressional committees.

Epstein insists that cancer is preventable and that the obstacles to defeating it are not medical, but blatantly economic and political. In his explosive book, 'The Politics of Cancer'—yet to find a publisher in Britain—he accuses the chemical and pharmaceutical industries of cynical distortion, suppression and outright destruction of data on the cancer-causing properties of their products. It is a case of short-term profit interests running rampant over the longer term interests of the community, workforce and even the industries themselves.

problems are there because of the profit motive. It would be quite feasible for our society to have much safer motor vehicles. To have motor vehicles that wouldn't pollute the atmosphere with lead. The reason these things are not done is because it would be less profitable for the motor manufacturers to produce vehicles of this sort.

OFFICIAL STATISTICS 1977 Great Britain 6612 killed and 342,000 injured on the roads. An increase of 2½% over 1975. 5-12 year old casualties increased most.

Over 5 million motor vehicle offences in England and Wales in 1977. One offence for every four motor vehicles.

1975: 573 children under 14 died on the roads of England and Wales. 88 children lost their lives as a result of murders.

Pedestrian Association.

JL: David, hello.

David: Jerry, I don't want to be personal but have you ever yourself served a sentence in prison?

JW: No I haven't.

David: You haven't. So your experience is second-hand as it were?

JW: Yes.

David: What do you think can be done about people like George Davis who was freed after a very public clamour. Or his family and relations who made a great nuisance of themselves to get him freed. And he's back inside very very quickly having attempted to commit a very vicious bank raid.

JW: What can I say about George Davis? It's a problem isn't it? We've got lots of problems and obviously his life has presented difficulties for a number of people who have come into contact with him. I don't think he's going to be helped particularly or anyone else is going to be helped by giving him a long prison sentence. I don't know if he was guilty or not in the original offence. He may not have committed the earlier offence. I think if people felt he was innocent they were quite right to campaign in the way they did.

David: This is really the problem. We've got very many vicious professional criminals who turn to crime as a profession. They look at it as a way of earning their living and when these people are set free in society it's the poor old policeman—and I'm not a policeman myself—that's got to face these individuals to get them back inside. It does seem to me quite honestly that—I'm quite sure you've got very good intentions and I think the road to hell is paved with such things—surely to goodness there are individuals in society who are dangerous people and we've got to accept and face this fact.

JW: Yes. I just feel there's a much smaller number than you may think because the vast majority of those in prison are not in that category. Of the 45,000 people in prison, 4 or 5 thousand possibly would be in a category of those who need to be restrained. The vast majority don't need to be in prison. Look at people who are in prison: there are over 500 people in prison now who are mentally ill. There are people who have committed acts like smoking cannabis. I'm going to visit somebody in prison tomorrow whose inside for 6 years for smoking cannabis. There are tramps in prison, people who have got nowhere to stay and this is the reason they are in prison. There are a large number of women in prison who are essentially prostitutes who have been exploited by society and are being punished further for being exploited. All these sorts of people are also within the prison population and I think they shouldn't be inside.

JL: I think David has raised something which is pretty important. Which is the person who views crime almost as a profession. It is his way or her way of making a living. Now it would seem that any idea of rehabilitation isn't going to convince someone that if they can make a lot of money very quickly—that there's going to be any better way of doing it than going back to crime.

JW: The best way of making money is to join the system and to be an entrepreneur and to tax dodge and fiddle and have a second home somewhere else and three or four cars and be in a tax haven. That's the way to really make money out of this society and the successful people make a lot of money.

They never get punished for that. Or very seldom do they ever get punished for it. In fact they are conning society, they are depriving society of income that is rightfully the society's. I think they are the people who we should really be concerned about. We're particularly interested in not just the crimes of the poor but the crimes of the powerful. And the crimes of the powerful are the ones people get away with.

JL: Now are you saying that it's all right they can continue getting away with it so long as the other people can too? Are you saying that you want them punished?

JW: I think there should be means. . . a system in which restraints are provided for those people who are exploiting society—yes.

Frances: I really want to say a word in support of Jerry. I'm really pleased to hear someone talk some sense about prison. A friend of mine's husband has been in and out of prison for years. Prison hasn't taught him a thing, in fact it's made him worse. When he comes out of prison he can't get a job. He's back into the old crowd. He gets back into trouble. He goes back to prison. He gets totally demoralised. The conditions are really lousy. They're teaching him nothing. I can't agree with you more and I'd like to hear more about your organisation. I'd be very pleased to help. I feel really excited about what you've been saying.

JW: Good. I feel it's well worth while just for that alone. We have an office. . . address, telephone number.

Frances: In what ways do you think people can help your organisation?

JW: Our basic thing is to provide education if you like. Social education about the question of prison. As we've seen tonight people have got what we'd call misconceptions about prison. They don't realise how destructive prison is. We want to talk to people mostly. We want money of course. We want people to join us in our organisation by becoming members and we want people to set up their own radical alternatives. Like what was done in Newham and people are trying elsewhere. We want to have alternatives that will include people who have been offenders—ex-offenders. This provides difficulties when we're trying to get money for such projects.

JL: Don't you find there are difficulties in getting ex-offenders to help you? Because there are a lot of people who come out of prison and want to forget the whole experience or to try and go straight and they're not necessarily interested in helping other people.

JW: Yes. If there's anybody inside listening tonight, if you feel fed up with what's happening to you don't forget afterwards because it's important for those people you leave behind that you struggle when you come out.

JL: Lorna, hello.

Lorna: I've got two things I'd like to ask. One is a very quick one. I feel very hurt actually because as a car driver I've got guiltier and guiltier and I've thought we're all potential murderers when we're driving about.

JW: You are Lorna, so am I.

Lorna: I'm not. Because I don't go out in my car to mow people down. I go out in my car to get from A to B. And I do it as safely as possible. I know in what frame of mind I drive my car in. I'm not saying every driver's safe. But what I really want to say is if I sound very barbaric when I'm glad we've got

prisons and I can go to bed knowing that potential murderers are behind bars.

JL: Not all of them are.

Lorna: No. But I am saying the police are doing their jobs to the best of their abilities. And they are putting as many people behind bars as they are capable of doing. And to me, I'm glad I've got a copper living up the road doing his job. Am I barbaric when I say to myself that I hope my children never go to prison and I do as much educating before they ever get to be potential thieves, killers or anything? And I think really the emphasis is not you letting them out, you should be paying more attention on going into schools like the police do now. The police go into our school on a regular basis. They say to the kids: "this is wrong, this right. This is what we're trying to do. We're not against you, we're for you." And this is what our local coppers do. Am I barbaric?

JW: I don't think you're barbaric but I would just make one or two points. I have a friend who went to prison in the last war for refusing to kill. There is an instance not so long ago when a policeman is supposed to have been involved in the killing of an individual who was demonstrating. I don't know if all the rights and the wrongs are quite clear. When it comes to killing, the State is the number one killer in society. When it comes to nuclear weapons it is the State which threatens to wipe out millions of people.

JL: Now Lorna says she sleeps better in her bed at night because she knows the police are trying to put as many people as possible behind bars. And I think probably, in a sense, that is the most important argument against you if you like—the most important thing which people would say—this is why we don't agree with you. We want to be safe.

JW: Well, you see I think the police are maintaining an unequal society. I think that's what they're paid to do by the State. I feel a much securer basis, a much better way of going to bed at night and sleeping soundly, would be social equality and social justice where people had fair shares and there would be no need for people to steal from others. Now, that's a vastly different type of society from the one we've got now—it's one in which there is a redistribution of wealth on a vast scale and this is only going to take place with major changes in people's views and attitudes. At the moment this doesn't look at all likely.

JL: But people who go out and steal don't do so simply because they want to come up perhaps to the level of other people. They do so very often to steal huge sums of money money which would set them up for the rest of their lives.

JW: I think people steal because they get rich quick. This is the sort of society in which this sort of activity is encouraged. We live in an acquisitive society in which acquisition of goods is encouraged by all sorts of means—by television, by the media, even by LBC.

JL: We'll leave that there. I shan't challenge you on that one. I want to talk to more people. Lorna, you're not barbaric, don't worry. Mike, hello.

Mike: I think your speaker there has made some very good points but I think unfortunately he's compromising his argument from his evident political bias. And I think it is sad that in his position representing people in prison, that he should be speaking with such an obvious political bias. Because there's a lot of truth in what he says and I think a lot of people who are listening are going to deny that there's any truth in it. Because they immediately hear the bias. I recently read a case where there was a kid of 16, his girlfriend got insulted by a teacher and he went home and got his brother's shotgun and he went into the school and blasted a few holes in the ceiling. Now I don't know if he had a criminal record or anything like that but this kid was sentenced to 7 years in prison. It seemed to me that was a very foolish sentence and a classic example of where our legal system goes wrong. Now that boy when he comes out is most probably going to be a hardened criminal. There must have been a better alternative for that boy than prison.

JW: I'm sure you're right on that Mike and I feel the first point you made is a very important one about political bias. I do recognise that this is something that is said about our organisation and it would be said about me. In fact there is no way out of it. There is no other way of explaining how you can abolish prisons but by talking in a political way about vast political changes that are required. If you're going to get to the end that we have in mind—the sort of society in which prisons are abolished—you have to talk about political changes and these are things that do stir people and I do recognise that this does cut us off from a certain number.

