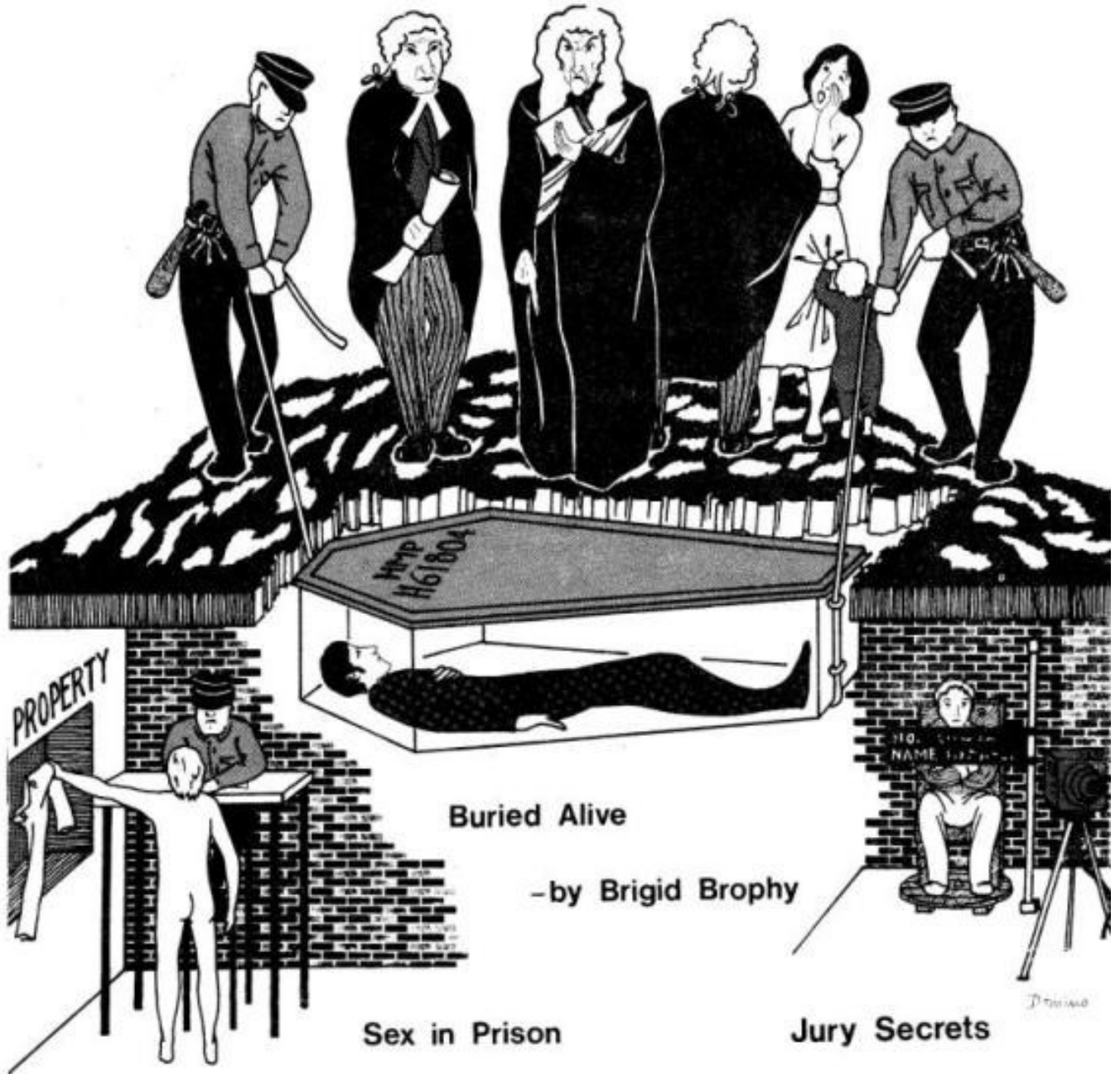


# THE ABOLITIONIST

a quarterly journal from Radical Alternatives to Prison



Sex in Prison

Jury Secrets

Hull/Peterhead/Wormwood Scrubs

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**EDITORIAL**

In this issue of 'The Abolitionist' I hope we catch some of the flavour of both the highs and lows of working in this field. Prisoner's resistance, generosity, art and anger are given scope in our pages. The inside of a jury room is revealed, Brigid Brophy provides an incisive article posing the shattering idea that prisons bury people alive.

Although the movement against prison is a small one in Britain, we certainly are providing a radical critique which is having an impact throughout society. Our constituency ranges from anarchists and revolutionaries to liberals and reformists. We are not a tightly-knit group but a loose one - not imprisoned by our ideological horizons.

Perhaps our greatest task is to show to the British public that there is an urgent need to radically alter the punitive penal policies of this country. Prison fails, but we in Britain are getting more and more of it. Thus it can be said that all of the varying groups calling for change are failing also. Where must the impetus come from for a change of direction?

The May Report as we write is unavailable. It seems doubtful, even if it is far-seeing and fundamental, that this Commission's recommendations will be acted on sufficiently rapidly by the present administration. If the authorities are deaf to the crisis in our prisons then the impetus for change is bound to come from within the prisons.

We cannot talk glibly of riots and disturbances because they mean suffering and pain. But people given no way out burst and the forces that could be unleashed in prison are not pleasant to contemplate. Undoubtedly it is prisoners who will suffer most.

But what other means exist for change? Means that are effective. Many of us are tired of words, tired of conferences, tired of statistics which always say the same thing and result in not less prisons but more. Not less suffering but more. Prison is a disastrous way of dealing with problems. We must aim at doing away with it - we cannot tolerate people being buried alive, we cannot allow one man's bread and butter to be another person's lack of freedom.

RAP, has far less to blame itself for than many other richer and more powerful voices within the penal lobby. We have always had the sketchiest resources, we work now as always on an almost invisible shoe string. Yet never has our influence been more urgently required. Reaction rules in Britain, if RAP goes under - and without at least one full time worker I think it will (and we have no funds for such a worker for 1980) - if we disappear from the scene, the circumstances that led to RAP being formed will not alter. The forces of liberation, however, will be that much weaker. Sometimes it seems the public must witness repercussions before any sense can prevail in penal policy - those repercussions such as widespread disturbances in our gaols with many injuries and deaths, no one, in their senses, wants. But, if there are not the resources in British society to support groups like Radical Alternatives to Prison then no one should be surprised at further deterioration.

Jerry Westall  
Co-ordinator R.A.P.

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*Those who are arguing for the merits of trial by jury might think again after reading these comments supplied to the 'Abolitionist'*

Comments made by jurors in or out of court;

'I hope we don't have any cases like attempted murder or rape, I don't think I could decide whether a person was guilty of those sort of things.'

(reply) 'Oh don't worry, I've heard all they get at this court are cases of theft, shoplifting and the like, and obviously people who get nicked for that have been caught at it.'

'What we need is a nice little gas chamber out the back, then we could shove them all in it and not waste all this time deciding these people are guilty!' (greeted with loud guffaws from other jurors)

'I don't like the look of that defence counsel, he's scruffy, longhaired and dirty.'

'Didn't you see how the accused couldn't look me in the eye as I passed him in the dock — a sure sign of guilt.'

'You must have seen the defendants mates sitting in court; they look like real little thugs. He'd have done better not to bring them along.'

'Well, this boy looks quite well dressed up to the neck, but...'  
(black defendant with dreadlocks.)

'I don't think he's smartly dressed at all — just cheaply dressed for the occasion.'

'Anyone who's stupid enough to hit a woman police officer's asking for it.' (Said before all the evidence had been heard.)

'You always get one or two stupid women on a jury who don't want to find someone guilty.'

Because I am registered on the Electoral Roll, I was recently called to do jury service. People who are not registered are not called, so this cuts out a large section of the public for a start; those who for one reason or another don't have a permanent home. My worst fears of the prejudice of a so called cross-section of the public called for jury service were unfortunately confirmed, so I hope this record of my experiences as a juror will be helpful to anyone up against the law.

### CHALLENGES

Defendants are allowed to challenge three members of the jury if they don't like the look of them; then three others take their place. Jurors are told not to take this as a personal insult, but most of them do! The most commonly challenged people tended to be middle-aged women, the reason I suppose being that these women are by virtue of their age and sex sour and mean bigots. Every comedian's got a joke on this one; 'mother-in-law' jokes etc. However this is not necessarily so at all; challenging based on these sexist stereotypes often backfires, and a reasonable person may be replaced by a genial looking bigot. In my experience the appearance, age and sex of jurors was not necessarily a guide to their opinions. Challenging made a bad impression on most jurors. They tended to think; 'If the defendant is innocent, why do they need to challenge.'

Most jurors think that because someone is up in court, they must be at least a bit guilty. The acceptance of police evidence in the form of 'the notebook' seemed almost universal, although most of them accepted the fact that police evidence is not always 'God's truth!' Being firm believers in the 'one bad apple' theory, this never seemed to apply to cases which they were trying!

The nervousness that most jurors experienced at the beginning of their jury service soon gave way to loud moaning about hanging around waiting for a case, and a jovial resignation to hearing longwinded speeches in court when their minds were already made up early on in the proceedings.

The most commonly read newspapers in the jurors waiting room were the Sun and the Mirror, and one can only feel that the simplistic, sensationalist, prejudiced and sexist portrayal of news in them (or any of the straight media) had been absorbed by the readers and spouted as if it were their own philosophy. It seems that an unquestioning belief in the written word when recorded by those in authority dies hard. The jurors thought there was such a thing as a criminal class, composed of people with hereditary and unchangeable characteristics, and arguments about the effect of environment and culture on a person did not wash at all. They did not identify with defendants who came from the same backgrounds as themselves, and justified this by seeing them as members of a 'criminal' class. Of course black defendants got a double dose of this attitude, being from both the black and the criminal classes.

### DECIDING THE VERDICT

So much for the maxim a person is 'innocent until proved guilty.' I found that the majority of jurors were mainly interested in finding fault with the defendant and his counsel and not with being convinced 'beyond all reasonable doubt' of the prosecution's case against the defendant. As for waiting until all the evidence had been heard before making up one's mind, these jurors reached conclusions by haphazard and almost mystical means — within five minutes of hearing a case many of them 'just knew' the defendant was guilty!

Of the four cases I was involved with there was hardly ever a juror who didn't stick to his or her first opinion — usually that the defendant was guilty. The pressures brought to bear on you if you're not in agreement with the eleven other jurors can be very hard to resist — you're constantly asked to explain and justify any of the doubts you have, and are generally made to feel uncomfortable or downright awkward; sometimes you're just treated in an openly hostile manner. Putting the pressure on the dissenting juror took the form of comments like —

'If we have to wait here much longer for you to change your mind we'll get caught in the rush hour — we don't want to sit here all day cooped up like this.'

Don't you think someone like you is always going to have doubts about a defendant's guilt, whatever the case?' (too right!)

'I think he's guilty and that's it, I've got to get home and give hubby his dinner.'

'I hope we don't have her on our jury or we'll be there forever.'  
(I became a mildly amusing standing joke!)

The last case I was involved in was the one that finally made me realise what a fiasco the trial by jury set up could degenerate into. As usual, bearing in mind the obvious direction given to the jury in the judge's summing up, most of the jurors had made up their minds the defendant was guilty early on in the procedures. I and one other woman weren't convinced that the police evidence was all it seemed to be – we had strong doubts about the defendant being guilty and wanted to acquit him. After two hours of discussion in the jury room I was the only one still with any doubts, and during this time I was constantly cajoled and pressurized into changing my mind and fitting in with the other jurors' decisions. 'You just seem to be bringing up points that are irrelevant red herrings, you really must give us reasons that will convince all of us of this man's innocence.' There didn't seem any chance at all of any of them changing their minds, and that's putting it mildly! The foreman of the jury, a jolly, humorous and reactionary man, plus the other jurors, basically kept at me, with their Sherlock Holmes type analysis of every detail of evidence, until much to my horror I stopped resisting and slid into agreement with them.

You may have heard of experiments where people are instructed to administer pain, through electric currents, to others – much against their better judgement. What makes them react so untypically is the concerted pressure of someone else making them feel they ought to conform – whatever their own views. I use this as a comparison to the situation I found myself in as a juror. I thought I had my own independent views and yet I was press-ganged into changing my mind. This certainly brought home to me the irony of the statement, made time and again to jurors by judges, that each juror should make up his or her mind for themselves in accordance with what they believe to be the facts in a case.

#### SUMMING UP

To start with jurors I spoke to thought that when a judge summed up a case for the benefit of the jury that was what he was doing – giving a fair account of the evidence from both sides, in an unbiased way. However, it didn't take the jurors long to realise that the judge was directing them to come to a particular conclusion. And on the whole, believing as they do in the innate good sense and intelligence of judges, they were in full agreement with this direction. What struck me was the heavy handed and not at all subtle ways judges have of drawing attention to facts they want to emphasize. These would often be accompanied by facial contortions, changes in tone of voice or simply made into jokes: Judge interrupting defence counsel with a jolly, 'I bet his solicitor would not have been very happy to receive a telephone call at three in the morning!' – deferential merriment from the jury and prosecuting counsel.

So it seems that, far from making up their own minds jurors feel quite happy to follow a judge's direction, bearing in mind his 'fairness', years of experience and perhaps most importantly, his knowledge of information not available to the jury – for example the defendant's 'previous.'

The aura of reverence surrounding courtroom procedure seemed to blind many jurors to what was really going on – the ritualized drama, the strung-out evidence from both counsels, the laboured long-hand record the judge makes through the case, the hushed consultations between judge and clerk of the court, the bowing of ushers and others leaving and entering the courtroom – all this struck me as an enormous and absurd scene of theatrical proportions, like a long-used, historical but rusty tool. I have rarely seen such ham acting done with such belief by both counsel, and judge, until I felt the whole object of the proceedings had become overshadowed by all this ritual.