JL: Terry, hello.

Terry: Jerry. It's nice to hear someone talk a bit of sense for a change. I've just come out of prison at the beginning of April. Out of Wandsworth. And you've had several calls on the line to you talking about the rougher and tougher it is for people inside prison the more of a deterrent it will be for them when they get out. Because I know myself, I've been in prison three times, only short sentences. But I've always come out feeling very bitter, very anti-authority and just generally ready to go out and get at it again. So that rough and tough thing—all they do to you in prison is dehumanise you, just treat you like rubbish most of the time. As far as rehabilitation is concerned it doesn't exist in prison. You're just there to be locked away for a prescribed period of time.

JL: Terry, can I ask you very quickly are you at all convinced that rehabilitation could work for you?

Terry: Not now because I'm 28 years old but I think when I was about 14 or 15 when I first started getting into trouble. . .

JL: Terry, sorry we have to leave it there. Thanks. . .

FROM AN EX-PRISONER

Although I had heard of RAP during the course (of god knows which sentence) it wasn't until I reached ***** Prison that a welfare officer suggested I get in touch with you. He had to give me yours and PROPs address outside of the gates - because it is a disciplinary offence to be caught with either in your cell.

Naturally my own experiences inform me that prison is not the answer, but for the life of me I cannot think of an alternative.

What really made up my mind to have a bash at reform/alternative - was the way I saw sexual offenders treated in ;;;; gaol. It was bad enough knowing my fellow inmates attacked such prisoners, but the staff have no excuse, nor the Governor or doctors for 'blind eyeing' the beatings.

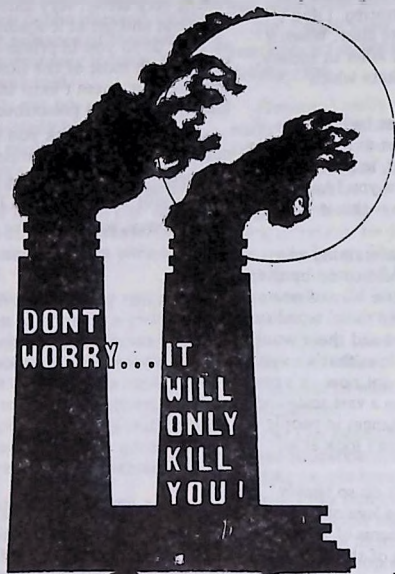
Man deserves better than that.

(Name, address and names of prisons withheld for obvious reasons).



GUY FAWKES

The only person to enter Parliament with honest intentions



PRISON VISITING

There are over 40,000 prisoners and only about 600 Prison Visitors. Anyone between 21 and 70 can become a Prison Visitor by writing to the Governor of the nearest prison. A formal application is dealt with by the Home Office and requires at least two references.

The association between a prisoner and Prison Visitor is entirely voluntary and the Prison Visitors Association can advise and discuss their. The General Secretary is Mrs A McKenna, 47 Hartington Street, Bedford. Those wishing to visit Wormwood Scrubs can contact the local group via this office.

CARDIFF PRISONERS' PLAYGROUP

Every Saturday morning at Cardiff Prison there is an unusual and very successful playgroup session.

For the past few months prison officers, their wives and a group of prisoners have been running a playgroup for a group of mentally handicapped children.

The scheme has been very successful, with at least one of the prisoner/helpers keen to continue working with the playgroup after his release. There is also a waiting list of 50 more men who want to help. Mr Thomas, the assistant governor who runs the scheme, is very aware of the tightrope he is walking with an experimental scheme of this kind and is anxious to stress that while the whole point is the provision of a worthwhile play session for the children, "we must in no way interfere with the normal running of the prison. All the work is voluntary and given in our free time. The security of the prison is of paramount importance and we can't take any risks at all."

Other prisoners at Cardiff are involved in making and repairing toys for the playgroup as well as furnishing for a local children's hospital.

Further information from Brian Thomas, the Assistant Governor at Cardiff Prison.

Below is a short extract from Stan Cohen's preface to The NAP Report, to be available later this year.

In conclusion, then, how might we finally try to evaluate NAP? By applying the sort of criteria I have suggested—or others like them—we can surely say that the project turned out as a reasonable vindication of its founders' aims. 'Success' is always a difficult matter to judge. It must be admitted that using the formal criterion of the prevention of further offences, the project's record was not especially impressive. About a third of the main research group were convicted during their deferred sentence and 56.8% had been reconvicted after the end of their sentence. This is no better or worse than for comparable terms of custody or non-custodial schemes like community service orders.

For other considerations of 'success' we have to return to the comparison between short term humanitarian reforms and long term political objectives. There seems to me no need for RAP to be apologetic about its 'early idealism'. Nor should it downgrade its success in creating what it called a 'small cell of humane values' within the system—a gap in provisions through which projects of uncertain reputation (like NAP) can occasionally sneak'. As long as such cells and gaps exist, there is every reason in the short run for projects like NAP to continue filling them.

Such projects though, have a limited life: they are always dependent on the patronage and whims of the official system and they must also face the inherent paradox that the more successful they become, the more likely they are to lose their radical and experimental flavour and be bought off by the system. To admit these limitations, though, is not to justify doing nothing. Projects like these should be set up—then their organisers should know when to self destruct and move (like a guerilla army) into some other part of the system.

While its immediate justification may be to fulfil short term needs, each project must ultimately be judged in terms of its long term political effects on the system. It is difficult in advance to decide which reforms are—in Mathiesen's terms—'positive reforms' and hence undesirable because they prop up the system, and which are 'negating reforms' and hence desirable because they expose the contradictions in the system. The NAP story cannot in itself answer this question. It does, however, show the possibilities of achieving genuinely humane as well as potentially negating reforms with the most limited resources.



FIRE AT NAP

Nap was set on fire by person or persons unknown (?) on Monday 21st May. The back two rooms and roof to the toilet were destroyed, the kitchens were made 'pretty messy' and upstairs is unusable due to smoke damage. Newham Alternatives Project is pressing the Council for alternative accommodation and tell us that they 'may have to operate at half cock for some time'.





Prisons are closed institutions in every sense of the word. They operate behind an apparatus of absolute secrecy. The Home Office are totally responsible for every aspect of confinement. This includes the physical and mental health of the prisoners. Behind bars the prisoner has no access of right to his or her general practitioner, to a specialist or to a psychiatrist. The inmate reports sick to the medical officer (Doctor) and is prescribed medication. If he is dissatisfied with the medical care he is unable to seek outside medical attention. One exception exists in the case of a prisoner being a party to legal proceedings where a medical opinion is specified according to Rule 37(8). In practice such circumstances are rare and we know of one case only where this was successfully used.

The Medical Officer (of which there are 84 full-time and 98 part-time) is an employee of the Home Office. This dual allegiance—to the State—and to the patient, as one psychiatrist has pointed out¹, can only result in activities which largely favour the State. It is such practices with which we are concerned and which triggered off the formation of the Committee.

During the early months of 1977 PROP (The National Prisoners Movement) had been receiving information about widespread drugging in Gartree prison hospital. The drug which was constantly reported was largactyl (a major tranquiliser used in the treatment of schizophrenia and of notoriety in the Soviet Union for the treatment of Soviet dissidents). Smuggled letters from inmates² detained in the Prison Hospital in Gartree reported side effects of the drug as a zombie-like appearance, glazed expression and total lack of motor co-ordination. Repeatedly the Home Office denied such allegations of drugging. Under persistent pressure however a Home Office statement confirmed reports that one prisoner, George Ince, had been drugged and placed in solitary confinement. Such admissions are rare and under no circumstances will the Home Office admit that drugs are being given for purposes of control.

The breakthrough of evidence occurred when an article by a prison doctor writing in the restricted *Prison Medical Journal* was leaked to the *Sunday Times* (22 October 1978). This admitted categorically the use of drugs at Albany Prison for disciplinary non-medical reasons.

Currently on record we have cases falling into the following four categories:

1. Those concerning failure of medical diagnosis. We have two cases concerning short-term prisoners where initial failure of diagnosis or misdiagnosis produced irreversible deterioration of their medical condition. Peter Lannigan's Hodgkin's disease was not treated whilst in custody. On release, however, he underwent major surgery since his condition was in an advanced stage. The other case concerned a condition of lung cancer which was diagnosed as TB whilst the man was in Brixton. His condition deteriorated to such an extent he was taken to Kings Cross Hospital where he was treated for cancer of the lung and within 48 hours had a lung removed.
2. Cases of overdrugging in which people previously of stable mental health are given massive doses of major drugs used in the treatment of psychoses. Ben Phillips spent six months in Feltham Borstal in 1972. He was prescribed doses of major tranquilisers; largactyl and modecate, barbiturates and antidepressants for no other reason but for his part in a demonstration in the workshop.

- 25 3. Cases where treatment is an integral part of the sentence invoked but not provided in prison. We have two such cases on file.
4. Cases of life sentence prisoners who have committed sexual offences and been given hormone treatment on the understanding they would be considered for parole. This raises the ethical issue of consent given under doubtful circumstances. The *Prison Medical Journal* reported the use of such drugs for experimental purposes. (*The Sunday Times*, 12 October 1978).