The much praised fairness of the British judiciary system, including being tried by jury, seemed no more than a time-consuming and expensive charade.

#### ADVICE TO WOULD-BE JURORS

Remember if the whole jury is not agreed and your verdict is different from the other jurors, the judge will leave you in the jury room for 2 hours 10 minutes, after which he can accept a majority vote – so try and hold out!

If there's anything in the evidence you wish to have explained you may send a written note to the judge who can make the point clear for the jury's benefit.

Remember that it's entirely up to the prosecuting counsel to prove the defendant's guilt – he/she doesn't have to prove his innocence.

Try not to feel pushed into agreeing with other jurors just because you're the odd one out. If you can give clear and reasonable explanations of why you disagree you may be able to persuade the others to think again.

#### ADVICE TO DEFENDANTS

Jurors may find it odd and suspicious if you don't appear in the witness box – they will think:- you have something to hide, you can't keep your 'story' up, you will lose your temper. So far as the jury goes it's best to appear on the stand.

Make sure you and your defence counsel have a convincing account of events – jurors will be looking for weak spots and lack of detailed explanations in your account; not those in the prosecution's case.

Your appearance and expressions will be noticed in detail by the jury – whether, in fact, you're looking 'guilty.' Things like looking at the floor all the time, or on the other hand looking too confident and 'innocent', don't go down well with jurors! They'll even decide whether you're specially dressed for the occasion, and even whether you could look them straight in the eye!

Here are some examples of prejudiced comments made by other jurors between cases.

'He's a real little poofah.'

'These blacks are different from us you know. . . .'

' . . . and it turned out she was married to a queer.'

'I'm putting all this make-up on in the hope that I'll get on a case where a famous and good-looking film star is being tried and I'll make a catch.'



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## THE PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE OF BURYING PEOPLE ALIVE

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Society abhors crimes because they infringe people's rights and are callous towards people's feelings. When it catches a criminal, it expresses its abhorrence of his deeds by putting him in prison, where it treats (or neglects) him callously and abolishes most of his rights.

This circular argument ('Give them a taste of their own medicine' or 'Violence is the only language such people understand') is the entire philosophy of prison.

### THE PURPOSE

Prison is a device for hurting prisoners.

Optimists often assume that prison must be performing other functions, to which the hurting is incidental. During the homily, which it is a perk of his office to preach at people he is about to send there, a judge sometimes remarks that keeping a criminal in prison for a while will protect society from assault or plunder by him. More sentimental judges may represent prison as the prisoner's opportunity to undertake training or therapy and thereby achieve a reconciliation with society.

Such assessments of prison are fantasies. The temporary protection of society from the inmates might explain why a prison has a high outer wall. But it cannot explain why prison is also walled about by the Official Secrets Act, which prevents the escape of nothing except information to society of what is being done inside in the name, and at the expense, of society. Still less does it explain why, once inside the walls, the prisoners are continuously and systematically hurt by boredom, humiliation and discomfort.

To be deliberately treated thus may cow you into a daze or it may infuriate you into defiance and bloodymindedness. Neither state is a qualification for good citizenship – on which point the protection that prison supposedly gives society evaporates. It is true that, while he is inside, the prisoner can be aggressive only against his fellow-prisoners or his custodians. But when you release him (or if he manages to scale the outer wall), you are loosing on society a person whom you, by your treatment of him, have made into an increased danger to society. The very stigma of prison may keep him out of a lawful slot in society. If you've dazed him, you will have unfitted him to fill the slot even if he can find it. If you've infuriated him, he won't want to find it but will have embraced crime as his vocation. Either way, you have increased the risk to society from his activities or his disabilities.

The only secure and long-term protection society can give itself against crime consists of the wholesale transformation of criminals into good citizens. At effecting any such thing prison (or the threat of prison) is an out-and-out failure. Some three quarters of the men in prison in England and Wales have had a previous sentence.<sup>1</sup> In Scotland some 95% of people released from prison commit another offence within a year.<sup>2</sup>

Whenever a person who has already been to prison is tried for a crime, it is in reality prison that is on trial; and whenever such a person is found guilty it is prison that has been proved, by due process of law, an abject failure at the one task that is generally held to justify its existence, namely the protection of society from crime.

In fact, only a fantasist would expect it to succeed. Society does not suppose that it can turn merely passable citizens into super-citizens by hurting them. It has no reason to expect that hurting them will make passable citizens out of bad ones.

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Hurting prisoners is so costly that in practice there's little money left for 'training' or 'therapy'. But even if these were available, they would have small chance of success while the hurting went on. Therapy requires that the patient shall first want to be cured or helped, education that the pupil shall first feel curiosity. Imposed pain cannot substitute for these pre-requisites. Most of what small 'treatment' does take place is limited to mechanical interferences with mood or personality,<sup>3</sup> negative processes which may neutralise anti-social impulses but can't develop a social being.

You can't in fact, integrate a being into society by cutting him off from society. It is perverse to pretend that the way to convert a criminal into a responsible citizen is to deprive him of a citizen's political responsibility (the vote), sever his relationships with people outside to whom he is personally responsible, force him to hand over his family responsibilities to the welfare services, and subject him to a regime where he bears virtually no responsibility for what he is to do next and is forbidden to argue with or seek explanations from the authority that issues him orders.

### SUPERSTITION

The functions optimists expect of prison are in reality made impossible by prison's primary purpose, the only one it is efficient at (though even so at high monetary cost). About that purpose official language is franker than many officials. It calls prison a penal institution; and 'penal' is a development<sup>4</sup> of the same Latin word (*poena*) as 'pain'. Were it not for the English language's fertile habit of branching off two words from the same root and specialising one of them, we would speak not of our penal system but of our pains system.

That would be completely plain English. As soon as society (in the person of a court or jury) is convinced, to its own satisfaction, that an accused person has broken the law, it cuts off its argument with him and resorts to pain or the threat of it. A fine is a restricted pain: it stings only the pocket. Even so, it is backed by the threat of prison. Likewise, such seemingly lenient and persuasive methods as probation and suspended sentences consist of threats of prison, which will descend on the convicted person if he doesn't manage to be persuaded. Prison itself is comprehensive pain. It wounds (and usually maims) the whole personality.

Society exacts pain from prisoners in obedience to a pre-scientific and pre-psychological superstition (like the idea of 'purging' contempt of court), whereby a breach of the law has to be expiated by pain in order to make good some balance of metaphysical nature. The prisoner's pain does not render his criminal deed undone. Nothing could. But his pain does not even make a contribution to such amends as can be made, the return of stolen objects to their owner or monetary compensation (which is inadequate, but better than none) for bodily harm and alarm. English law has only fairly recently made an only minor point of compensating victims of violent crime, and it isn't a point that affects the prisoner. He may compensate his victim or return what he stole, but the penal system will still be unsatisfied. It will still demand expiation of the injury done not to a person or to society but to the law.

Perhaps this adherence to superstition is meant to uphold the majesty of the law. What it in fact upholds is the hypocrisy of society. The aggressions and infringements which the criminal commits sporadically and unlawfully are committed against him in prison lawfully and systematically. The 'majesty' of the law is mere manipulation by the majority in its own favour. The majority is in a position to make its cruelty lawful.

## WHAT IMPRISONMENT IS

Prison, which is now the strongest instrument in our pains system, became dominant only by a gradual takeover from more spectacular ways of being cruel, like putting the prisoner in the stocks, lopping off his ears or killing him. There were once more than 300 offences for which you could be killed by English law.<sup>5</sup> The essentially 19th-century process of substituting imprisonment for killing and other bodily mutilations and abuses was not completed in England until the 1960s. There are places where it is still not complete and some that are reversing the process, including the Central African Republic (or, as it now is, Empire), which in 1972 instituted loss of (according to the number of convictions) an ear, a second ear, a hand and finally life, as the penalty for theft.<sup>6</sup>

The promiscuous savagery with which English law once dealt death naturally turned petty criminals into desperadoes. So far as your risk of meeting cruel treatment went, it was a matter of indifference whether you committed a grave or a mild example of the capital offences, a situation still commemorated in our proverb that one might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. (The last execution in England for sheep-stealing was in 1831.<sup>7</sup>) Unwarned by the existence of the proverb, part of the judiciary took the cessation of hanging as a chance to renew the old blanket judicial savagery in terms of long prison sentences, inviting our age to coin a proverb that one might as well get 30 years for murder as for robbing a train.

Much of the movement to substitute prison for cruder pains was only superficially rational or humane. It reflected less the conscience than the squeamishness, self-righteousness and concern for appearances of the class that ruled 19th-century England. Typically, it abolished public hanging, lest the crowd enjoy and be depraved by them, but went on for a further century committing the cruelty of hanging in the privacy of prison.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, imprisonment itself merely removes the cruelty done to prisoners from public view. It is only a shade less cruel to deprive a person of two years than of two ears. (Moreover, if you deprive him of two years you don't know precisely what you're depriving him of, because you don't know his life-expectancy.) Similarly, the cessation of hanging has obliged the public, if not all the judges, to notice that a life sentence is not much less cruel than the death sentence.

By the turn of the 19th into the 20th century it was obvious to both the great Anglo-Irish socialists and puncturers of bourgeois hypocrisy, Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw, that imprisonment was hardly more than a 'nicer' and less conspicuous version of the wholesale executions which by then it had largely replaced. 'All trials are trials for one's life, just as all sentences are sentences of death,' Wilde<sup>9</sup> wrote (in prison) in 1897. 'Imprisonment is as irrevocable as death', Shaw<sup>10</sup> wrote in 1903.

In 1919 Shaw elaborated his perception into the burglar in Heartbreak House, whose burglary is only a pretend-burglary but whose arguments are valid. Caught seemingly stealing Lady Utterwood's diamonds, and threatened with prison, he replies: 'Well, you've got them back, lady: havn't you? Can you give me back the years of my life you are going to take from me?'

Imprisonment is partial, temporary and slow capital punishment. Wormwood Scrubs, a prison built in 1874 by convicts,<sup>11</sup> is, in kind through not degree, as much a monument to a mass atrocity as any grave whose occupants were forced to dig it before being shot.

## ALTERNATIVES

The rear-guard defence of all atrocities and affronts to conscience, from slavery to vivisection to sending little boys up chimneys to sweep them, has always been: 'It's regrettable. But show us the alternatives.'

RAP, by its very name, accepts the challenge. But its acceptance should not deceive anyone into supposing that to ask RAP to demonstrate what it can do is an objective or scientific way of evaluating alternatives to prison. While prison exists, it is an implied threat suspended over experiments as over people who 'get off with a fine.' So long as prison is the alternative to the success of the experiment, its existence increases the experiment's chances of failing. Moreover, so long as prison exists, it sucks up resources. The only genuine test would be to hand RAP the more than £200 million that is spent annually on the prisons<sup>12</sup> and then see what RAP could do.

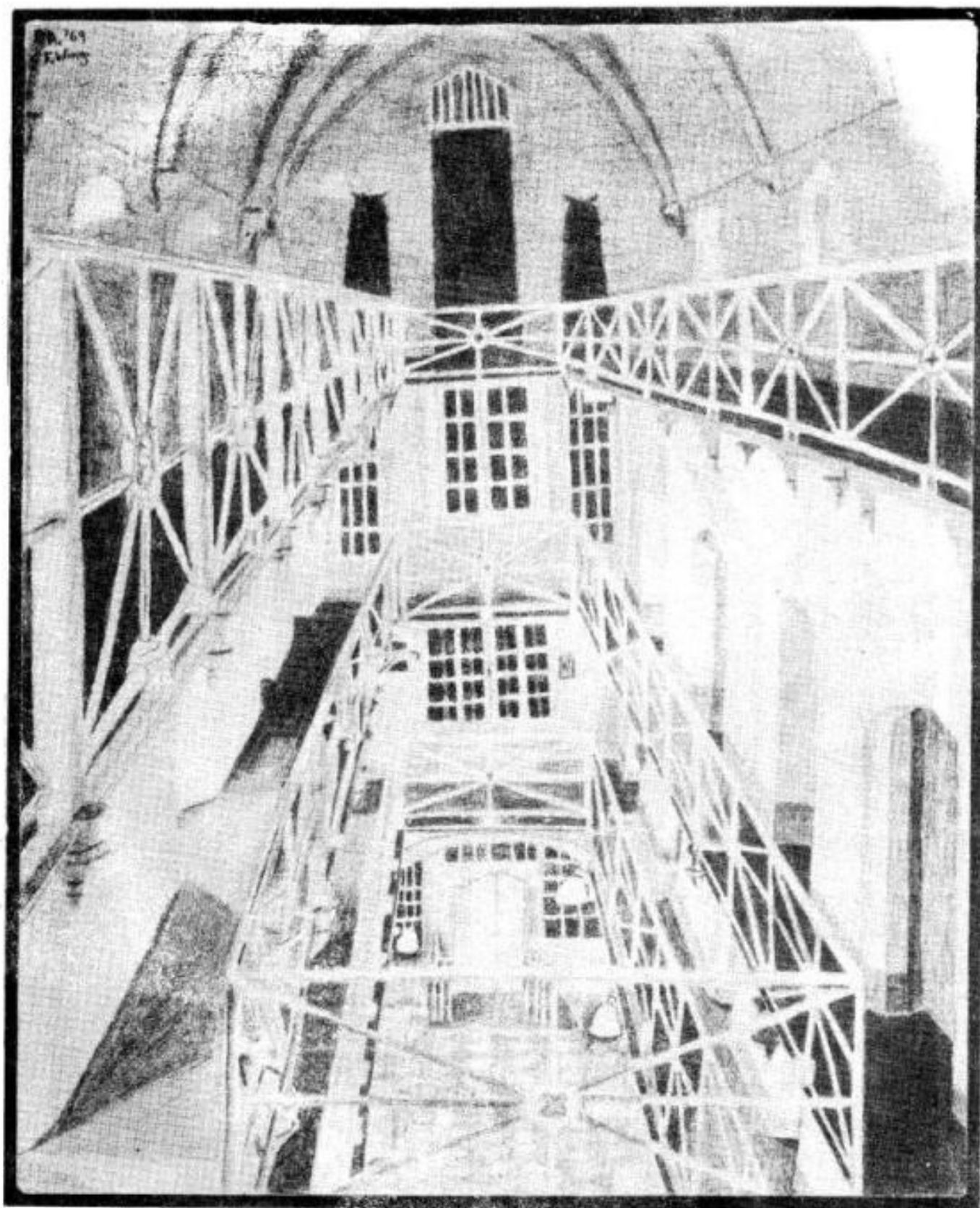
The most prolific method of finding alternatives to an atrocity is to abolish the atrocity. You then oblige necessity to become the mother of invention. Make it impossible for middle-middle-class households to get cheap and overworkable domestic servants, and human ingenuity has to invent the washing-up machine.

However, the alternative for which society should really be searching is an alternative to crime. Prison is not alternative to crime; it's the same thing in mirror writing. By putting him in prison, society is adopting the criminal's standards. To give someone 'a taste of his own medicine' is to endorse his medicine. If 'violence is the only language such people understand', society's business should be to enlarge their vocabulary.

## THE DISCUSSION

By segregating caught criminals in prison, society denies itself precisely the two opportunities it ought to leap at it if it seriously wants to eradicate crime: the opportunity to convince criminals of the reasonableness of society's point of view; and the opportunity to inform itself about the nature of criminality, whose impulses are probably present in us all.

Indeed, perhaps we are acting out the suppression of our own criminal impulses when we insist on locking away prisoners out of sight of and contact with the rest of society. If so, it is not surprising that the pretexts we put forward for behaving so irrationally involve a number of pretences: not only the pretence that you can't restrain a person without segregating him and hurting him from moment to moment into the bargain, but also the pretence that all crime is violent crime from whose perpetrators society needs to be shielded by a prison wall. Just as journalism persistently couples sex and violence, quite as though it couldn't see the moral and practical difference in status between violence and the socially harmless (provided it doesn't spread VD or unwanted babies) act of sex with consent, so discussion of crime couples offences against life and property, quite as though it couldn't see the moral social distinction between those. The promiscuous use of prison as a treatment for lawbreakers rests on the unspoken assumption, which nobody dares speak for fear of showing up its absurdity, that writing a fraudulent cheque is as dangerous to life and limb as stabbing.



F. Wing Holloway (1969) Fat Arrowsmith

Traditionally, it is violence against flesh and blood that makes news, and rises in the rate of violent crime that excite social concern. As a matter of fact, I am not convinced that anyone is in a position to know when the violent-crime rate rises. The rate is usually calculated as a comparison between the number of violent crimes and the total number of the population. However, that is to ignore the fact that a class which constitutes more than half of the population, namely women,<sup>13</sup> is a comparatively little given to crime of any sort (or at least, which is all that can be known with certainty, little given to being found out),<sup>14</sup> together with the seldom mentioned but patent probabilities that toddlers won't commit violent crimes and that old people are unlikely to attempt them except by poisoning. To arrive at the true violent-crime rate you would have to compare the number of violent crimes in a given year with the number of people in the population who were, during that year, genuine candidates for resort to violence.

Even, however, on a graph that relates crimes to total population,<sup>15</sup> violence against people (in a sense that includes murder, manslaughter and wounding,) although on the whole its tendency, from 1945 on, has been to rise, remains near the bottom of the diagram. Less than one thirtieth of the indictable offences recorded by the police consist of bodily attacks on people. Much the major part of crime concerns things and money, chiefly in the categories of burglary, theft and handling stolen goods, and fraud and forgery.<sup>16</sup>

If society were to restrain offenders only in cases where it needs to protect the citizens against a person proved to be violent, and not in superstitious pursuit of expiation or other fantasies, it would have comparatively few charges on its hands. That would promptly and significantly reduce another charge, that on the public purse.

A further bonus would follow as soon as we discarded the superstition that prison must consist not only of an outer wall but of internal oppressions. One reason why our present prisons cost society so much money is that hurting and humiliating prisoners uses a disproportionate amount of labour. In British universities and polytechnics, one staff member copes with seven and a half students, but in British prisons one staff member can cope with only two prisoners.<sup>17</sup> The present unnecessarily large prison population carries with it a second population, almost half its size, of prison employees. The squalor, ugliness and sheer grinding nastiness of prison, which for superstitious reasons we inflict on prisoners, form the daily working environment of gaolers. Any campaign to better the living conditions of prisoners is automatically a campaign also to better the working conditions of prison officers — a fact that came within an ace of explicit recognition in August 1979 when the protest of some of the prisoners at Peterhead maximum security prison against what they considered inhumanity was accompanied by objections from prison officers to the place's material seediness.

As soon as restraint is released from the oppression and secrecy of present-day prisons, society will for the first time have a fair chance of acquiring information about those violent people whom at present we can only label, as a confession of our ignorance, with words like 'psychopath'. To its non-violent criminals, society could, once it stops threatening them with prison, offer therapy in the only conditions (that is, freedom) where it has a fair chance of working and thus a fair chance of genuinely protecting society from crime. But a rush to the universal application of therapy would not work, because it would not be reasonable. The advantage in de-segregating criminals is that it permits reasonable discussion between them and the rest of society. One cautionary lesson demonstrated by Women's Lib is how much therapeutic breath used to be wasted in helping women 'adjust to the feminine role,' only for it to turn out later that the supposed patients were perfectly all right, it being the role that was wrong. A reasonable discussion with criminals implies not only that the criminals may be persuaded by society but that society is open to becoming convinced that the criminals are right.

Society has quite often had to admit this after the event, when it has changed its mind on its laws or a whole regime. The change in 1960 of the law about gambling, and in 1967 of that about male homosexual acts, shifted large groups of people overnight from the criminal classes into the innocent classes. Likewise, the classic ironic joke of the end of empire is that the subversive whom the colonialists perfectly legally imprisoned returns to the colonial capital as honoured guest and respected elder statesman.

To open discussions with criminals might put society in the way of learning comparable social lessons more quickly. If it should turn out that Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was right when he pronounced that property is theft, then the burglars suffering in our prisons are, if not innocent, at least no more guilty than the owners of the safes they burgled. It may be that the bulk of our prison population consists of unconscious and unwitting revolutionaries, whose failure is a breach of democracy rather than of any specific and absolute moral law. Thieves are concerned, like most respectable politicians and all ambitious business men, to effect a re-distribution of wealth. Their offence consists of failing to obtain their fellow-citizens' agreement before going into action.

The common, saloon-bar reproach that a thief is a workshy person who wants something for nothing carries a suspicion of moral ambiguity in society that runs on capital and interest ('Put your money to work for you') and gets much of its entertainment from gambling, whence, with luck, you may get something for remarkably little. To label the thief a criminal seems direct hypocrisy in a society where a rich person's child may lawfully get a fortune for, precisely, nothing beyond being his parent's child, an exploit that required neither work, thought nor moral rectitude on his part. To condemn the thief to piecemeal death in prison is so cruel as to suggest that it is society which is behaving criminally.

As Mrs Hushabye (Lady Utterwood's sister) exclaims in Heartbreak House, 'Oh, we can't bury a man alive for ten years for a few diamonds.'

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- 1 Of the 33,906 males 'received' into prison in England and Wales in 1977, only 7,996 had no previous sentence. In Scotland in the same year, of a total of 9,021 people sent to prison, 7,024 had previous sentences. Of those, 3,492 had between four and ten sentences. (Annual Abstract of Statistics, HMSO, 1979)
- 2 A percentage of 95 to 97 was cited by Ken Murray and quoted in an interview in *The Guardian*, 23 August 1979.
- 3 *The Times*, 15 August 1972, reported group therapy at Grendon Underwood but also group hypnosis at Wakefield, hormone implants at Wormwood Scrubs, brain surgery at Parkhurst, and drugs and electro-convulsion at other prisons. See also *The Abolitionist*, Summer 1979.
- 4 Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.
- 5 Derrick Sington and Giles Playfair: *Crime, Punishment and Cure*, p. 99 (Secker and Warburg, 1965)
- 6 *Sunday Times*, 6 August 1972.
- 7 E. Roy Calvert: *Capital Punishment in the Twentieth Century*, p. 10 (Putnam's, 5th edition, 1936)
- 8 The first English execution in private was in 1868 (*ibid.*, p. 96).
- 9 *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p. 509-510 (edited by R. Hart-Davis, Hart-Davis, 1962).
- 10 *Man and Superman* (*The Revolutionist's Handbook*)
- 11 Nikolaus Pevsner: *The Buildings of England: London*, p. 177 (Penguin, 1952)
- 12 Total net expenditure on prisons, England and Wales, 1976/7: £219,853,000. (Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1979).
- 13 Estimated UK population, 1977: 28,668,000 females and 27,184,000 males. (Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1979).
- 14 The number of women sentenced for indictable offences in England and Wales in 1977 was about one fifth of the number of men. (Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1979).
- 15 Such graphs (concerning England and Wales) occur on p. 57 and 59 of *Britain in Figures*, by Alan F. Sillitoe (Penguin, 1971).
- 16 In 1977 for England and Wales the ratio of offences concerning violence against the person to the total number of indictable offences recorded by the police was 82.2 to 2636.5. (Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1979)
- 17 Staff-to-student ratio of 1 to 7.5 in UK universities and polytechnics quoted from Dr Rhodes Boyson, *Daily Telegraph*, 23 August 1979. Daily average number of prison inmates in year ended March 1977: 41,548. (report on the Work of the Prison Department, HMSO, 1977) Number of prison staff, excluding education and probation officers, etc. 1 January 1976: (Prisons and the Prisoner, HMSO, 1977)



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 SEX IN PRISON
 

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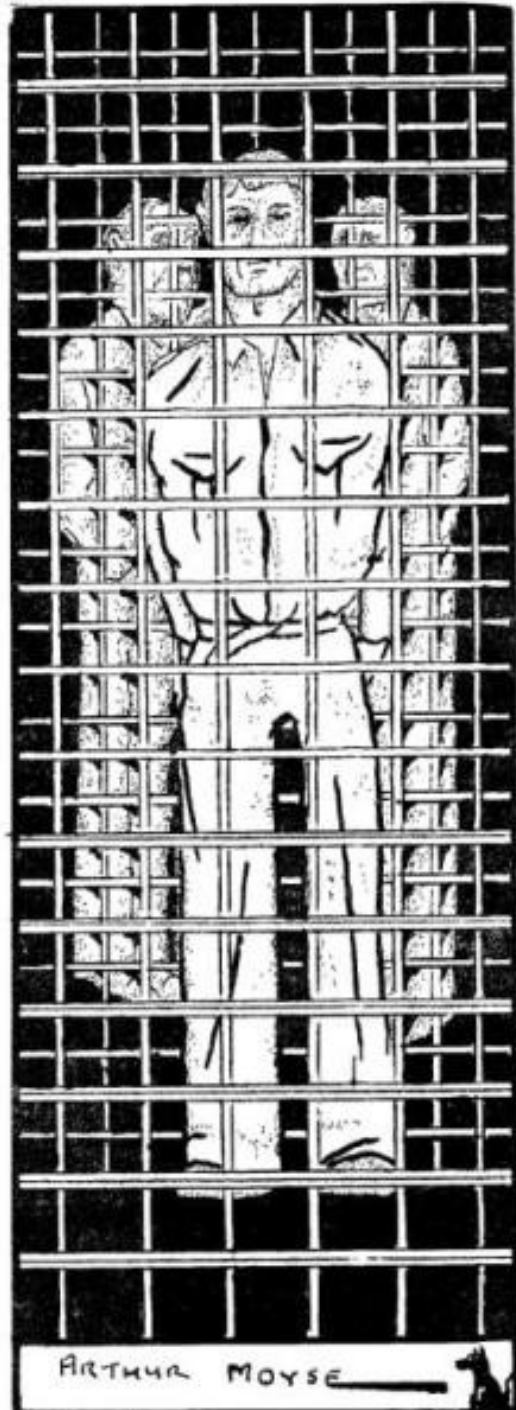
The Prison Department is the law enforcement body that keeps at least 40,000 people inside penal institutions in Britain. This captivity is achieved by an elaborate system of rules that can punish undesirable behaviour. In fact the rules are elaborate and flexible enough to cover almost any aspect of human behaviour if deemed necessary. One example is sexual behaviour. Sex in prison, as outside, is often ignored on an official level. However, it is not just a pretence of nicety, in fact, all sexual acts in prison are illegal. The opportunity for energy release by heterosexual means is obviously nearly nonexistent. Homosexuality when officially apprehended is dealt with strictly and masturbation is also an offence.

My information has been gathered and my opinions formed as a result of observations made while working in a prison for some years and by conversations with a few prisoners who I managed to make friends with, in spite of being a psychologist. As a female in an all male prison I have been the object of various graffiti scrawled on my office door and obscene drawings put through the letter box (not to mention a few propositions). It became apparent that a lot of sexy thinking was going on and I was the subject of a few phantasies, though I am still not absolutely certain whether the communications came from inmates or staff. What then does the sexual behaviour among prisoners consist of as I understand it?