The standards of medical care in prison fall abysmally short of National Health Service practice. The society of Radiographers recently affiliated to our Committee and they are appalled at the low standard of radiographic facilities and training in prisons. Whilst training for radiographers within the NHS is two years, that for the Prison Officer is a mere two to four weeks. Yet the Prison Officers carry out the same tasks as their counterparts and are ill-equipped to do so. The dangers of such lack of expertise are apparent.

In order to minimise such abuses we are campaigning for the abolition of the present Prison Medical Service and advocate a system whereby the prisoner is treated by a doctor of his/her choice within the National Health Service. Our other major aim is the collection of information on general medical care in prisons and Borstals including the use of drugs and other psychiatric methods and we welcome any information however trifling.

References

- 1 Paul Bowden *Ethical Aspects of the Role of the Medical Officers in Prison* Medical Services for Prisoners—Day Conference Howard League and Kings Fund (1978).
- 2 *The Times* 7 February 1977.

DRUGS COMMONLY USED IN PSYCHIATRY

In the course of its work in attempting to find out the true extent of drugging in our prisons, The *Medical Committee Against the Abuse of Prisoners by Drugging* has encountered many difficulties. One such difficulty has been that many prisoners who have claimed that they have been drugged have been unable to stipulate exactly what drugs they were given. The prison medical service is notoriously reluctant to disclose medical records—even to an ex-prisoner's GP—and most drugs in prison are given in the form of liquid tots, which means a prisoner is often completely ignorant of the identity of the drug or combination of drugs he is being given. One possible means of discovering which drugs have been administered is by knowing what forms they can be administered in, and the side-effects of various drugs. Below, we carry a list of drugs commonly used in psychiatry. We hope that this list will be of some use to those prisoners, their families and friends who are attempting to identify more accurately the drug treatment they are receiving. In this issue we deal with major and some minor tranquilisers, and in the next issue we will go on to deal with anti-depressants, sedatives and rigidity and tremor controllers.

It should be noted that the side effects mentioned can, but do not necessarily, occur, and few people would experience many of these. Mild side effects are fairly common, but serious ones are rare.

Official Name	Trade Name	Minor Side Effects	Serious Side Effects
<i>Major Tranquilisers</i>			
Chlorpromazine hydrochloride	Largactil	Drowsiness Dry mouth Nasal Stuffiness Drop in blood pressure Rashes Rashes brought on by sunlight Weight increase Lactation	Jaundice (due to effect on liver) Blood disorders Loss of sex drive Impotence Muscle stiffness Shakes Dribbling Zombie-like appearance Restlessness
White sugar-coated tablets Syrup is brown Strong syrup is orange			
Thioridazine	Melleril	Drowsiness Dizziness Dry mouth Nasal stuffiness Lactation Weight gain	Impotence
White sugar-coated tablets Suspension-opaque cream Syrup is clear orange			
Perphenazine	Fentazin	Drowsiness Dry mouth	Muscle stiffness Shakes Dribbling Zombie-like appearance Restlessness
White sugar-coated tablets Syrup is light green, peppermint flavoured			
Promazine hydrochloride	Sparine	Drowsiness Drop in blood pressure Skin rashes	Blood disorders
Tablets yellow, orange or red sugar coated (depending on strength) Suspension—yellow—pineapple flavoured			
Trifluoperazine	Stelazine	Lassitude Drowsiness Dizziness Insomnia Dry mouth Blurring of vision Muscular weakness Drop in blood pressure Lactation rashes	Muscle stiffness Shakes Dribbling Zombie-like appearance Restlessness Jaundice (due to effect on liver) Blood disorders
Blue sugar-coated tablets Clear colourness capsules Opaque yellow-capped containing hundreds and thousands Syrup—clear pale yellow—peach flavoured Concentrate—pale yellow Syrup—bitter, numbing after taste			
Haloperidol	Serenace		Muscle stiffness Shakes Dribbling Zombie-like appearance Restlessness
Red, pale pink, or white tablets depending on strength Liquid—clear colourless, given as drops			
Fluphenazine Flupenthixol	Modecate Depixol (these can be given orally, or as an injection, with a prolonged action)	Drowsiness Lethargy Blurred vision Dry mouth Drop in blood pressure Lactation Skin rashes	Muscle stiffness Shakes Dribbling Zombie-like appearance Restlessness Jaundice
Pericyazine	Neulactil	Drowsiness Drop in blood pressure Fainting attacks Sweating	Muscle stiffness Shakes Dribbling Zombie-like appearance Restlessness Jaundice
Yellow tablets Syrup is green			

Minor Tranquillisers

Diazepam
White, yellow or blue tablets depending on strength
Syrup is pink, raspberry flavoured

Valium

27

Drowsiness

Unsteady gait

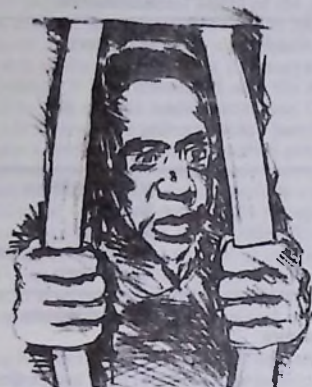
Chlordiazepoxide hydrochloride

Librium

Drowsiness

Unsteady gait

Green and yellow capsules, or black and green capsules, or green tablets, depending on strength
No syrup



Black people in Britain's jails

As a result of our contact to the *Leveller* the May 1979 issue of that magazine published a section of the manifesto of the Prisoners' Liberation Front, describing it under the heading 'Blacks Against Prison Tyranny'. We have the full text of the 9 page document from the PLF Collective and although RAP does not agree with a number of the sentiments expressed in the manifesto we are glad to know it is being publicised elsewhere. Since Wadi Williams, a prisoner in Wormwood Scrubs, has been named by both the *Leveller* and other papers as one of the authors of the manifesto it is appropriate to remark on his great courage in agreeing to make his own contribution known. As a black prisoner who will not be released until 1981 everyone realises the risks Wadi has taken to provide authenticity to the manifesto. It is thus important to have the full manifesto in print

To give you an idea:

"In recent months we have witnessed a somewhat tentative effort to give the entire prison struggle an ideological coherency; perhaps the most glaring omission in this effort was the absence of a statement by we, the most affected—we, the past and present inmates of these institutions, inhabitants of this nebulous terrain, where the remote wishes, of remote individuals, formulated in remote places are enforced. We are daily battered and bruised by a tragically unfeeling system, whose sense of awareness appears to have been stunted and caught up in a 19th century time-warp. We who are in desperate and urgent need of a new human environment are subjected to those who pontificate in comfort as to the finer points of change, we have for the longest of whiles, been without a voice. To remedy this painful and basic flaw, we the inmates of these penal institutions have formed 'The Prisoner Liberation Front'. A movement which we hope will

be our—the dispossessed, lumpen proletariat's—contribution to the developing struggle. The class bias of these institutions is now an unquestionable fact. The disproportionately high numbers of blacks and working class inmates attest to the openly racist and class orientation of the current structure of oppression. Furthermore as the economic and class contradictions mature and sharpen, the establishment is finding and using the penal institution and its rubber stamp the judiciary as a most effective arm in its arsenal of repression—thus silencing, isolating and of course suppressing the rising consciousness."

Professor F Gambino
Comitato Contra la Repressione - 7 Aprile
Facolta di Scienze Politiche
Via del Santo 26
35100 Padova
ITALY.

We (lecturers at Thames Polytechnic, London) wish to express our sense of amazement and scandal at the detention by the Italian State of leading lecturers, trade unionists, feminists and journalists since 7th April.

The fact they can be detained legally without trial for up to four years; and that the President himself has congratulated their arrest before they were formally charged; and that part of the evidence against them consists of their *writings*; all this, makes the whole affair appear a grotesque hybrid between Franz Kafka and Senator Joseph McCarthy. Should we now await the public burning of these books?

To defend such actions in the name of democracy and moral values is an insult to our intelligence. We condemn the arrests unreservedly; we call for the immediate release of all those imprisoned; and we demand a complete halt to any further conspiracy against those who disagree with the historic compromise policy.

Twelve names.

Campaign Address (UK)
The Italy '79 Campaign,
c/o Rising Free Bookshop,
Box 135,
182 Upper Street,
London N1.

THE ITALY '79 COMMITTEE

Since April 7th the Italian security police and judiciary have set in motion a series of arrests of communist militants belonging to the movement of Left-wing opposition to the 'Historic Compromise'. Those arrested include workers, journalists of the Left press and free radio stations, militants in the women's movement; and, in addition, some of the best known intellectual and political proponents of the "autonomous Left movement" since the 1960s—including almost the entire teaching staff of the Faculty of Political Science at Padova University. So far 23 arrests have been made but more are announced.

The arrests have been made on the charges of (1) involvement in armed struggle", and (2) more broadly, involvement in "subversive associations"—charges brought under Fascist articles still remaining in the Penal Code. These 'associations' are defined to include their involvement in/alleged responsibility for the politics and the actions of the movement of Left autonomy since the 1960s. No precise legal evidence has been produced. The charges have not been substantiated—thereby making the task of the defence impossible. On the other hand, they have been subjected to a 'pre-trial' by an orchestrated campaign of personal denigration, lies, insinuation and 'psycho-smear' in the Press and TV, backed by all the major parties, and with the personal blessing of [socialist] President Pertini.