To start with homosexuality: although in prison there are vast numbers of men living together in a very limited space, sometimes for many years, the extent of homosexuality is not great. It is mainly restricted to already practising gays, a few bisexual studs who do not mind the fact being known and others who try to keep it quiet. Often homosexual encounters are without emotional involvement and aided by the use of visual material e.g. a female pin-up pinned on the man's back. However, there are love affairs, quarrels and jealousy, communications by love notes and romantic rendezvous in the chapel. On the whole there is a strict social taboo against homosexuality, it is not very good for status and great stigma is in store for those caught at it. Position on the status hierarchy is quite important as it may modify your access to certain commodities, and being gay can be a threat to a male prisoners status and position. Despite this the actual prison homosexuals, some of whom acquire make-up, dye their hair etc., are fairly well accepted and do not get beaten up as long as they keep their distance. Thus there is a small core of practising homosexuals and there is also a small core of fetishists.

The universal outlet is masturbation. Bearing in mind how long prisoners spend in their cells, especially at the beginning of a long sentence, and the kind of mental tensions produced by merely being in prison over and above the natural sex urge, then wanking can become quite an important occupation. It might be saved up for a special treat at night, or carried out several times a day. Sometimes the habit reaches obsessional proportions and prisoners undergo puritanical self purges to try and cure it. Perhaps at first masturbation may be just a necessary physical release but with time boredom and depression undoubtedly become powerful motivations. It becomes a frantic activity and mental stimulation is needed to a great degree. In the absence of sensual stimulation the mind takes over and becomes very inventive. Elaborate sexual phantasies develop in order to

achieve erection. I am not really able to elaborate on this as sex is not usually discussed among prisoners on anything but a superficial level, such as . . . 'brassy birds I have known' . . . or . . . 'I'd like to give that new welfare bird a seeing to' . . . Masturbation is not openly discussed and only mentioned to me by prisoners when we have established a fair amount of trust.



The peripheral aids to stimulation are numerous. It might be arranged for a girl to visit you wearing no knickers, or having a detailed verbal sex encounter on a visit. Probably the most important is pornography, which is the focus of much underground social activity. There is the 'soft porn' condoned by the authorities such as Playboy and Mayfair i.e. W. H. Smith material. There are 'soft porn' kings who collect and save pin up material and supply it to other cons. They are held in low esteem but tolerated because of the need for this commodity. 'Hard porn' as it is illegal is rare and requires good organization to get it inside. Thus it starts off in the hands of the highest status cons the 'chaps', and is purchased with tobacco. In fact there is a fair amount of visual sex material floating around male prisons and tolerated by prison officers to a certain extent, probably because they like to get a look at it themselves. Many cell walls and floors are well-covered with pin ups and cunt-magazines. Written material is also popular and there is a small cottage industry of porny stories and drawings.

Having given as realistic a description as I am able to, it is necessary to say something about the atmosphere in which sexual behaviour occurs. First there is the legal aspect. Officially sex is considered undesirable, dirty, corrupt and cannot be allowed in a disciplinary regime. The rules are made clear when a person enters prison. It does not often happen but a prisoner can be nicked for wanking and is liable to lose a few days privileges on adjudication.

Privileges in prison, by the way, are what remains of basic human rights, like being able to talk to other people, food other than bread and water, access to books, bedding. Anyway the offence is covered by the rule about 'offending against good order and discipline.' It is not usually carried this far but the fact remains that no prisoner wants to be found out. A prisoner's position is degrading enough, but to be caught wanking by a screw is not desirable and they do have a habit of entering the cell or having a peep through the spyhole unexpectedly.

The other contribution to the atmosphere is the prisoners' inability to seriously admit to real sexual frustrations, and how they deal with it, not to mention guilt. I have been told that just before locking up at night there is a real panic to get hold of some juicy visual aids. A conversation might go like this:-

A. 'Got anything to read Fred?'

B. 'Yeh, want something horny?'

A. 'No, not really, just something light, a mag, or something.'

to which B produces his pile of magazines minus the ones he does not want to lose. There is an overt denial of sexual need: however, prisoners do not condemn each other for their individual outlets. The prisoner feels ashamed of his way-out phantasies and sexual habits and sees himself as dirty, sordid and perverted. His wife or girlfriend is thought much too nice to be included and he would be degrading her if she was anywhere in the masturbation phantasies and anyway they soon cease to be stimulating enough. Real women and real relationships become disconnected from sex. This is aggravated by rules such as no intimacy being allowed in letters. Overall then, the sexual atmosphere is very furtive, subversive and overwhelmed by fears.

Sex for the majority of men in prison is a mechanical motion of the hand, with a vast amount of mental imagery. There is no touch, smell, love or sensations from another person and most of the body is motionless and not involved. It may occur always well under the blanket with a magazine for company and in a state of constant preparation for anybody to appear. The prisoner is forced to behave sexually

in a way that makes him feel degraded.

Obviously this does not apply only to prisoners and a lot of what I have said applies in a broader context. However people in prison do not have a lot of anything in their favour and there is nothing really to help compensate for an almost complete loss of sexual freedom.

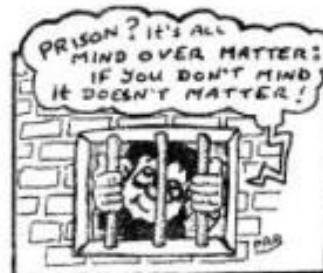
What happens then when they get out? In some cases impotence, if only for a limited time. Many men after a long time in prison find they are unable to maintain an erection in intercourse with their wife or any woman in fact, and they do not get aroused by the normal stimuli they used to. Prisoners' own theories about this are that they have developed needs for extremely perverted means of excitation and that these are incompatible with the expectations of their British Standard wives. He wants to fuck her, can't, so he feels bad, he tries to get her interested in some of his ideas, she does not like it and gets upset, he feels even worse because he thinks he has corrupted her - and so on. Thus there is a breakdown in the relationship he has been clinging onto for so long.

It seems that to cope with the situation of being in prison, sex has to be something far removed from relationships. Relationships are something else, and they also become distorted. Contact with people in prison is of a limited kind and subject to elaborate defences, constructed for survival. Trust does not abound ever between cons and if anyone needs love and comfort there's not much of it about. The people he knew or wants to know in the outside world become phantasy characters and when 'freedom' is tested out it may not measure up to expectations.

Sex is just one illustration of the effects of imprisonment and punishment for a criminal act is a very involved process.

To sum up; however hung up about sexual relationships a person is when he is sentenced, he certainly will not be any better off when he gets out, and probably a lot worse.

Zara Whitlock



#### SEX FROM THE INSIDE

A former prisoner using experience 'drawn from a three year sentence served at three London and two local institutions, and spanning over four years' adds his personal experience on sex inside.

Sex is sublimated to a wide degree. Perfume on letters is a common-place stimulus of the sex urge. Titnags are considered juvenile and the closest most men get to sex of any kind is a furtive grope in the visiting rooms. There are (obvious) homosexual: in prisons, and a few men have physical contact with them. A few because 'the girls' are

invariably placed in single cells, and close encounters of the toilet type are impossible, because of the half-doors fitted to all cubicles. The number of sexual relationships between men would rise rapidly if toilet cubicles were built to human rather

than to lilyputian dimensions; If sex could be done and not be seen to be done. Not all prisoners wank discreetly, indeed not all prisoners wank, but all subscribe to the view that wanking is not a disease; probably the only subject on which there would be a unanimous agreement if a questionnaire of sexual practices were distributed amongst her majesty's cons.

Love is a much more important part of the emotional make-up of cons than sex, part of the feedback from the unconscious acceptance that sex is the one thing excluded to all prisoners, and while some cons talk easily of loving their fellow cons there is little done to establish sexual contact.

The requirements of the body are realised by the prison department only to the extent of providing basic food, bedding and work, and inadequate toilet facilities. The mind is slightly better provided for, with the availability of books, and evening classes. Exercise and drawing books may be obtained; Each book is liable to censorship before it leaves the prison, and one of the home office rules relating to inmates' use of these books goes something like this: 'this book is to be used for private study/education \* purposes only. It may not be used for any pornographic writing, poetry or prose, nor any obscene drawing.' (\*delete as applicable)

Romanticism, if not actively encouraged, is accepted as the normal outlet for man/woman feelings. A drawing of a nude figure with an erection would be obscene, equally, with any depicting female sex-organs.

That segregation from women plays a large part in anti-authoritarian acts can be seen from what, inside, is considered to be the depth of insult to prison staff, that is to say to a prison officer: 'there's a big nigger knocking off your wife. . .' of course, it's not always 'nigger', but that is the most common, simply because that is the widest spread hate among the prison population.

Another question asked when a prison officer is being more difficult than usual is 'what's up with him? he couldn't get his leg over last night' even the cons' name for prison officers; 'screws' has sexual connotations. The exhibitionism of cons is far outstripped by the voyeurism of their guards, whose eyeballing activities are carried out when the cons are most likely to be undressed - in the morning.

Nakedness is not frowned on in prison (a con is given prison clothing only after he has surrendered his own, and on his release he can only collect his own clothing if he has handed back the prison issue.) But contact between naked men is forbidden.

The proposed castration of convicted rapists by a North American State appears as an economic measure, an attempt to impose permanent celibacy in place of the temporary celibacy of prison. In effect it comes as an extension of the major restriction of prison, implemented by society - heterosexual activity.

It is not uncommon for the foam-rubber mattresses in an English prison cell to have grin-shaped holes, plucked out by men in an effort to relieve the sexual frustrations of enforced celibacy, and the weekly bath is a regular outlet, with feelings heightened by the contact of warm water, and the softness and perfume of soap.

The conclusion is that in the denial of normal sexual fulfillment in prisons, the prison department is actually engendering deviant practices.

Inside, rape is the ultimate form of brutality between the men. Since prison life excludes the female as a victim of male sexual violence, prisoners find victims in other men, very often, men who are non-threatening, non-violent, young and often gay.

Men who rape other men use the same tactics to gain sexual, physical domination over their victims as against women and attack men who are less likely or able to defend themselves. Men who aren't gay upon entering prison but become involved sexually with another man often still view gays as perverted and contemptible. Usually the violence is a tactic used by stronger men to secure a 'kid' sex slave and claim ownership over 'desirable' young (gay) men. Or they may use a less physical, more subtle form of coercion to get this relationship. It's all the same game, though.

Two years ago at Washington State Penitentiary - Walla Walla, a number of prisoners formed a group, Men Against Sexism, whose intention was to destroy the barter system for exploitation of gay and physically weak prisoners. Men Against Sexism held meetings to discuss sexism in a personal way, as well as set strategies on specific problems inside. For example, 1) secure 'safe' cells for vulnerable prisoners, 2) pull gay and passive prisoners out of Protective Custody and provide them with support and protection, 3) hold regular meetings to raise consciousness around sexism with topics like rape and male/female stereotyping.

Men Against Sexism included both gay and nongay men, as well as both black and white prisoners. But since the group began the situation at Walla Walla has altered significantly. With the wave of bomb discoveries and escape attempts in summer 78, the authorities have used every excuse to clamp down on groups like M.A. S. and destroy them wherever possible. Dixie Lee Ray, governor of Washington, decided that the unrest at the prison was due to a liberal administration allowing the prisoners too much freedom and fired the staff at Walla Walla, replacing them with an old-style repressive administration. These changes have served to evaporate Men Against Sexism for the time being.

There are no rape crisis centres behind bars and most victims are forced to accept the consequences of the attacks over and over again. From one prisoner: 'The long term effects in many people are the inability to feel emotions, depersonalization, suspicion of other people's motives in forming friendships and blind hate against the system which made the rape possible.' If the rape victim reports the attack to the authorities he is facing the risk of being killed by his attacker. This is why many men resign themselves to protective custody units - the isolation at least gives them physical protection.

#### LOVE & STRUGGLE

Prison support groups on the outside have not been able to learn more than a fraction of what goes on inside around sexual violence and gay oppression. Prisoners and staff are reluctant to discuss what is really going down. But it's time that both inside and outside people thought about how we are all manipulated through conditioned sexuality, too. If nobody wants to submit to the force of the guards then why would anyone submit to the Man to keep the prisoners fighting each other, not acting as equals and just basically reproducing all of society's crap.

Prisoners wanting to form Men Against Sexism groups could get people to pass in information from Rick English, at Box 520, Walla Walla Pen in Washington state or just start rapping together to see what could happen.

## SCREWED

From Vol 1 No 5 of 'Anarchist Black Dragon'

The guards of the Oregon State penitentiary have a free run to do anything they want, any time they want, and to anyone they want.

The prison administration has worked hard and long for several years to condition the public and the prisoners of Oregon that the keepers' form of nonsense is rational thought.

For years the keepers have told prisoners accused of prison infractions that they may have witnesses testify on their behalf before the prison disciplinary committee, as long as the witnesses are not inmates, staff members, or other persons. That doesn't make sense, but no one objects in the free world, the only hope prisoners have.

The prison administration backs the actions of the guards, whether the guards beat, mace, torture, destroy mail, etc., ad nauseum, and recently the administration gave guards the right to use prisoners as sex objects.

The president of the guards union, a nine year employee, and one of the most visible guards to both prisoners and staff, was caught having sex with a prisoner in his private, locked office. He was not prosecuted, the excuse being that the laws of Oregon, indeed the laws of the United States Constitution apply only where the prison administration wants them to apply. Guards can break the law with impunity except in extreme cases.

Imagine a prisoner craving drugs being offered drugs, drugs in abundance and a steady supply of drugs, if he will go along with the guard. That gives you some idea of free choice in a prison environment. Imagine a world where a guard can make or break a prisoner's record of 'adjustment' and thereby decide if the prisoner will spend extra years in prison. That gives you an idea of 'consenting adults.' Imagine a world where a guard has god-like powers - he decides where the prisoner lives, who lives next to him, how the prisoner is clothed, when the prisoner is allowed extra time out of his cell - and that gives you a slight idea of the relationship between prisoner and guard.