It is clear that the supposed 'discovery' of those guilty of the Moro affair—for which there is no factual basis, as we shall show in later bulletins—is nothing more than a grotesque frame-up, a sensational 'witch-hunt'. The specific aim is a further stage in the marginalisation and criminalisation of all Left opposition outside the official party system. This playing of the law-and-order card on the eve of the difficult passage of the coming elections serves the interests of the Establishment (both Right and Left) extremely well (See George Armstrong, *The Guardian*, 18th April 1979).

State frame-ups of this kind have already been used to incriminate the Left in Italy over the past decade. In the notorious Valpreda case, for example, an anarchist was imprisoned for years on a bombing charge for which 3 Fascists were eventually found guilty. The aim of this new action is to shore up the political system by means of a qualitatively new German-style strategy of repression, closing all space for independent Left politics and dissent, criminalising all forms of struggle and social opposition under a general label of 'criminal delinquency'.

Those arrested are 'on trial' only for their opinions, for their politics. It is 'books' that are being cited by prosecutor Calogero as 'key evidence' in the case. (Some of these writings are shortly to be published in Britain). This marks a new phase of attack on freedoms guaranteed by the Italian constitution, a legitimisation of arbitrary State repression under the cynical pretext of the 'defence of democratic institutions'.

The ITALY '79 COMMITTEE has been formed as the British link with the International Committee established in Padova (together with other groups in Paris, Berlin, New York, Barcelona and Dublin). We intend to campaign along the following lines:

The immediate release of those arrested. No to open-ended preventive detention 'pending inquiries'.

To investigate, to give maximum publicity and information, and to organise protest against the strategy of State repression of the Left movement in Italy.

To collect funds to assist the defence of those arrested.

To call a public meeting in London, during May. (The date and venue will be announced in *Time Out* and elsewhere).

To publish bulletins, and a dossier of materials on the case, as well as publishing some of the writings of those arrested.

We are asking for statements of support and protest to be sent as soon as possible, from individuals, from academic institutions etc. and from the movement as a whole in Britain and Ireland. These statements should be sent to the UK campaign address below. Further information, bulletins etc. are also available from that address.

28 MICHAEL THYNNE

Below is a petition on behalf of Michael Thynne together with a letter from Janet Stevenson, Executive Secretary of Depressives Associated. Some of us in RAP find the serious problem of rape a very difficult area in which to establish a clear abolitionist strategy. We want very much to discuss with radical feminists the type of alternative to custody that could be tolerable for those found guilty of rape. Could anyone interested on being on a working group please let us know.

Michael Thynne is at present in Wormwood Scrubs Prison and on 24 November 1975 was sentenced at the Central Criminal Court to life imprisonment for rape and buggery. He had freely admitted his guilt to the charge of rape but was advised to plead guilty to buggery although he has always denied that charge.

On sentencing Mr Thynne the Recorder of London stated, inter alia: "But for the psychiatric report that I have seen I would impose on you a very much longer prison sentence. As it is, I am going to sentence you to life on each count in order that those in a position to observe any improvement in your personality disorder, those capable of carrying out any operative treatment which may seem to be necessary, with your consent, on your frontal lobe, may judge the time when it is reasonably safe that you should be free."

The sentence which was confirmed by the Court of Appeal is an unusually harsh one, especially in view of the fact that Mr Thynne had no previous convictions of a similar nature. In effect the Learned Recorder was making the sentence 'open-ended' so that Mr Thynne could be examined, assessed, and treated, if necessary, and eventually consideration could be given to his release.

In confirming Mr Thynne's sentence the Court of Appeal said as follows: "We do not see the life sentence in this case is necessarily involving detention in custodial conditions for a very long period of time. It depends upon the regime to which he is subjected and the treatment that he can get. . . . We appreciate that those who are close to him, his relations and those who have been advising him and those who have been investigating him and trying to treat him all feel very strongly the sense of frustration that must arise when a man does not know the target date for his release and therefore has not something to look forward to by a fixed date. . . . It is the job of those looking after him in prison to get him back to thinking on the right line. That is their job. It is not easy but we have every confidence that they will set about it in this case."

Until 21 March 1978, 2½ years after he had been sentenced, Mr Thynne had not been receiving any treatment and there did not seem to be any proper monitoring of his case. He now receives only limited therapy which consists of a short interview by a psychotherapist every two weeks.

Mr Thynne is now aged 27. Since the age of 10 he has hardly spent more than two years out of one institution or another. He is articulate and literate and does not in any way seek to lessen his guilt over what has happened.

All he is asking is that his sentence be properly reviewed now so that he can be fully assessed and a fixed term sentence substituted. This, after all, is what the Learned Recorder had in mind when he sentenced Mr Thynne to life imprisonment which does not appear to have been properly carried out.

If this is not done his fear is that he will be forgotten and that he will languish in prison with no hope or help in the near distant future.

If you support Mr Thynne in his application for a review of his case by the Home Office we would be obliged if you would add your name to the enclosed Petition, and return it to the address stated thereon as soon as possible. If you require any further information please do not hesitate to let us know.

Yours faithfully,

SUPPORT MICHAEL THYNNE CAMPAIGN
c/o SM Gerlis Telephone: 01-748 6015
Myers, Ebner & Deaner,
29/31 Hammersmith Broadway,
London W6.

Dear Sir,

Now that the *Secret Hospital* has been shown giving details of the treatment given in Rampton Hospital, I do hope that something will be done to discover more of what is happening in the so-called centres for those put into care.

We are calling it *non care*, and as with people who have been incarcerated in Rampton, so many children suffer, firstly because they are taken away from their parents, and are then subjected to so many changes, being moved around from one home to another, that with this 'loss of emotional stability' they become more difficult and aggressive, and are actually being *punished* for becoming the people that others have made them.

Michael Keith Thynne has already been mentioned in Parliament. He has been a victim of the system, for he was pushed in 'care' at the age of ten. Still suffering after the death of his brother, he indulged in what was perhaps a game to him . . . cigarette stealing . . . I stole some money when I was five, but was caught the first time, and my uncle wisely gave me pocket money, for which I worked, dusting down the wrought iron bannisters.

I have visited Michael Thynne, and he is aware that he did a terrible thing, but under the influence of drugs. *Rejected* by society, he longed to have friends, so could only join those who would ask no questions. Whether we are members of the *Order of the Garter*, or of a local 'gang', we all join with others in different settings. Michael did the same. Depressives feel so *isolated* from people, that they are not helped when *solitary*

29 *confinement* is one of their 'treatments'. They cannot 'reflect on their past misdeeds' as their superiors fondly imagine, they can only wallow in further self-hatred, and extend their *anger* at the great lack of understanding.

I was amazed to find that Michael has remained so stable, after the many things that have been done to him. However, he does feel that at last he has some friends who *care*. I do hope that his case will be reviewed, and that he will be given some consideration.

Because those of us who have been through a period of depression, we feel that we know, even better than some psychiatrist, what setbacks we feel each time we are not understood. Much of the aggression in hospitals who think that they cater for the mentally ill, stems from a complete *lack of understanding* of the problems. No psychiatrist ever mentions the *mind reversal state*, and yet this is discussed quite freely by those who have recovered, despite what doctors do to us, in the meantime.

Firstly, though, we need support for Michael Thynne, now serving a life sentence in Wormwood Scrubs, then we want to help other depressives, and save vast sums of money spent on patients, because their *treatment* is actually *prolonged* by the so-called *experts*.

I hope that some of you will write for more of our information, for we have a unique knowledge of depression, and have recovered.

Yours faithfully,
Janet Stevenson, SRN, SCM.



CONFERENCES.

Newhan Alternatives Project with RAP are organising a National Conference on Alternatives to Prison on the 28th/ 29th July at Sussex University. NACRO's Director Ms Vivien Stern, Martin Wright (Howard League), Geoff Coggan (PROP), Ros Kane (RAP) and Jerry Westall (RAP) will be among those making contributions. Films to be shown include Punishment Park, Attica, The Brutalising of Franz Hob, The Glasshouse and RAP's Open Door programme. Cost is £10 if you can manage that. Otherwise explain any problems and we will try to make arrangements. Telephone contact to Alan Leader or Chris Bott on 01-555-0289. Correspondence and cheques to National Conference on Alternatives to Prison, 56 Dames Road, London E7.

RAP General Meeting.

We are planning to hold a much needed meeting for any RAP members able to attend on Saturday, Oct 27th. The venue will be at Conway Hall. The idea is to have a discussion in the morning on RAP's structure with nominations for the Policy Group being considered and voted on. In the afternoon a reaction to the expected May Inquiry report is the main suggestion. We could arrange a session on serious sexual crimes if there's sufficient interest. Anyone who would like to be on the Policy Group please let us know. More news on the meeting in the next *Abolitionist* or by a *Newsletter*.

Prisoners' Wives and Families Society, 14 Richmond Avenue, London N1 (tel 01-278-3981) is a self-help voluntary organisation. They provide an advice centre, a small hostel, an all-day playgroup and a limited amount of caravan holidays. Hours 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Recent publications include : *Women Who Wait* - this pamphlet looks at some of the problems faced by women whose men are in prison. The lack of money, the problems of visiting and the sheer length of time they spend alone produce formidable difficulties. Price 10p. Also a personal account *My Nightmare* of one woman's experiences after her husband - never previously in trouble with the law - was given a six-year prison sentence. Price 30p (plus p & p).