This administration has long covered for an unregulated prison staff. (The lawsuit of the Prisoners Legal Services spans three years and includes several boxes of evidence.) The administration has devised a complex system of cover-ups for their every action, including methods to manipulate state and federal officials to cover for them. (See 'Prison, vol 1, issue 1') The administration has now gone one step further - guards have now been given free reign on any prisoner that excites him.

There is no other prison in the world like Oregon's prison. Let us pray there never will be.

Donald Danford

### PHIL RUFF - 11 MONTHS IN SOLITARY

Phil Ruff, an anarchist and 'Black Flag' contributor/cartoonist for some years, has now been in prison for almost two years. Having spent some time in Wormwood Scrubs Phil was sent to Gartree, a long-term prison in the Midlands. This had the advantage of accessibility for his aged parents to visit and being a long-term prison also had facilities to enable Phil to pursue studies (he thought of taking an 'Open University' course.) Visiting conditions for Phil at Gartree were comparatively reasonable: canteen-type facilities; no screws breathing down your neck throughout the visit; up to two hours per visit, and more. (These canteen-type facilities did exist in Brixton Prison for remand prisoners but now, for some unknown reason, the visiting facilities consist of a corridor with tables close together and prisoners

12 Phil was kept in Durham in solitary confinement until early this year when he was moved to Armley jail in Leeds - but he is still being kept in solitary.

Phil described Durham prison as what he thought to be the worst of a bad lot. The cells were so small that when standing up it was impossible to stretch your arms out and library books had to be piled against the cell door to keep the mice out. Other prisoners in Durham were on hunger strike against the conditions there. Phil's letters were subjected to rigorous censorship, including letters to his solicitor. In fact, rather than censor bits out of his letters the prison authorities kept his letters on file and didn't send them out nor return them to Phil. We hope that more details of the conditions in Durham prison will be brought into the open. Phil wrote a twelve page letter, describing the conditions there but this was not of course allowed out.

Since the Gartree riot, Phil has been held in solitary confinement on 'Rule 43'. He hasn't been charged with anything arising out of the riot. This rule allows for the segregation of prisoners without any offence being committed. It is used in cases where prisoners are separated from the others 'for their own good' - 'allows for segregation by the governor to good order and discipline'. Although this order has to be renewed regularly by a magistrate it is often abused and as in Phil's case, allows for a prisoner to be held for a year or even years in solitary without even being found guilty of any offence.

Solitary confinement is used in British prisons as a form of torture - both psychological and physical. It consists of 23 hours a day in a cell, alone, with no contact with other prisoners and often there is no contact even with the screws; one hour exercise usually in a cage, exclusion from all prison activities (no classes, T.V., etc.); restricted visits; restricted books, papers, letters. The reality of solitary confinement is that a person has no social contact or communication whatsoever, the purpose being to isolate and consequently break the prisoners's identity and to confuse him/her in order to weaken resistance.

There are numerous examples of prisoners being put into solitary confinement or 'on the block' due to their political beliefs. Almost all of the 80 Irish Republican prisoners in England as well as other left activists spend a great deal of their sentences in solitary because the State wants to separate them from the majority of the prison population so as to avoid an even stronger politicisation of prisoners in general.

Letters to Phil, expressing solidarity, can be sent to:

R.M.

B.13517  
H.M. Prison,  
Armley,  
Leeds.

*Below is an untitled poem by Phil Ruff. A number of his cartoons are also in this issue of the 'Abolitionist'.*

Walled around the boundary  
Fenced inside the wall  
Cameras turning, sentinel and sinister  
In my tiny double-bolted box  
I sit scratching little moments of my life  
Picking the scabs from desires  
Being patient, growing older. . . .

DAILY MIRROR, Wednesday, August 22, 1979

# SILENT HELL OF 'GRASS' JAILER

By BRYAN RIMMER

A JAIL officer who alleged that warders attacked a prisoner has been sent to Coventry by his colleagues.

Since his allegation several officers at Brixton have been suspended and are to appear in court.

And 32-year-old Mark Cowan has not been allowed to return to the jail.

First he was moved to Ford open prison in Sussex — and was promptly shunned by his new colleagues.

He then asked to be moved to Durham jail, where he has again met a wall of silence.

He works alone in a hospital ward with only prisoners to talk to.

His colleagues refuse to speak to him unless absolutely necessary.

And his local union officials refuse to answer any of his queries in writing.

Last night his wife Janette, 31, spoke out bitterly after five months of silent anguish.

Janette, who has been

## EXCLUSIVE

in hospital because of the strain, said: "Our life is hell."

"We are being forced to suffer because he did what he felt to be right."

Janette and their five-year-old son Mark are living 150 miles from Durham, and the strain on the marriage is showing.

In London the deputy chief of the Prison Officers' Association backed the Durham officials' ban on written communication.

And the union's Durham secretary agreed that his members were talking to Mark only when necessary.



SHUNNED: Mark Cowan

## WOMAN PRISON ACTIVIST RAPED BY GUARD

Below is part of a letter sent to the Torch/La Antorcha concerning the rape of Shirley Keller, an active member of the Lucasville 14. In the past, to protest the complete denial of human rights to prisoners, the group wrote over 7,500 letters to government officials and conducted a hunger strike. When this failed to get results, they sent their own cut-off fingers to U.S. officials and the Soviet Mission to the UN. So far their active resistance has been met with brutality, strip-cell confinement, forced hospitalization and drugging, isolation — and now rape!

Dear Torch,

As you know, Shirley Jean Keller is one of a group of prisoners known as the Lucasville 14, having renounced her citizenship in August 1977. She has been fighting with us ever since.

The government took custody of Shirley, and moved her to a federal prison in an attempt to break her away from us... she was first taken to Alderson, West Virginia. She continued to organize while there. She was then moved to Pleasanton, California, the same prison that Patty Hearst was in.

Shirley was recently raped by a male guard at Pleasanton and as a result is pregnant! When Shirley reported that she had been raped she was thrown in the hole in an attempt to force her into silence, and force her to consent to an abortion, and she has refused both.

The media in California got onto it, and a radio station got in to interview her, and she told it like it was. She was then moved, along with another woman prisoner who was a witness to the rape, to a county jail in San Francisco. A couple of lawyers and some Bay Area political activists called a press conference for her, and some people from Congressman Dellums' office got in to speak with her.

Yesterday I received another letter from Shirley telling me that she has been moved again, this time to a men's federal prison in San Diego, and she and her witness are being kept in an isolation unit there. She only gets out of her cell 45 minutes a day, and they are pressing her to abort, and she is still refusing and stating that she wants to leave the country and have the baby.

Richard Armstrong  
Lucasville 14



SUFFERING: Wife Janette and little Mark.



*The following is from a Prop press release (27th Sept, 79)*

On 31st August prisoners in D Wing at Wormwood Scrubs were subjected to an unprecedented assault by an organised riot force of prison officers - 300 strong. Since that date the prison has been under the strictest security. For a fortnight there was a complete ban on family visits and access to the wing itself was denied to ancillary staff working within the prison. Outside lawyers and probation officers were unable to contact their clients and cases. The restrictions were commented upon in the press and there have also been low key reports of a prisoners' demonstration in some newspapers. But the security blanket has been sufficient to smother news of the scale and the serious implications of what has occurred.

Even now many prisoners are receiving visits behind glass and large numbers of prisoners continue to be transferred without notice to prisons in other parts of the country. The seriousness of what has happened has been clear to us for some weeks and most newspapers are well aware of the concern that we have voiced as to the whereabouts and wellbeing of many individual prisoners reported to us as having been injured.

The information now to hand is of violence on the scale of the aftermath of the 1976 Hull riot, inflicted in the presence of senior officers of both governor and uniform grades, and administered by a regional, and maybe national, force of trained and riot-equipped prison officers. Even if this force had not been launched into action in so violent a manner, its very existence - unsanctioned by Parliament and unannounced by Government - raises issues which place recent events at Wormwood Scrubs in a class of their own amongst recent penal developments.

On 13th August prisoners were promised by the Governor that they would receive a reply within two weeks to complaints they had made about increasingly restrictive conditions and the curtailment of privileges. On the 31st - the third anniversary of the Hull riot - after the two weeks had elapsed without any reply being given, prison officers entered the cells of D Wing prisoners and removed plastic water bottles (used by prisoners as do-it-yourself weight lifting equipment). They accompanied this needless provocation with threats of 'if you want a fight, we'll give you one'.

At 5pm 192 prisoners in D Wing refused to go up to the landings and staged a peaceful demonstration in protest at the deteriorating situation.

At 7pm there was a tannoy call for 'F group to report to control'. With hindsight, it now seems likely that this was either the rallying call for the assembled forces of armed prison officers to muster, or for the Wormwood Scrubs contingent to join that force.

D Wing prisoners had no knowledge of this massing of forces. Their sit down was confined to the administrative and recreational areas and landings, and the cells themselves, which alone would offer sight and sound of what was developing outside, were locked. But we have since received many reports from C Wing prisoners of the massive build up which took place at this time. Alarmed by the stamping in the yard, these C Wing prisoners climbed onto chairs or onto the hot water pipes which run along the end of the cells so that they could look out of the windows. Various reports spoke of 'hundreds', '300' or '400' prison officers forming up in ranks of four. All agreed on their dress and equipment -

helmets, visors, padded jackets and gloves, and long staves - not the normal prison officer's baton. These are the weapons which the D Wing prisoners, taken by surprise a few hours later, were to describe as 'pickaxe handles'.

Two officers stood in the yard with notebooks, to take details of the cell location of any C Wing prisoner who looked out of his own window. These prisoners were placed on report and have subsequently been dealt with - with up to 28 days loss of privileges and removal from association. We have also just heard, from two quite separate sources, that bricks and stones from a small building or construction area at one end of the yard were hurled up at the windows as further discouragement.

At 10 pm two squads of 50 helmeted prison officers flung open the end gates of the wing and stormed in, lashing out with staves at prisoners who were sitting peaceably, many of them playing cards, chess or dominoes. We have been told that one Irish prisoner, reported to us variable as Tony Lynch or Ron Lynch, was playing chess with his back to the gates as they were flung open. He was felled by a heavy blow from a 'pickaxe handle' and repeatedly beaten while prison officers ran past him to attack other prisoners.

Several senior staff members of D Wing were present during the assault - notably the Assistant Governor Gregory Smith and P/O (Principal Officer) Hutchinson. We understand that another assistant governor was so shocked by the attack that he has applied for an immediate transfer. We are awaiting confirmation of reports we have received of the behaviour of individual named officers before making such details known.

We are prepared to name P/O (Principal Officer) Tomlinson as having given evidence in the subsequent adjudications on D Wing prisoners. Though a member of the Wormwood Scrubs staff he is not, in fact, a D Wing officer. His appearance as a witness on so many adjudications suggests that he was one of the external force.

At least some of the Wing's own regular staff, who had remained within the wing during the demonstration, some of them chatting and joking with prisoners, were appalled at the savage way in which the peaceful sit down was broken up. We have accounts of these prison officers hurriedly opening cell doors so that prisoners could get out of the way of their charging, yelling colleagues. As many as ten prisoners piled into some cells and tried to hold the doors against their attackers.

At the same time as the main force was breaking into the wing at ground level, other squads, each of 20 or so, came into the wing from the spiral staircase turret entrances at the end of each landing. It is on the landings that prisoners were forced to run the gauntlet as they ran to and fro to find an unlocked cell. Those that were in cells were dragged out to be beaten and we have reports that senior officers were amongst those who selected which prisoners to haul out.



We have been told by quite separate sources that one prisoner, Mick (or Nick) Walters (or Waters), a crippled polio victim with a useless foot, was ordered by prison officers to lie down. He was then repeatedly beaten and kicked. A senior officer, one of those walking along the landings identifying prisoners to be dragged out of their cells and beaten, actually had to step over Walters to do so.

Another disabled prisoner, Patrick Hackett, was reported as having been knocked down, kicked and beaten. Like other Irish prisoners he was singled out for special violence. Last week we appealed for information about an unknown Asian prisoner who had been last seen, by fellow prisoners subsequently moved elsewhere, lying motionless, bleeding from kicks to the head. We now believe this prisoner to have been Raju (or Ranji) Patel.

Information passed on from one prison officer – and we have no means of judging the motives or accuracy of this report – stated that 69 prisoners were injured badly enough to require medical attention and that 26 required stitches. But this general picture fits in with prisoners' reports of sixty injured and with the preliminary list of 28 names which we had already compiled by the 15th September.

Another prison officer has stated that the riot force came from Brixton, Wandsworth and Pentonville as well as from the Scrubs itself. He said that 500 prison officers could have been called upon if wanted. A comparison of the various reports which have so far reached us suggests that in fact 300 prison officers arrived in coaches and that between 170 and 200 made the actual assault on D Wing, the remainder being kept in reserve.

#### RAP PRESS STATEMENT

Radical Alternatives to Prison wishes to join with others in calling for an independent public inquiry into the serious events which took place at Wormwood Scrubs on August 31st. We are appealing to the All-Party Parliamentary Penal Affairs Group to take immediate steps to ascertain from the responsible authorities the following information:

- 1 Was the use of a squad of prison officers to assault prisoners at Wormwood Scrubs sanctioned by anyone who is accountable for that decision?
- 2 If that decision was sanctioned are those in positions of public responsibility content to allow such activity to be carried out in our prisons?
- 3 If the decision was taken at Wormwood Scrubs by a person or group of people who were not given the authority to act in this way, are the person or people concerned going to be identified and charged appropriately?

RAP is concerned that our prisons are no longer under effective control.

#### THE IRISH POW BULLETIN

The Bulletin of the Irish Political Prisoners in Britain states:-

'4 Republican POW's held in 'D' Wing, were moved out after the assaults. . . Gerry Young to Durham, Stephen Nordonne to Stragways, Roy Walsh to Wandsworth and Phil Sheirdan to Winchestre, Herts.' The Bulletin also mentions the wounds inflicted on Roland Lynch which 'resulted in a great loss of blood'. He has lost a month's remission.



The 'Guardian' (11th Oct 1979) reported that training in riot control technique for prison officers had been started in Feb. 1978. The first public indication of this 'long-term Home Office programme' emerged on August 31st at Wormwood Scrubs.

New Statesman 12 Oct 1979

Anna Coote: 'The Ns has collected information from 8 different sources, including relations, friends and lawyers of D Wing prisoners and other individuals who are closely involved with prison. Their reports tally in almost every respect and add up to an astonishing account of unprovoked violence'.

'A senior police officer has now been appointed to investigate allegations of criminal activity, at Wormwood Scrubs'.

'A man called Burny has lost an eye'. 'One psychologist (at the prison) voiced the hope that prisoners who had been injured would get legal aid. Few doubt that there will be further violence'.





## HULL PRISON

Following the use by the 'Guardian' on August 11th of material smuggled out of Hull prison by Irish republican prisoners and sent to RAP, we were sent by Tom Sharratt of that newspaper a letter. It read:

'It is correct that conditions are as described in the letter either in your hands or the RAP. The prisoners there are refusing to accept visits from their families until conditions of visits improve. We are most definitely of the opinion that the governor is ruling over this and not merely the Home Office as conditions are not like this in all top security prisons. I am absolutely certain about this big problem in Hull.' There follows information which demonstrates how the informant is aware of the position.

The full text of the letter from 4 prisoners:

'Following the large wage increase to the tools of oppression, namely the army, police and very soon the prison service, it is becoming very clear as unemployment continues to escalate amongst the working class, that Britain is in the midst of civil war preparations.

The continuing silence from left wing groups in regards to the Labour and now the Conservatives oppression of the Irish working class and the brutality carried out against the prisoners will in years to come lead to their own downfall.

The ruling elite will not hesitate in the event of Civil War to use the same methods which are now being used in Ireland to put down the English working class. All forces at the disposal of the government have undergone rigorous training in preparation for a class war in Britain. At present Ireland is not only being used as a training ground for the army, they are now using the H-Blocks of Long Kesh for the training of prison personnel in the handling of political prisoners. (Note the number of English and Scottish screw presently employed in Long Kesh.) Not only are they using the H-Blocks of Long Kesh for the training of these prison officers but are actively using the dispersal and local prisons here in England.

I shall now give further examples of these preparations, and I use the plight of the Irish political prisoners in England, and especially to the visiting conditions which they and their families have to undergo because of their political convictions. As far as the prison administration are concerned we as Irish political prisoners are only the guinea pigs and are used as such to help the prison administration prepare themselves for the intake of English Political Prisoners when the Class war takes place in England.

Hull prison has again reopened for the confinement of POW's, and once again the POW is faced with atrocious visiting conditions. The visiting room in which the POW is expected to have his visit is approximately 12 foot long and 8 foot in width, two large tables are placed together in the middle of the room, the POW has to sit at one side of these tables while his visitors are expected to sit at the opposite side. No physical contact is permitted. While the visit is in progress two screws are in the room taking notes. It is interesting that despite the fact of no physical contact being permitted the POW is still subjected to a strip search before and after the visit, and his visitors are given a body search with a metal detector. As a result of these conditions Republican prisoners are refusing to accept visits.

Our comrade . . . arrived here in . . . and from the time of his arrival has been continually harassed by the prison administration. It is now ten months since . . . last saw his

wife and three children, due to the fact that he was held in . . . prison and refused to accept the half hour screened visit which they offered him in solidarity with our comrade. . . 's refusal to accept these visiting conditions. Following his arrival at Hull prison he immediately sent a visiting order to his wife who made arrangements to visit him. (Note a POW's visitor has to give five days notice before she or he can visit). The night before the visit a riot occurred on the wing where . . . was confined. When his wife arrived the following day for the visit, she was turned away at the prison gate by a screw with a smiling face who told her that . . . was no longer in the prison and he didn't know where he was. It is true that . . . had been moved to . . . prison the day that his wife was turned away at the prison gate, but we have established from . . . who is now back in prison, that at the time of his wife and three children being turned away at the prison gate he was in fact still in the prison and was not moved to . . . prison until later in the day.

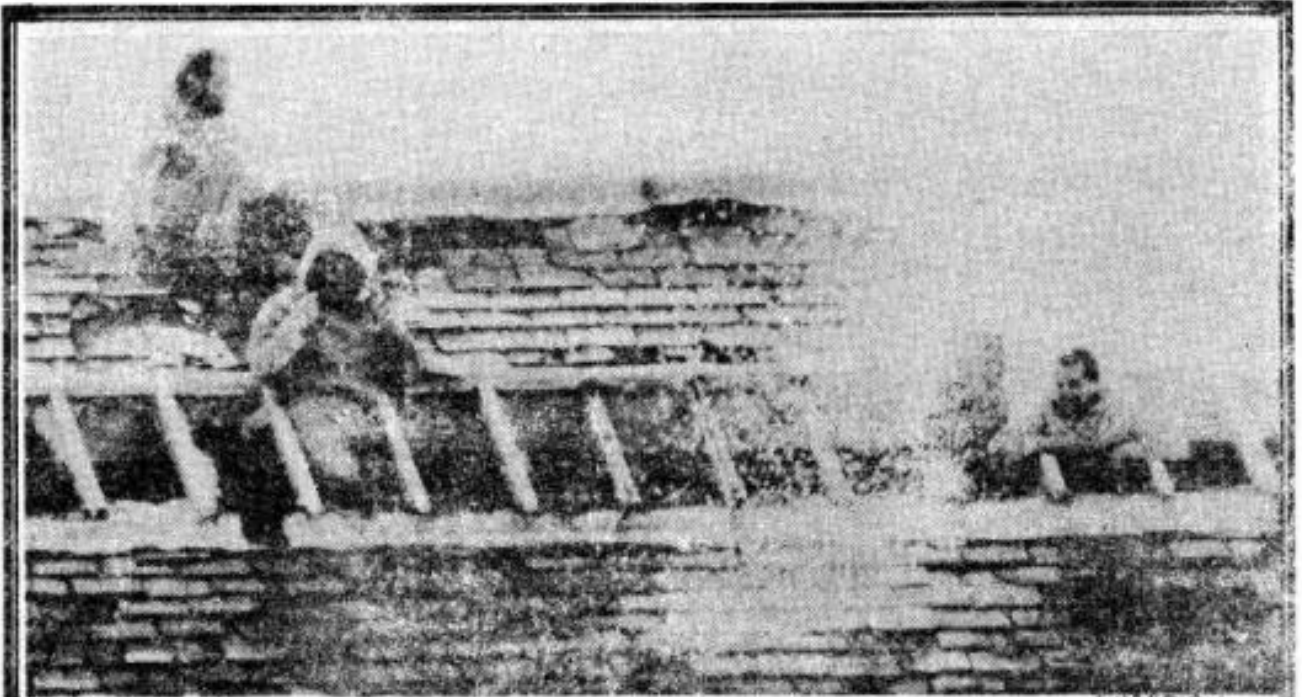
Just another example of the victimisation carried out against POW's here at Hull, was the visit of . . . and his girl friend. When . . . entered the visiting room and found all the oppressive conditions in force (as described in an earlier paragraph) he objected very strongly and refused to co-operate with the conditions they were trying to impose. After much argument the visit was terminated. It had lasted approximately three minutes. . . . visitor had travelled from . . . for the visit and had paid £s on fares for the privilege of a body search and a three minute visit. The next morning . . . received 14 days in the block (in solitary confinement) for objecting to the atrocious conditions they were trying to impose.

When we complain about visiting conditions we are always given the same answer of 'Don't blame us its the Home Office'. This is just a pass the buck statement. In fact it is the screws who dictate what type of visits the POW's receive in various dispersal prisons. I use the word various in the last sentence advisedly because all English prisons whether they be dispersal or local are autonomous, the Home Office acting as a Central Government.

We have no intention of making suggestions as to how the prison system might be reformed, because we know this to be a fruitless exercise as it is a part of Capitalism's machinery and like all other institutions it shall be with us until Capitalism is smashed. The reason why we mention the way various prisons are run is to highlight the influence which the screws have in the day to day running of prisons. We don't claim to be the only prisoners who suffer as a result of this influence which the screws wield in prison. We recognise that all prisoners suffer under the influence they wield, but there are certain groups amongst the prison population who are made that much more uncomfortable. We can only hope that appropriate action will be taken against these individual screws at some future date!

The letter ends with calls of solidarity and is sent in the name of four prisoners though it is clearly composed by one individual. It seems likely the letter was endorsed by all four named prisoners.

The Home Office spokesman contacted by the 'Guardian' is quoted as saying the letter's description of visiting conditions was 'approximately correct'. Although no separate regulations for IRA prisoners existed 'high risk' prisoners were subject to extra security precautions. It was claimed that not all IRA prisoners were 'high risk' and that RAP's suggestion made by the Co-ordinator that Irish republican prisoners were being treated differently because of their political views was not true. No doubt Irish republicans will feel somewhat disturbed that all 'IRA prisoners' are not high risk.



At Peterhead gaol, hoses spray the rooftop demonstrators, who donned oilskins for protection

## Ten in rooftop protest at 'inhuman' gaol

GUARDIAN  
22/8/79

### PETERHEAD PRISON

The riot at Peterhead Prison in August 1979 caused a great deal of publicity in the Scottish Press and its repercussions are frightening as prison officers are allowed to continue carrying out their own disciplinary code surrounded in secrecy. The following article is a diary of events that took place over the five day protest period and includes material sent by Rose Innes from the Scottish media.

22nd August 1979

'Press and Journal'

The Peterhead Prison has a reputation as one of Scotland's toughest prisons with many of the prisoners serving long sentences. This latest protest about prison conditions began after news that prisoners had been refused legal aid to pursue their case at the European Court of Human Rights. The protest also began on the eve of a visit by Mr Malcolm Rifkind, Scottish Home Affairs Minister, who, on hearing of the protest hurriedly called a Press Conference where he announced a grant of £1,000,000 was to be made to Peterhead to improve conditions.

On August 21st ten prisoners managed to break away from a group in the exercise yard and climbed onto the roof of the prison's observation block. Immediately all other prisoners were confined to their cells. At one point one man climbed down voluntarily but he was replaced by another prisoner who joined the men on the roof. Prison Officers retaliated by drenching the prisoners with water from two high-powered hoses, the aim of this, according to the Scottish Office was simply to contain the men in the area they had already occupied. The prisoners were shouting from

the roof how terrible the conditions in Peterhead are, the main target for their complaints being the observation block they were standing on which contains nothing but punishment cells. The men shouted to the Press that one man had been in solitary for 18 months, spending 23 hours out of 24 locked up in his cell.

It was reported in the Press that the M.P. for East Aberdeenshire condemned the manner of the protest and in his view it had been made merely because the men had become aware of the intended visit of Malcolm Rifkind.

23rd August 1979

'Press and Journal'

Amid the mounting tension within the Prison, prison officers failed to break the attempt by prisoners to bring to the attention of the public the appalling conditions in which they are forced to live. High-powered jets of water were continuously aimed at the men and one prisoner shouted that he saw prison officers using pick shafts. This battle raged for half an hour before the police arrived to remove watching reporters and photographers saying that they had been receiving complaints from the prison authorities owing to their presence at the scene of the protest.

A prisoner appeared on the roof carrying a truncheon and a protective shield, but he was eventually forced back inside by the spray of the hose and the hurling of stones. The men fought back by saying that if their protest did not bring about some result they would raze the prison to the ground. Prisoners in neighbouring cell blocks shouted their support and waved white towels. Interestingly, the Scottish Office

admitted that standard truncheons were used by prison officers they denied that the ones used by the prisoners were the same. Yet, somewhat incongruously, they claim that prisoners dropped into the reception area that morning and raided a cupboard in the prison to get the items. Who else would be in possession of truncheons but the prison officers? The Scottish Office spokesman also denied all knowledge of stones being thrown.

23rd August 1979

Radio Scotland

Gordon MacGregor, solicitor representing men whose cases the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties are taking to European Court, supported claims by prisoners of brutality and lengthy spells in solitary confinement.

24th August 1979

'Press and Journal'

Four of the men in the rooftop protest surrendered whilst the other six although agreeing earlier to come down during talks with the Governor, decided to continue and, according to Peterhead solicitor, Gordon MacGregor, who had spoken with the men, the protest at this stage was 'by no means over.' Previously Mr John Renton, General Secretary of the Scottish Prison Officers Association, Mr MacGregor and a prison visitor were asked by Governor Dingwall to witness the prisoners surrender after all day negotiations had resulted in a promise of no repercussions. Mr Renton said afterwards that he could not understand why six men had decided to stay and concluded 'the longer these six inmates continue to stay on the roof the longer the danger exists to our members and the prisoners themselves.' On this the fourth day the noise from the protest culminated in the breakout by 8 B block men as windows were smashed and burning blankets were hung from bars.

24th August 1979

Radio Scotland

Renton claims damage at prison enormous - repairs will cost £1 million.

25th August 1979

'Press and Journal'

As the 84 hour rooftop protest ended the questions began. Internal enquiries are to be conducted into the circumstances leading up to and during the demonstration at Peterhead. The Authorities, needless to say are simply concerned with how the ten men managed to escape, stackpile food and makeshift weapons and how eight other prisoners managed

to escape and spend the night on B block at the height of the protest, than the real issues that surround the whole way in which prisons are run. There is also concern regarding the Government policy of 'passive containment' which is known to be unpopular with the prison officers.