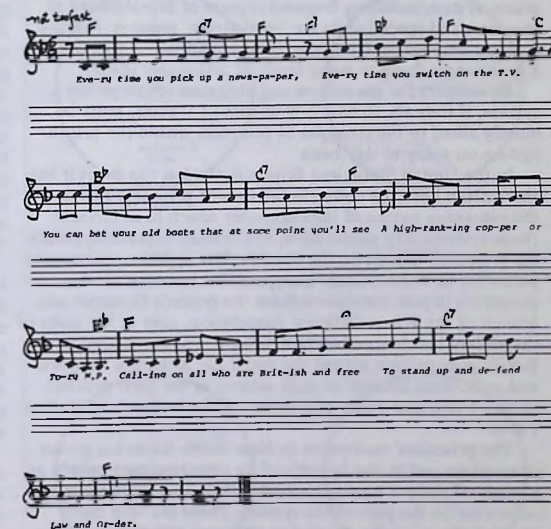
LEGAL ILLEGAL

30

The Abolitionist has taken over from the old *RAP Newsletter* as the group's regular voice. As the *Newsletter* is almost as old as *RAP* itself, it's not surprising that a few 'goodies' lurk between its pages, now lying peacefully at rest in the archives. In the last issue we included *The Ballad of Holloway* by Roger Woddis, while below we reproduce another *Newsletter* golden oldie containing some typically pointed observations from Ewan MacColl on what is, and isn't, legal. Our thanks to Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl for allowing us to use their song, which can be found on the *Hot Blast* album, available only from Blackthorne Records, 35 Stanley Avenue, Beckenham, Kent BR3 2PU (price £2.75 incl. postage). They will also provide information about releases and songs from Ewan and Peggy (s.a.e. please).

1. Every time you pick up a newspaper,
Every time you switch on TV,
You can bet your old boots that at some point you'll see
A high-ranking copper or Tory MP
Calling on all who are British and free
To stand up and defend law and order.
2. It's illegal to rip-off a payroll,
It's illegal to hold up a train,
But it's legal to rip-off a million or two
That comes from the labour that other folk do,
To plunder the many on behalf of the few
Is a thing that is perfectly legal.
3. It's illegal to kill off a landlord
Or to trespass upon his estate,
But to charge a high rent for a slum is OK
To condemn two adults and three children to stay
In a hovel that's rotten with damp and decay
Is a thing that is perfectly legal.
4. If your job turns you into a zombie,
It's legal to feel some despair,
But don't be aggressive, that is if you're smart,
And for Christ's sake don't upset the old apple-cart,
Remember the boss has your interest at heart
And it grieves him to see you unhappy.
5. If you fashion a bomb in the kitchen
You're guilty of breaking the law.
But a bloody great nuclear plant is OK.
Though plutonium processing hastens the day
When this tight little isle may be blasted away -
Nevertheless it is perfectly legal.
6. It's illegal if you are a gypsy
To camp by the side of the road,
But it's proper and right for the rich and the great
To live in a mansion and own an estate
That was got from the people by pillage and rape -
That's what they call "a tradition".
7. It's illegal to carve up your missus
Or put poison in your old man's tea,
But poison the rivers, the seas and the skies
And poison the mind of a nation with lies,
If it's done in the interest of free enterprise
Then it's proper and perfectly legal.
8. It's legal to join a trades union
And to picket is one of your rights,
But don't be offensive when scabs cross the line,
Be nice to the coppers and keep this in mind:
To picket effectively, THAT is a crime
Worse than if you had murdered your mother.
9. It's legal to sing on the telly,
But they make bloody sure that you don't
If you sing about racists and fascists and creeps
And thieves in high places who live off the weak
And those who are selling us right up the creek,
The twisters, the takers,
The con-men, the fakers,
The whole bloody gang of exploiters!

Words and music by Ewan MacColl
© Ewan MacColl Ltd.





FOREIGN NEWS

Alternative Criminology Journal (8 dollars for 4 issues from PAG, P.O. Box, Surrey Hills, New South Wales, Australia).

Jail News (4 dollars for 1 year's issues from P.O. Box 215, Glebe 2037, New South Wales, Australia).

The Prisoners' Action Group of New South Wales was formed in 1973 by a group of ex-prisoners and friends, to agitate for a change in the present prison system in New South Wales. It mounts a continuous campaign through the media and through the dissemination of information, to keep up pressure for reform. PAG is active in very many areas, publishing pamphlets, a journal, a regular newsletter; it provides practical and moral support for prisoners in struggle, organizes conferences and has made a 22mm film *Prisoners* about the NSW system.

The group's two publications—*Jail News* (an 8-page news sheet) and *Alternative Criminology Journal* (a well-produced and edited forum of articles, news and polemic) are of particular interest to prisoners' groups and abolitionist groups in Britain. *Jail News* is a lively and informative information sheet which combines the latest news from 'inside' with longer articles on abolitionist topics. The *Alternative Criminology Journal* is of special interest because it is raising and debating issues highly relevant to abolition politics in all countries.

There is a high standard of presentation and debate in both publications which combines with the discussion of other topical issues, including legislation and policy, prisoners' rights, health, families, and some of the nastier aspects of the prison system including frequent reports of brutalisation of prisoners and special units for 'recalcitrant' inmates. All this gives an impression, from afar, of an organisation growing into a very potent force at many levels of action and theory.

Movements for the reform and abolition of the prison system, if they are to have any chance of success, must be closely allied to the struggles of prisoners within the prison system on a day-to-day basis.

In the United States and Britain in the last ten years it has more often been the collective actions of prisoners against the repressive nature of imprisonment which have brought those systems into public view, and created organizing points for prisoners' groups on the outside. The appalling conditions persisting at Walton Gaol, Liverpool, for instance, have prompted urgent statements from the prison's Governor and branch of the Prison Officers' Association, only in the wake of the violent incidents of early February. The conditions in British prisons have earned the particular attention of media and politicians because of such actions as the mass protests of mid-1972, and a fear of a repeat of the incidents at Hull in 1976.

The prisoners' movement in New South Wales has grown in numbers and in the breadth of its activities, particularly as a result of actions similar to that at Hull, and similarly brutal responses on the part of the system. There are very many parallels between the Australian situation and that in Britain and elsewhere. The occasional 'riots' and protests can be seen not as the isolated actions of a few pathological prisoners (or prison officers!) but reflecting the basic brutalities and inhumanities of prison systems.

In 1973 public attention was focussed on NSW prisons by

31 allegations of brutal beatings at Long Bay Gaol. Investigations were held in camera, with subsequent whitewashing of events. In February 1974 Bathurst Gaol was destroyed by fire. 'The official position is that the gaol was burned without reason, and that it was populated with dangerous, cunning criminals, the control of whom calls for ever more oppression at the hands of good, just and law-abiding officials who, though no fault of their own, lost a favourite gaol' (Mr Justice Staples writing in *ACJ Vol 1 No 2*).

The Bathurst 'riot' occurred in the wake of a sit-down strike by a number of prisoners which was ended on a promise of no reprisals against the participants. These promises were not kept, and subsequent events, including the brutalizing of a young prisoner, led to the 'riot' of Sunday 3 February, and a series of prisoners' demands for reform of Bathurst conditions and rules. The prisoners' action was met with gun-fire and with further beatings.

Other similar actions occurring at Maitland Gaol in October 1975, and protests at standards of health at Mulawa Women's Gaol in 1976, prompted the establishment in July 1976 of a Royal Commission into NSW Prisons under Mr Justice Nagle of the NSW Supreme Court and which was staffed by conservatives in the field of corrections and criminology (including Leon Radzinowicz!).

In February 1978 the NSW Prisoners' Action Group published a very detailed summary of the evidence to the Royal Commission, as there was no final statement of findings by that time. The Royal Commission finally reported in March 1978, and the first few issues of *Jail News* summarized its observations and recommendations, it perhaps came as a surprise to the PAG, and to other prisoners' groups which had given evidence to the Commission, that the final report contained some substantial indictments of various practices and conditions in NSW gaols. Under the heading of 'Prison Discipline' for instance, the Commission recommended the appointment of a Special Prison Ombudsman to replace the Visiting Justice system so much despised by prisoners. If implemented, say PAG, recommendations along these lines would at least open up the present travesties of the disciplinary system to public scrutiny and review. The practices surrounding the segregation punishment of prisoners also received attention, it being the Commission's view that prisoners ought to be able to appeal against a sentence of cellular confinement, such appeal operating as an immediate stay of proceedings; prisoners sentenced to cellular confinement should be kept in their own cells, the practice of depriving prisoners so punished of additional rights and privileges is illegal and should be discontinued; punished prisoners should not forfeit remission as a result of such a sentence; regular medical examinations should be made of prisoners undergoing cellular confinement punishments. The Royal Commission also severely criticised the standards of health care and the wrongful use of psychiatric referrals (to silence dissidents).

In its issues of *Alternative Criminology Journal* and *Jail News* the PAG and its sister organisation, Women Behind Bars, are continuing to analyse and criticise the shortcomings of the recommendations, and in particular to combat the campaign in the Australian popular press, which supports the organised resistance of the Prison Officers against some of the more liberal recommendations for reform. This campaign takes the 'prisons should not be holiday camps' line of reasoning, with which we are so familiar in Britain.