The six prisoners who remained on the roof came down following an outbreak of fire in the clothing store in the observation block. Mr Renton said that although 'the demonstration is now over the situation is still fairly tense and the other inmates are naturally in a frustrated mood.' He added that £1,000,000 Government grant would not be enough to pay for 'new special accomodation and that his association would be 'totally against' any of the money being used for the repairs to the prison as a result of the demonstration.'

27th August 1979

'Guardian'

A pencilled letter smuggled out of Peterhead confirmed the protest was being forced on prisoners, 'because the authorities have never paid attention to the complaints we made through the official channels.'

27th August 1979

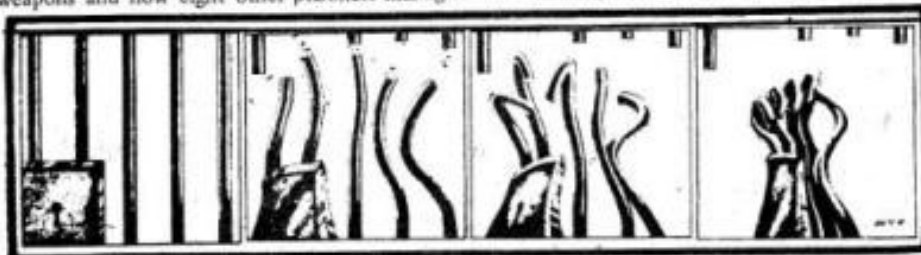
'Press and Journal'

The Scottish Council for Civil Liberties approached the Home Affairs Minister, Malcolm Rifkind asking him to think hard about disciplining the demonstrators. The Chairman, Norman McEwan said on Radio Clyde's current affairs programme that 'Mr Rifkind has more or less admitted that there was some justification - that there was some real cause for complaint.' He went to remind people what happened in the Attica prison riot where 37 people were killed as a result of the authorities taking a 'tough line'. 'Its time to bring fairness and justness into the prison system' and he predicted further trouble if the Government stuck to their three year time-scale for the Peterhead improvements scheme. He concluded that 'I don't think we should be misled to think that because of the announcement of £1,000,000 at the end of last week's riot that is the end of the problems at Peterhead. We really fear what may happen in that place unless something is done urgently.'

28th August 1979

'Press and Journal'

Two of the men who took part in the rooftop protest told the press that 40 prisoners are now in solitary as a result of the incident. This statement was made after a meeting with their solicitor, Mr Gordon MacGregor, one of the 3 'independant observers' called in to supervise the surrender of the ten prisoners. The two men are now in the prison's



B hall in single cells which have been stripped to the bare necessities—only a bed and a pot remain. They are being kept in their cells 24 hours a day under 'strict observation'. Forty other prisoners are in similar circumstances including those who gave the protest moral support. They are being charged under prison regulations ranging from assault to malicious damage and fire-raising. The latter charge involves the burning of prison clothes. Mr MacGregor knew of other prisoners who wished to see him but this was not possible 'due to prison regulations'.

31st August 1979

TV announcement of 10 new cells for Peterhead.

3rd September 1979

Radio Scotland

Rifkind in Peterhead. He wants kitchens, toilets, boiler house modernised. Renton now says that £10,000 is needed for repairs resulting from damage.

6th September 1979

'Evening Express'

Claims made by prisoners of brutality by prison staff at Peterhead were revealed by a top criminal lawyer and a former inmate of Peterhead, Paddy Meehan. The aftermath of the rooftop protest has brought accusations of reprisals by prison officers towards the men, which have been, needless to say denied by the Scottish Office. Accusations are also mounting as result of a riot against 'everyday brutality' of prison officers who, as we know, carry out their own unofficial disciplinary code. As one ex-inmate says 'what goes on in Peterhead Prison is beyond a free persons credibility.

David Burnside, who represented Paddy Meehan (who was granted a Royal Pardon on a life sentence after having served 7 years for a murder he did not commit), said he knew of the unofficial disciplinary code — that if a prison officer is assaulted the prisoner can expect a visit from other officers. The Evening Express received two letters from former prisoners at Peterhead after the rooftop protest. One man described four years of 'hell' and the other has sought press help for those 'incarcerated behind its walls'. The inhumanity and violence are apparent in the following quotations from the letters; 'They batter and kick you. One holds you and the other two batter'. 'As far as prison warders are concerned you are in Peterhead for punishment and that is what you get — men are in their cells and just forgotten about'. 'I was in solitary for 14 months and I never saw another prisoner. I was allowed out of my cell only once a day to walk around in a circle like a robot'.

22nd September 1979

'The Scotsman'

The Peterhead prisoners involved in the rooftop protest were punished at committee hearings held within the prison. One prisoner lost three years remission as a result of trying to bring to the public notice the inhumane conditions in which the men live. Privileges have been withdrawn and a number of prisoners have been ordered to serve periods in solitary

confinement. The visiting committee are made up of personnel from different public bodies under a chairman appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland (so much for a fair hearing) and this body is not limited in any way as to the amount of remission they can take from a prisoner serving a determinate sentence. In the case of a life prisoner the committee makes a recommendation to the Scottish Office and this would have an important bearing on any future parole hearing. Prisoners are not entitled to any legal representation.

The result of this protest is that the Scottish Prison Officers Association, at their conference are reviewing the type of riot equipment in use in the prison service. At present prison officers go armed with a helmet, a metal riot shield, helmets with shatter-proof visors, gauntlets, breast and back plates and leg guards.

These developments are horrifying and can only lead to further demonstrations and riots within prisons all over Great Britain.



In a press statement issued on 23rd August 1979 Radical Alternatives to Prison, The National Prisoners Movement (PROP) and the Newham Alternatives Project stated categorically that they 'wish to support those prisoners at Peterhead Prison and elsewhere who take direct action to draw attention to the inhumanity of prison conditions. The solution to the problems of prison does not lie in spending money on altering facilities but in a change of attitude towards the whole question of crime and punishment'.

# CLOSE THE "CAGE"



On 28th August RAP issued the following press statement:-

## Rehabilitation or Punishment?

Mr Malcolm Rifkind, Scottish Minister for Home Affairs, has stated that among the plans for Peterhead Prison is the construction of a new ten cell unit for 'more difficult prisoners'.

Comments by the Secretary of the Scottish Prison Officers Association, John Renton, assert the new Peterhead unit is a response to Scottish jailers' demands for more alternatives for 'difficult prisoners'. Renton maintains that the final form for the unit has still to be worked out, but it will 'not be a punishment'. This is something very new from the Scottish Prison Officers Association. They have recently been campaigning for the re-opening of the infamous 'cages' at Porterfield Prison, Inverness and chiefly because of this the 'cages' now house an inmate of the gaol, 37 year old William MacPherson.

There is another alternative for Peterhead. A unit modelled on the successful Special Unit at Barlinnie Prison. Unfortunately with the recent removal, against his wishes, of Ken Murray the prison officer most closely identified with the unit, it seems there is little hope of rehabilitation being an aim for the Peterhead plan. It is strongly rumoured that when the most celebrated inmate of the Barlinnie Unit, author and sculptor Jimmy Boyle is transferred from Barlinnie the unit could be closed.

Until the picture is clarified we ask anyone concerned with human rights to urge the Scottish Minister of Home Affairs not to tolerate dictation from the SPOA by agreeing to the use of the Inverness 'cages' and the construction of a control unit incorporating sensory deprivation techniques at Peterhead Prison.

27th September 1979

Malcolm Rifkind said the government had no plans to change the use of the notorious punishment 'cages' at Porterfield Jail Inverness.

After visiting the special segregation unit which the Scottish Office say is used 'to discipline violent prisoners', it was made clear three inmates are in the unit.

From a description of the unit at Inverness by a prisoner who spent several months there:-

'The Silent Cell - this is a concrete cell within a concrete cell, which means that one has to enter two sets of walls and two heavy doors to get into it. Once in there the prisoner hears nothing for it is what its name says, Silent Cell. Prisoners lie in these for any amount of time with no toilet facilities whatsoever. The cell is so silent that there's a constant ringing in the ears in there.'

Over 1000 signatures of people from all over Britain have been sent to the Scottish Office protesting at the use of the Inverness 'cages.'



SCOTTISH PRISONS AND THE SPECIAL UNIT

by Dave MacDonald and Joe Sim.

This pamphlet looks at what is happening in Scottish prisons in the last quarter of the twentieth century, both in theory and practice. It examines the position of short term prisoners ('the forgotten majority') and that of long term prisoners, both those in the traditional penal system and those in the successful Special Unit.

Scottish Council for Civil Liberties,  
146 Holland Street,  
Glasgow G2 4NG.  
70p & 10p postage.

## SCRUBS

Robert Kilroy-Silk MP, chairman of the all-party parliamentary penal affairs group has called for an inquiry into the events that took place at Wormwood Scrubs on August 31st.



"Hammer" David McNee



### EAST LONDON WOMEN AGAINST PRISON

A small group of women got together at the National Conference on Alternatives to Prison and decided that Women needed a place where they could meet, find alternatives to prison, and get legal advice. We started looking at statistics referring to Women in prison, and were horrified by some of the results, 1970 56% of the female prison population were either awaiting trial (only to be acquitted or given non-custodial sentences) or awaiting reports (only to be given non-custodial sentences). Large numbers of women are in prison for offences where a man would have walked out with probation or a suspended sentence. We felt it was time for women to stand up and be seen in the movement against prisons. We are now trying to work towards a centre in East London, run by women for women, where we can structure a viable and positive alternative, and where we can offer support and friendship and aid to any woman who has come up against the Law and prison system (either herself or her family). We need women who have experienced prison themselves, as prisoners, or as wives or girlfriends, who feel as strongly as we do, to contact us. We have also prepared a short paper on Women and Prison. It lists some damning statistics, and puts forward our views and aims. It will be ready shortly.

If you want a copy or wish to contact us, write to :-

ELWAP  
Ruth, Penny or Juliette,  
c/o 56 Darnes Rd.  
London E4.

#### Review

**WOMEN & THE PENAL SYSTEM**  
Memorandum From The Howard League 40p.

This report deals with 9 areas of concern from the 'misuse of prisons' to 'security', from 'mothers and children' to 'staffing.'

It is a strange mixture of the positive, forward looking, radical approach, and the more traditional, pussyfooting reformist approach. In effect, a strange reluctance to grasp firmly certain important problems, tends to make the whole report a very bland, easy to deal with document. Unfortunately the excellent radical recommendations are lost in the easy options.

Coming at a time when the Government is damping down on many opportunities for real reform and radical action, this report is welcome, especially when one realises that women are becoming more active in the prison movement. Its many positive aspects cover the recommendations that the power to send prostitutes to prison should be abolished, that no person under 17 should be sent to prison or remand centre (except in a few cases!). That more regard be paid to the children of women facing prison, but most importantly of all, that Bullwood Hall Girls' borstal, and the maximum security womens wing at Durham be immediately closed; and that an immediate halt be put to the misuse of pretrial, or presentence remand.

The report then goes on to outline the need to improve conditions inside womens prisons, borstals and childcare containment units, especially where women have their children with them; and also in the use of medicine.

Whilst agreeing that fewer women should be sent to

prisons they then on the other hand propose that there should be more, flexible and smaller units throughout the country, both borstal and prison units, possibly mixed sexes with mixed staff, so that women would be nearer to their homes, these units possibly attached to mens prisons and borstals. They recommend that family groups should be kept together by increased visits, letters, and home leaves, and that the education system should be regarded as important for all people in prison, not just as a privilege. These proposals, and others in the report, whilst formulated with the best intentions, especially where childcare within prisons is concerned, would no doubt improve conditions in womens prisons immensely; and whilst also the report suggests more women should be given a non-custodial sentence, it lacks constructive and positive recommendations for alternatives, and we found it very muddled as to whether it was aiming to reform prisons, or whether it was aiming to stop women from being sent to prison and given alternatives instead. It seemed to pull both ways.

by Ruth, Penny, and Juliette,  
ELWAP.



#### Meeting

On Wed 28th November Jerry Westall will be talking on 'Rape and Prison' at the London Men's Centre, 316 Upper St., London N1. Starting 8pm. Rap members interested in this area welcome. Some of us will be meeting beforehand in the pub next door.

The long-awaited report on the NAP project will be available in late November. To be called 'Outside chance', it will cost £2 (1.50 to members). Orders with cash can be made now.

Due to pressure of space we have held over part 2 of Ian Cameron's review of 'The Acceptable Pressure Group' with a response from the author, Mick Ryan. Also part 2 of our Drugs survey has been held over.




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 LETTERS
 

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Dear Editor,

I have been reading the Howard League comments on the Green Paper 'Youth, Custody and Supervision'. I feel that the Howard League were dreaming if they felt that the Green Paper would give any constructive suggestions about Young People in custody. As a person who has spent most of his adolescence and early twenties inside Penal Institutions, I can see that these institutions are destructive both emotionally and physically for the majority of people in them. The Howard League suggests that to reduce the number of people in prison firm discipline integrated into a form of supervision is needed. I am sure that the Howard League must be aware that present non-custodial measures are not being used effectively by the judiciary and in my opinion the Howard League is suggesting yet one more link in the web of social control. They say that crime and anti-social behaviour needs a firm reaction. I feel it is more important for society to show a firm reaction to the root causes of crime: unemployment, poor education, poor environmental conditions. Of course the Howard League criticises the Green Paper for ignoring the counter productive effects of institutions but suggests a more subtle means of control.