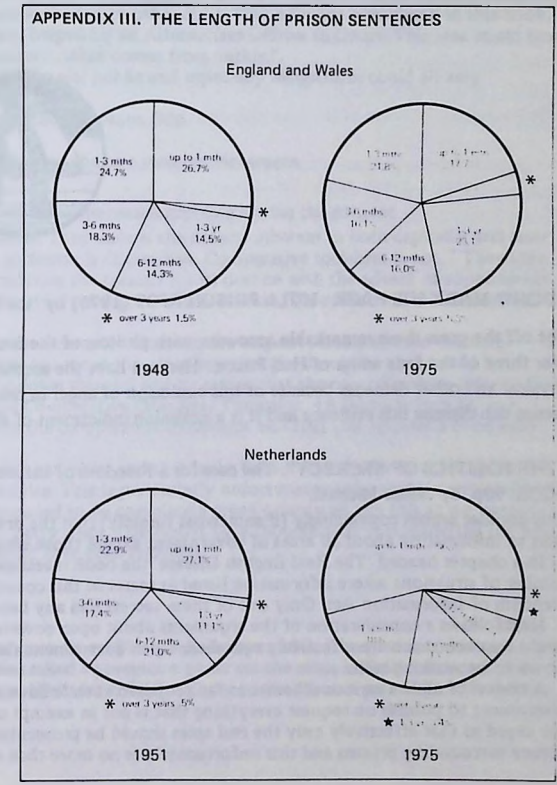
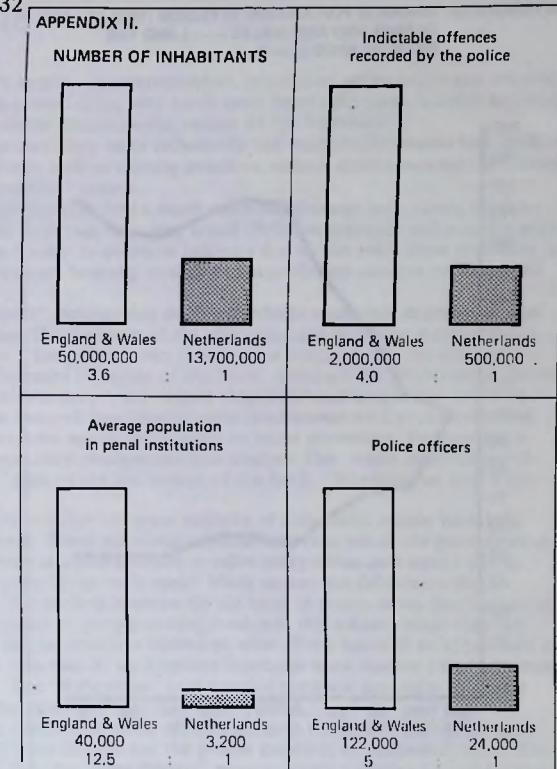
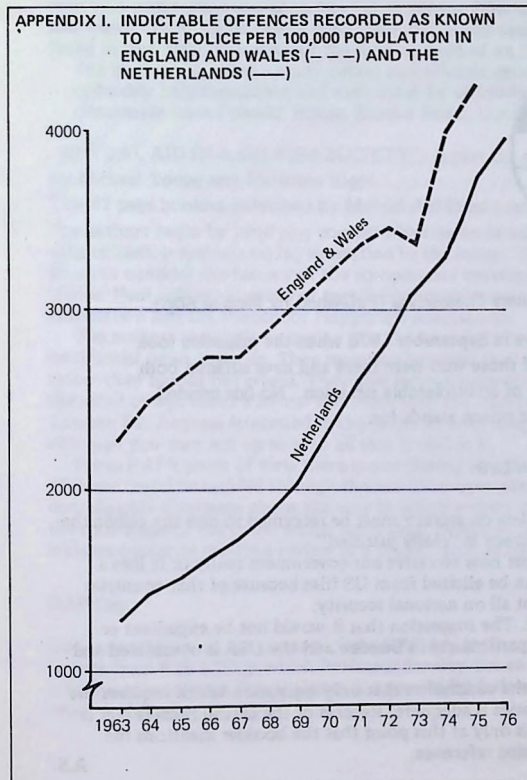
The work of the PAG in New South Wales, and more recently in Victoria, is based in a situation of prisoners' struggles against a particularly repressive prison system. The PAG works not only as a pressure group for reform, but provides a platform in its news sheet and journal for the wider debates concerning abolition. The interesting feature of PAG as an organisation is that it is openly debating the relationships between the different elements which make up the more radical prisoners' groups—Prisoners, ex-prisoners, relatives, political activists, and radical criminologists and

32 other academics. Radical criminologists and seemingly more openly involved in PAG than seems to be the case with similar groups in Britain. There is reflected in the Journal articles a desire to critically examine these relationships between the different interests. In the first issue (late 1975) the editorial calls for the prisoners' movement to also be concerned with activity at the level of theory and to be involved in developing... 'some alternative forum to the predominantly conservative forums presently available... in Australia.' Another article in the same issue: 'Alternative Criminology and Prisoners' Movements: partnership or rip-off?' by Gill Boehringer of Macquarie University, also contains exhortations to carry the activities of PAG into the realm of combating the conservative ideology of the Australian Institute of Criminology, which provides academic respectability and an apology for the present prison system. Although arguing for a close association between radical criminology and the prisoners' movement, Boehringer counsels against various pitfalls of the relationship—for instance the use of access to the prisoners' movement to enhance one's ego, career or pocket book! 'Without some concrete understanding of alternative criminology and its fundamental purpose... social justice, there remains ever present the danger that alternative criminology... will deteriorate into a trendy academic staircase for personal advantage, remaining peripheral to the quest for social justice.' (Vol 1 No 1, p33)

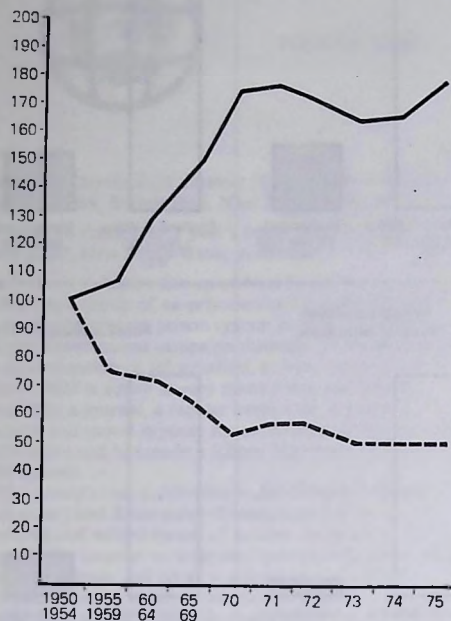
One of the failures of radical criminology in Britain is precisely that it has remained remote from the prisoners' movement, and its critiques of mainstream criminology rendered sterile through failure to put them to use in the service of the prisoners' movement and its struggles.

It is certainly to be hoped that *The Abolitionist*, as a new journal, will provide a forum which will lead to precisely the type of collaboration which is needed in the struggle for change in the British penal system.

Alan Phipps

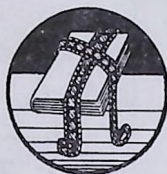


APPENDIX IV. AVERAGE POPULATION IN PRISON (1950-54 = 100) IN ENGLAND AND WALES (—) AND THE NETHERLANDS (---)



SOME DEVELOPMENTS IN PENAL POLICY AND PRACTISE IN HOLLAND by Dr Hans Tulkens (NACRO £1).

Dr Tulkens is head of the Dutch Prison Administration and the text of this booklet is from a paper delivered at NACRO's Annual General Meeting in 1978. Although the price is exorbitant for 20 pages the for 20 pages the publication is highly recommended as giving extremely valuable evidence on how Britain's penal policy could be altered radically without a major social upheaval. We reproduce here the most vital information from the booklet contained in the appendices. To assist interpretation it is useful to bear in mind the following statistics: 4 to 1 is the rough ratio of the countries in population (England and Wales compared to the Netherlands), 20 per 100,000 of the Dutch population are in prison, compared to 75 per 100,000 for England and Wales. Assuming that trends have continued since these statistics were tabulated the proportion of 4 to 1 is likely to be the comparison today.



'DON'T MARK HIS FACE : HULL PRISON RIOT (1976) by the Prisoners Themselves (Published by Prop at 60p)

Hot off the press these remarkable accounts, with photos, of the four days in September 1976 when the prisoners took over three of the four wings of Hull Prison. Here we have the accounts of those who were there and have suffered both physical and other damages because of this explosion of anger in the face of an intolerable situation. No fair minded person can dismiss this evidence and it is a sickening indictment of all that prison stands for.

'THE POLITICS OF SECRECY'. The case for a Freedom of Information Law. NCCL. 90p. by James Michael.

This booklet argues convincingly (if somewhat turgidly) that the present law on secrecy must be reformed to give the public the right to information about all areas of government except those where secrecy is "really justified".

In a chapter headed 'The Real English Disease' the book investigates just how secretive our government really is. It lists a number of situations where information listed as secret in this country can be elicited from US files because of that country's Freedom of Information Act. Only one of these secrets had any bearing at all on national security.

Next follows a consideration of the arguments about open government. The suggestion that it would not be expedient or would cost too much are effectively squashed. Open government abroad particularly in Sweden and the USA is considered and shown to be working well.

A review of all the various schemes so far proposed then follows with the conclusion that only legislation which requires the government to publish on request everything that is not in exempt categories is adequate. Reform of the official Secrets Act is also urged so that effectively only the real spies should be prosecuted. It is only at this point that the booklet mentions the secrecy surrounding prisons and this unfortunately is no more than a passing reference.

'SIX QUAKERS LOOK AT CRIME AND PUNISHMENT' 34

Published for Quaker Social Responsibility and Education
Reviewed by Jim Little, Bristol

Referring to prison, a new booklet from the Quakers says: "We consider it unconstructive, brutalising, appealing to and evoking what is worse rather than best in a man, socially divisive and in general doing very much more harm than good. It is also extremely expensive." Later it compares the 1977-78 figures of £96 a week for imprisonment against £4 for Probation!

This strong appeal against imprisonment made by the six authors (they write collectively not individually) makes this booklet of particular interest to RAP, but it also covers many other aspects, such as existing penalties, various alternatives and the attitude of society, especially regarding the authors' hopes for a "non-punitive" society.

Although in their last lines they reflect that the booklet "will probably find a much more ready acceptance among thinking non-Christians than among non-thinking Christians", one would hope that their very broad Christian approach will assure a wide acceptance. The references to "Christian teaching" should be sufficient to persuade believers that in this book some preaching is being put into practice; while others, who deduce that all religions are basically intended to sanctify and preserve privilege, will find that the authors are in fact very much of this World.

Early in the work they write "a society makes its own criminals", emphasising double standards more than deprivation, and making the point that we have so little initiation into citizenship. The aloofness of the administration of justice is personalised, compared to the relationship between most of us and offenders: "the gulf between them and us confirm[s] in the offender his sense of being an outsider." To overcome this gulf is perhaps the major intention of this book. Although the Introduction denies any intention of going soft on crime, they refer to a "non-punitive society", and suggest neighbourhood courts that could be more easily related to victims. In all courts the police would be removed from their present involvement with prosecution and convicting. They suggest a new professional status for the police, who would concentrate on crime prevention. Perhaps this is only a short term expedient, with more hope in the greater community involvement later implied. The "wider implications of the non-punitive society" and the philosophy of "punishment" take up the last section of the book: "Whenever we send a man to prison it is ourselves we are punishing."

The overwhelming impression from sitting in Magistrates Courts is that the great majority of defendants mainly need help with problems that are more than they can deal with on their own. The professional criminal is so rare, yet all the panoply of the law, the remoteness of justice and even prison is used for the theft of a pair of socks or other petty crime. Just once I was in court when two progressive magistrates let every defendant explain things for himself! When women are defendants the inappropriateness of the present courts is even more apparent. The authors however do not bring in points of sex discrimination.

The outlines the authors give of existing penalties are very useful for people coming fresh into this subject. While they are wary of different forms of police caution, they definitely feel that an Absolute Discharge, after all the hassle of an appearance in Court, is sufficient in many more cases. To digress slightly, for men over 21 an Absolute Discharge never reaches 1% of sentences. (1977: 0.66%). Even Conditional Discharges never reach 10%. The "References" at the end of the book does refer to Jimmy Boyles' *A Sense of Freedom*, but maybe a selected list of further reading would have been helpful.

Probation of course is considered and also the very difficult relationship of its officers between the Courts and the offender... We definitely need offenders' real friends. For new alternatives I was surprised at the greater emphasis on residential rather than non-residential Centres. Though in Bristol we are disappointed that our "New Careers" project, which is residential and for young men who might otherwise go to Borstal, is neither fully used nor extended to other areas. One item not considered in this book, and which I think could have a great potential, is self-sentencing, helped by an Alternatives Officer in Court. This idea could have fitted in with their discussion of the development of an "authority... that comes from within".

The book is sub-titled a *study paper*, and schools, groups, the general public and especially Magistrates could all very considerably help themselves and each other by seriously studying it.

Obtainable from Friends' House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. 46 pages. 50p.

'MUTUAL AID IN A SELFISH SOCIETY'. A plea for strengthening the co-operative movement.

By Michael Young and Marianne Rigge.

This 42 page booklet published by Mutual Aid Press costs £1 which seems reasonable considering the content.

The authors begin by justifying co-operatives on an idealistic basis. They discuss the defects inherent in both capitalist and state nationalisation systems saying in relation to the latter: "State socialism is discredited. Co-operative socialism is not." They then go on to consider the history of the co-operative movement analysing the reasons for its decline with the advent of supermarket chains. Next follows a review of new style groups run on co-operative principles such as Housing Co-operatives, the Consumers Association and the Pre-school Playgroups Association.

The authors conclude by saying that the new style co-operatives are much closer to the original principles than the long established retail societies. They maintain however that this does not mean the older organisation should be abandoned but rather they should be revived. They give various suggestions for doing this and end by saying that the new reforming activity in the retail co-ops needs a focus—therefore they are launching the Co-operative Consumer Campaign, 18 Victoria Park Square, London E2. Anyone interested in the political theorising behind the co-operative movement will find this booklet a good read although you may not agree with all that is said in it.

From RAP's point of view there is one glaring omission in this pamphlet and that is the failure to consider how the question of crime could be tackled through the use of co-operative principles. This is particularly unfortunate as the authors write with considerable eloquence about the way in which society is encouraged to be completely greed orientated and this as we know is the root cause of the crime which lands most people in prison—petty theft. One would have thought that in considering the new-style co-operative groups a review of a project such as NAP should have been included.

RAP Day.

Under consideration is a proposal for a RAP day at Thames Polytechnic on Thursday, October 18th. The plan is to have a public lecture from 4th 5.30 at which Professor Stanley Cohen is being asked to present a paper on the crisis in British Prisons. After refreshments an open Policy Group is a possibility followed by a Disco from 8-12. Entry to the Disco is just 50p. More news when we have it.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT: Some Thoughts on Theories and Policies by Stan Cohen (50p) RAP with the permission of 'New Society' have reprinted Stan's articles from the 'New Society's' of 1st, 15th and 29th March with an introduction by Prof. Cohen and suggestions for further reading. To RAP members only there is no charge for postage of this booklet. Below is a review by Elaine Sulman who is working for the Medical Committee Against the Abuse of Prisoners by Drugging.

In this series of articles on 'Crime and Morality' Cohen reviews the development of new or 'radical' criminology which developed in the mid sixties in America and the UK. He explores the relationship between the theories, the object of these theories, crime itself and the way this is translated into practice, in terms of crime control policies.

In a refreshingly candid and probing critique Cohen levels a two pronged attack on the state of the present day academic criminology and its relation to issues of practical social policy. He finds the theory upon which models of crime have been constructed characteristically fuzzy and misdirected and its pragmatic approach to penal policy, often riddled with contradictions. Criminologists have all too readily attacked the dominant value system, suspended judgement in an attempt to understand the world from the criminal's viewpoint, and yet shunned away from offering any 'substitute beyond a vague and quite inconsistent underdog sympathy'.

On the whole criminologists have failed on the practical level to come up with a viable alternative, perhaps with the exception of the advocates of community control. This policy emerges from a somewhat utopian view of crime, which considers the possibility of a crime free society. Leading on from this notion is the consideration of middle range social control measures in which the responsibility for dealing with lawbreakers is in the community itself; the Rap line. But, warns Cohen, these idealist measures need candid realism. Often so-called alternatives become mere adjuncts to the system, embracing those who were on the borders of the system, rather than those who were already entrenched. Community service orders are one example. Caution is advised in the replacement of one set of rhetoric by another, more subtle in approach, where punishment becomes 'treatment', locking up becomes 'intensive placement' and dossiers 'anecdotal records'.

In the final article Cohen addresses himself to the very questions most radical criminologists tend to avoid, radical proposals for reform of a system which by any yardstick of measurement has demonstrably failed. The analogy with industry is striking. A 40-60% failure rate in a factory would surely lead to closure, while prisons with the same failure rate (measured by reconviction) remain. To this end Cohen suggests some modest and 'entirely unrealistic proposals'. A policy of attrition, advocated by PREAP, (the New York abolitionist group) is a proposed model. A total moratorium on all new prison construction, with modern prisons the first to go, decarceration where (70-80%) would be released safely and excarceration (excluding crimes such as drug taking and vagrancy from imprisonment) are some of the essential elements.

In a package of comprehensive and far reaching policy proposals Cohen urges responsibility and clear sightedness. Gone are the days of the debate of punishment versus reform, a spurious argument indeed. For 'to say that the object of imprisonment ought to be punishment is like saying that the object of surgery ought to be medical treatment.'

Essential reading for all those vaguely interested in the penal reform arena.

BRITISH PRISONS (Blackwell £2.50 or £2 only to RAP members ordered from us) by Mike Fitzgerald and Joe Sim.

The authors of this critical account of the British prison system include material from both Scotland and England and Wales. As a source of information, much of it very up to date, the book is invaluable.

However Radical Alternatives to Prison is given scant credit for important work in the area of the control units (not mentioning Fitzgerald's publication for RAP on the units) and the authors say nothing of the important work of Newham Alternatives Project or of the Alternative to Holloway publication and campaign. In their final sentence Fitzgerald and Sim emphasise that: 'It is not only the nature, but also the uses and continuing existence of imprisonment which must ultimately be challenged' but they do not impart the knowledge that RAP has challenged the existence of prison in Britain since 1970.

That said the value of 'British Prisons' should not be overlooked, nor the great achievement of both the authors and publisher in getting together such a useful manuscript in so brief a period. The book is divided into six chapters which concentrate on the crisis in British prisons, the anatomy of prison, the people in prison, the control within prison, the prison officers and the politics of imprisonment. This final section could have come first since it gives the clue to all that precedes it: 'The history of prisons is part of a broader history of the struggle to establish a capitalist social order'. Something of the cool, detached, analytical style of the text which none the less has a trace of humour and

venom can be noted in the following questioning of whether prison officers could take on a 'welfare' role: 'The ritual unlocking and locking up of prisoners is not conducive to a welfare role, and overcrowding in local prisons makes informal contact even more difficult, assuming it is desired. But ultimately it is the role of uniformed staff which militates against their involvement in welfare.... Formal power is firmly located in the officers' hands, and despite the rules and regulations, can be and is used arbitrarily and unpredictably - hardly a situation in which to develop supportive relationships'.

I hope everyone in RAP will read 'British Prisons' for there is much material there to counter many an argument we face. Also persuade all friends and acquaintances to take account of the book which you can order through us. J.W



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Ian Cameron has written a fair-minded review of Mick Ryan's book *The Acceptable Pressure Group (The Abolitionist, January 1979)*, far removed from those academics he mentions who "find confirmation of their standing with the radical milieu by making boringly repetitious attacks on the League on any and every opportunity."

But since he raises it, could I set the record straight by putting my side of the story of the Control Units Action Group, before the version he gives is accepted as the authorised one? The CUAG issued an agreed press statement, as he says; on leaving the meeting I telephoned a contact at *The Guardian* to tell him to look out for it. To get him interested, I told him briefly what it was about in my own words, because I assumed his story would be based on the press statement itself; unfortunately, the statement never reached him, and he based his story on my account. I think some people objected to the fact that I said that there was a problem with 'bully-boys' in prison: I don't know why they object, because it is true. I certainly never implied that there was the slightest justification for control units as a method of preventing them from intimidating other prisoners. I believe that *The Guardian's* story was the only one printed, so without my 'phone call the press statement about the formation of the CUAG would have sunk without trace.

My second venture was that I was invited to contribute a short unsigned 'observation' in *New Society*. I took the opportunity to give another mention of the campaign. I thought it was realistic to mention that the reactions of prison officers were a factor in the situation; apparently this displeased some people at RAP because they believed in campaigning only about prisoners—prison officers were no concern of theirs. I don't think that the article did the cause any harm: on the contrary, to show awareness of the staff dimension probably lent weight to it. Most ex-prisoners will tell you that you can't get far in reforming prisons without prison officers—and despite RAP's usual stance, the abolition of control units was an exercise in prison reform. I do not accept that anything done by me or the Howard League sabotaged the aims of the CUAG; all I did was to support the aims with a couple of incidental statements that some members disagreed with, and it was they who broke up the group by insisting that that was a reason for requiring me to leave it.

May I also make one general point? The Howard League, whatever with hindsight are considered to be its mistakes in the past, wants to obtain reforms. Since instantaneous abolition of prisons is impossible, we want reforms which are moves in the direction of using less imprisonment: fewer and shorter prison sentences.

As for tactics, Ian implies that he disagrees with a policy of "restrained and sympathetic" protest. Restrained, yes, but I

wouldn't agree that the League tries to make its statements sympathetic to the Home Office. What we do is to try to show that we are as well informed as possible about the facts, and about the arguments the Home Office is likely to use against us.

The same style is, we believe, most likely to carry weight with thoughtful people who at present see prisons as an unfortunate necessity: they need, not just appeals to their emotions but answers to their questions.

Don't be misled by the style into misjudging the content of Howard League publications: some of them, such as *The cautioning and imprisonment of prostitutes*, are as radical as anything produced by RAP. We accept the point that some reforms could strengthen the system by legitimising it; but reforms in the direction of opening it up should help to reduce it, which is why we are currently campaigning for prisoners' visits and home leaves, and against censorship.

I will gladly send more information to anyone interested (s.a.e. appreciated).

Yours sincerely,
Martin Wright,
Director,
Howard League for Penal Reform,
169 Clapham Road,
London SW9 0PU.

Dear Abolitionist,

I am writing to append a couple of footnotes to Frank Keeley's excellent article on the 'liquid cosh'. Whilst seeing the 'treatment' ideology of prisons as in part responsible for recent developments towards drugging prisoners, Frank does not consider the ideologies of psychiatrists. They have not simply put their medical armoury in the hands of control agents in prisons. Psychiatrists have, after all, got much prior experience in the processing of 'deviants'—usually with regard to those deemed 'mentally ill'. Prison and psychiatric institutionalisation seem two means of social control of deviant behaviour. Perhaps it is not surprising that the nineteenth century reductionist perspective of psychiatry, which can easily reify people, should be used in both cases.

Perhaps RAP has a duty to other internees too.

Yours,
Dave Waddilove,
Leamington Spa.

Dear Friends,

We are writing to you in order to discuss the idea of a prisoners support and information network, which we feel is of growing importance.

We are a group of people who came together through working in the Astrid Proll defence campaign, and realised the need for such a network after learning about, and experiencing the link-up of the West European states and police forces, and the International control that is already in practice.

Many people in Britain and elsewhere are involved in current campaigns and struggles, of which the treatment of political prisoners is one part. What we hope to do is to provide for the exchange of information, taking up different struggles in a newsletter, to be distributed to all our contacts in different countries. For us it's evident we don't want to be only a printing service, and that we will make our points of view, as we hope you will.

As a developing group, we have not worked out our position on the various issues that are important in the consideration of political prisoners. However, we are agreed that the important issues include:

● What is a political prisoner? How does the state define who is a criminal and who is a political prisoner? How does a criminal become a political prisoner—and how does a political prisoner become a criminal?

● How and why do laws work to isolate activists by putting them in prison?

at the same time

● How and why do these laws constrict the activities of people on the outside?

● How do we on the outside relate to those on the inside?

● What is the relationship of the struggles of people in the so-called '4 worlds'?

We have talked about these issues a lot because they were not given space in the day to day running of the Astrid Proll campaign. We don't however, want to be a theory group. The most important thing is to support each other and spread information about struggles and actions.

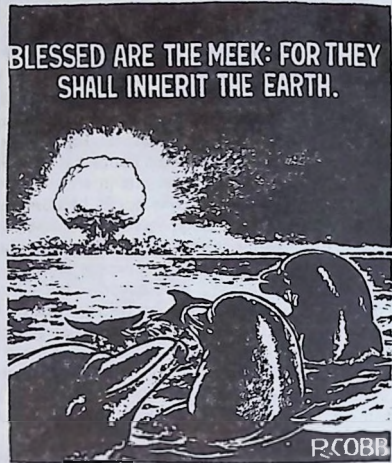
We'd like to hear from you, what you think about the idea? Do you have the time? Please send us your comments. We can translate from German, French and Spanish, so you don't have to write in English!

Prisoners Information Service,
c/o 35 Burma Road,
London N16.

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Black Prisoners

Starting in October with RAP will be Chris Onuoha, on a year's placement from Middlesex Polytechnic. With RAP he is going to carry out a study of black people and prison in Britain. Already we are aware of a disproportionate number of black prisoners in prisons and detention centres. The younger the age range the higher the percentage of black people it seems. We need evidence of the position in all Britain's custodial institutions and the Home Office with its well known desire not to be racially discriminatory cannot supply such information. It is therefore up to those inside and those visiting to get an accurate picture of the situation. We hope readers of the *Abolitionist* will help Chris in his particularly important research and extend to all organisations involved with the black population an invitation to provide Chris with relevant information and background data.



Volunteers are welcome at our new premises - give us a ring first to make sure we're in. Articles, art work, ideas, letters, bouquets and brickbats all welcome.

Copies of *Abolitionist* 1 are still available at a cost of 25p from the office.

RAP & PROP

RAP and PROP are now working from different premises (PROP are at 21 Atwood Road, London W6) but we are remaining in close association. Geoff Coggan, National Secretary of PROP, remains an invaluable member of our Policy Group.

Dear Friends,

You will be aware of the renewed threat to reopen the CAGES in Porterfield Prison. The Scottish Prison Officers' Association local branch seems determined on this move. Apparently over staffing has caused a reduction in income which twenty-four hour surveillance in the segregation unit could remedy.

An astoundingly inhumane reason for such a move which could very well succeed. A suggestion has been made to me that this might be a good time to press for a *special unit* here based on the Barlinnie model.

I am busy campaigning to gain support for this idea and feel sure I can count on your support. Certainly we desperately need an alternative to the hell hole here which by its continued existence brutalises and degrades us all.

Yours sincerely,

Rose Innes,
Inverness.

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ARMY

The facts.

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I'd like to know more about soldiering. Please send me the Army's colour booklet "The Professionals."

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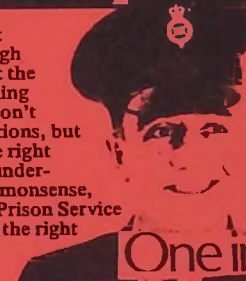
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