Crime and anti-social behaviour will increase as capitalist society plunges into a deeper crisis, I am against prison reforms - it doesn't matter what type of regime one installs prisons are still prisons. Their suggestion that more probation officers should be employed to take on this extra work is crazy. It would be better to redirect this money into the setting up of better community facilities. Is the Howard League living in a dream world! They should come down to earth and see what the real struggles of the working class and poor really are. Only when there is a fundamental change in our society will something be done about the Real Crimes that are going on. I see the rich committing crimes all the time.

Bad Factories. Empty Houses. Soldiers in Ireland killing. Large Companies supporting Fascist Regimes. Banks that made 1085 million pounds profit. What could that be spent on?

This money could build and run for five years: 25 small hospitals, 100 health centres, 100 community centres plus build 40,000 council houses. Also create 25,000 socially useful jobs. This is not done and that is what I call a crime.

I hope that the Howard League understands my criticisms. It is alright producing socially palatable documents for social workers, probation officers, lawyers to read and discuss at conferences or over a drink at the bar, but its for the working class and the poor to face the realities of corrupt capitalist state.

Soon one will have to decide what side the of the fence you're on - as the day of the People's storm is coming.

Solidarity greeting to prisoners and their families and Abolitionists everywhere.

Yours, in solidarity,

Alan/Karl

Dear Jerry and Friends,

Received today Abolitionist Nos 2/3. It is really a marvellous effort with such a lot of useful information and helpful material. Hopefully it will do a lot for RAP.

Jim Little, Bristol.

Dear Rap,

I am renewing (at long last) my sub because -

a. In place of the former sniping at Martin Wright of the Howard League I sense a new spirit of co-operation - e.g. the invitation to Martin to speak at your conference on alternatives.

b. Because of your decision to support Chris Onuoha's research on the disproportionate numbers and plight of Black youngsters in our prisons.

c. An excellent production of 'The Abolitionist'.

Best wishes and love to Ros,

Walter and Olive Barker.

Review of 'SCUM' - Prince Charles, Leicester Square

As an ex borstal boy I had mixed feelings about seeing a film about borstal life, but this film is full of emotional power and directness. It has a number of violent scenes that show exactly what borstal is - institutionalised violence. The violence between inmates is nothing compared to the violence of the State. It's a film for parents, Social Workers, Probation Officers and you to see. It shows the things that go on inside borstals have nothing to do with helping the offender lead an honest and industrious life on his release. Its the legal way to harass and brutalise the inmates. One has to realize that SCUMs main message is that the general public are unaware of what is done to offenders and it puts the blame on the public's shoulders, as prisons are run with taxes you pay and are run in your name. Its a brave film especially coming at a time when the Tories are calling for harsher penalties. Its working class kids that end up in borstal. The problem is will anyone take any notice? One positive step would be if Parents with a child of theirs in borstal could get together and form a network of parents against Borstal groups. I am sure that RAP would help in any way. I could. Any way see SCUM, its about time that something came out of the British Film Industry that said something positive.

Alan Leader.

NCCL Conference

Sat 24th November, University College, Gower St. WC1.

TOO MUCH PRISON

£3 (£1 claimants, students, OAPS)

Speakers: Prof Stan Cohen  
 Prof Laurie Taylor  
 John McVicar  
 Dr Hans Tulken

NCCL, 186 Kings Cross rd, WC1 (01-278-4575)





Donna Hamparian et al *The Violent Few: A Study of Dangerous Juvenile Offenders* (Lexington Books, 1979) Price: £11.50.

Rap members have debated often enough one of the standard objections to the case for a total abolition of incarceration: the existence or supposed existence of a certain number of 'dangerous' offenders who 'have' to be locked up to protect society. Strangely enough, this objection is seldom raised in regard to juveniles – despite the fact that something like the ideology behind it must inform the increasing numbers of juveniles in Britain being sent to secure units and other similar institutions.

There are, of course, all sorts of political and theoretical directions from which we can enter this debate. The actual empirical questions – how many offenders are dangerous, can they, indeed, be identified at all, can 'dangerousness' be predicted – constitute only one part of the debate. An important part, of course – and until the problem is formulated at a quite different level, we have to rely on the persistent attempts by conventional criminologists to identify the dangerous offender. One of the most publicized of these attempts come from 'The Dangerous Offender Project' run by John Conrad and his colleagues from the modestly titled 'Academy for Contemporary Problems' in Columbus, Ohio. The Project has so far produced some ten books (with titles like *Restraining the Wicked*) all of which point to the many flaws in the notion of dangerousness. It will be important for RAP members to plough through and try to digest these complicated statistical findings and one of us should try to summarize them in a readily accessible form.

The present volume deals just with juveniles and is based on a group of 1,138 youths from Columbus (a city of 536,000) who had committed at least one violent offence. Given all the problems of working with official statistics, these are the main findings of interest to us: – (1) juvenile violent offenders are not the principal source of violence in the city, they make up a very small (less than 2%) fraction of the total number of youth, the actual violent offences are incidental to their delinquent careers – only a handful committed more than 2 such offences; (2) there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that a chronic offender group can be identified, or that early-starting delinquents have a longer career, or that there is a linear progress from bad to worse (less serious to more serious crimes), or that there is such a thing as the 'young monster' – a distinctive sort of dangerous juvenile offender for whom special measures are required. Buried away in the statistics and cautious interpretations is this simple sentence: 'Until our cohort member lashed out in an act of violence he was statistically indistinguishable from any group of predominantly male, lower class nonviolent persons of his age.'

This is important ammunition for the political debate about dangerousness. So too, is the crucial finding that the intervention of the juvenile justice system doesn't affect the youths' behaviour in any positive way at all. More precisely

– in what Hamparian and colleagues describe as their most important single finding – when the impact of the courts decisions is measured on the intervals of 'street time' (months free to potentially commit other offences), the street time actually diminishes dramatically after each commitment to an institution. Or to put it more simply (and remember that there were careful controls for type of offence, age, race, class etc.) the effect of being locked up for a few months, far from slowing down the rate at which new offences are committed, is just the reverse. In the study's bland phrase, the impact of institutional treatment as a form of rehabilitation or prevention, is 'basically negative'. Old news, perhaps, but worth getting in this form.

Stan Cohen

'Legal Aspects of International Terrorism' Alona E. Evans and John F. Murphy eds.: (Lexington Books, 1 Westmead, Farnborough, Hants £22.50).

This American study is the end result of a research project on International Law and was prepared for the U.S. Department of State. The working definition of terrorism is 'the Threat or use of violence by private persons for political ends'. Whilst the editors recognise that 'acts of state terrorism create milieu's conducive to particular manifestations of international terrorism' they do not appreciate the unequal scale of destruction between acts by guerrilla groups and the use of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima. They also fail to distinguish between uses of violence directed at property, those directed at 'legitimate' targets (such as the military) and violence directed at innocent people. For some only this last category of targets can reasonably be considered 'terrorism' and it is preferred.

That said, this is a book worth having for its information on: Aircraft and Aviation Facilities, Nuclear Facilities and Materials, Ocean Vessels and Offshore Structures, Protected Persons and Diplomatic Facilities, Transnational Business Operations and Chemical/Biological/Nuclear Weapons among other areas. There is an index of 70 pages consisting of some 500 Aircraft Hijackings between Jan. 1st 1960 and July 31st, 1975 and a great deal on what those in power should do about the recent explosion (if that's the appropriate word) of 'terrorist' activity world-wide in the last twenty years. Two things the editors do not do: Make recommendations on how to deal with State terrorism or muse on just why all established means of political change have been abandoned by those who see no other hope of altering the course of history but by the use of illegitimate and dangerous means.

J.W.

Press statement, from RAP, 11th October 1979.

We wish to make public our total abhorrence of the 'short, sharp, shock' treatment the Home Secretary has announced as being in store for young offenders in detention centres.

As this approach to juvenile anti-social behaviour is only likely to create a bitter and hardened group of lifelong criminals, the function of this policy would seem to be a servicing of the sadistic fantasies of the emotionally disturbed supporters of an unbalanced administration.

The economic and social causes of anti-social behavior, such as unemployment, poverty, bad housing, are all being made worse by the Government. We are being put on a course by the State which can only lead to a worsening of the situation as regards juvenile crime.

Crisis in the Prisons; The Way Out  
Roy King and Rodney Morgan. (£1.50 Available from Roy  
King University of Southampton).

This publication from King and Morgan is a shortened version of their evidence to the May Inquiry, and although it in no way questions why prisons have continued not only to survive but also to flourish in mature industrial societies, RAP members would be foolish, for a number of reasons, to dismiss it altogether as crude establishment fodder. In the first place, and at a very general level, what King and Morgan have to say is significant because it confirms just how far the liberal centre has modified certain of its central assumptions about the potential of imprisonment. Whereas a decade ago no decent liberal would have seriously questioned the treatment paradigm King and Morgan throw it out altogether – in a few terse paragraphs – in favour of what they describe as 'humane containment' in a prison system which is to be freed from the constraints of the Official Secrets Act. Of course, Abolitionists need to be cautious, King and Morgan are not in favour of any largescale dismantling of the prison system and their reluctant support for parole indicates quite clearly the limits of their radicalism. And then there is their call for two purpose built security establishments: where category A prisoners are to be further segregated according to their 'subversive-enforcement quotient'. This section of their report was chilling enough to read, let alone what it might turnout like in practice.

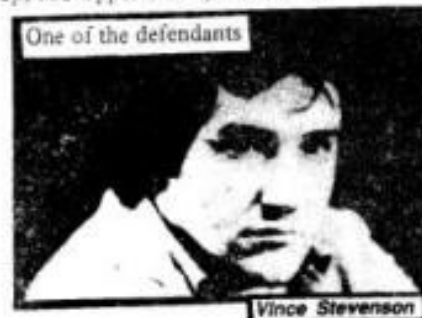
Caution in these areas, then, is obvious. What is not quite so obvious perhaps is how we should react to the attempt by King and Morgan to head off what the prison service hopes to win from the May Inquiry, namely, more resources. They ridicule the idea that the prison service has been starved of public funds and is the victim of antiquated buildings. Much more to the point for King and Morgan is how incompetently the Prison Department is managing what it already has. To illustrate this they refer to the massive waste of resources involved in operating the dispersal system in such a way that it treats category A,B. and even C. prisoners in much the same way – once in a dispersal prison they are all treated as if they justify 'maximum security.' This knock-on effect has reversed the assumptions on which the dispersal system was based, it also led to riots and created an undercurrent of tension in just about all of the dispersal prisons. This tension – which prompted the May Inquiry – can be eased, argue King and Morgan, not by granting more resources but by re-allocating those which exist. In other words, by a change of policy from dispersal to concentration.

It is now that the problems really begin since we are back to the two purpose built security establishments, subversive-enforcement quotients and so on. What seemed like a good idea, a demand to limit the resources of the Prison Department turns out to be only a policy for remodelling the Emperor's old clothes. This conclusion illustrates how the liberal centre can absorb selected aspects of a truly radical programme, how it can be openly critical of the prison establishment – King and Morgan are not just Home Office stooges – and yet at the same time take Abolitionists back to square one.

Mick Ryan  
(Thames Polytechnic)

#### Persons Unknown, a short review

By the time this pamphlet first hit the market in August 1979 the Persons Unknown case had become a cause celebre. Public suspicion had been aroused over this trial of a group of London based anarchists when the prosecution sought to vet the jury, and this suspicion turned into outrage when it was disclosed in September that the vetting procedure had turned up police evidence about jurors which included information that one had once lived in a squat, another had in the past complained about the police and four others were either friends or relatives of people with criminal records. This revelation, sensational and instrumental as it was in mobilising liberal support – the Guardian campaigned, though amazingly in the context of our essentially 'just judicial system' – should not detract radicals from pushing their analysis wider, that is, to expose the Persons Unknown case as a straight-forward political trial. This publication has the great merit of doing just this, of emphasizing the trial's political dimension. It may not do it with great subtlety, but in the circumstances that is perhaps excusable. A useful section on the media and lots of pre-trial material. Essential reading, and good value at 40 pence from Rising Free Bookshop, 182 Upper Street, London N1.



One of the defendants

Vince Stevenson

#### FROM JAIL TO CRAG

For the past three year JAIL has occupied an office, kindly provided by a firm of solicitors, at 271 Upper Street, London N1. The solicitors now need this office for their own use and gave us several months notice to this effect. Although we have spent a good deal of time looking we haven't managed to acquire new premises though the time has now come to give up our present office. Because of this we will no longer be available at the phone number (01) 359 8034. A JAIL worker will be available every Wednesday on (01) 989-1527 and we will retain the same address (271 Upper Street, London N1) as our postal address for the time being. It will be very difficult for us to continue our work without premises and we would be very grateful for any help you can give – either by letting us know of a suitable office you have seen or heard about, or if you have a spare room you would be willing to offer us.

Together with our change of address, the JAIL committee has decided that it is also time for a change in the area of our work and a change of name. From the beginning of next year we intend to broaden our work so that we no longer deal solely with the subject of identification. At present we see our work next year also including research into, and casework with, unsigned statements ('verbals') in criminal cases. Because of this we felt that a more general name was needed and have decided on Criminal Research and Action Group (CRAG).

THE LIBERAL PARTY ASSEMBLY (29th September)  
called for the following:

1. A review of the law in the area of marginal criminality with a view to abolishing offences without a victim (e.g. drunkenness, vagrancy offences, private morality matters) from the categories of crime.

2. The replacement of the dehumanising nature of present policing by bringing the policeman back on the beat to the local community and calls for the role of the local policeman, with its emphasis on prevention, to be recognised as vital within the police career structure.

3. The Police Force to be accountable to open Police Control Committees of local government.

4. For a fully independent complaints committee distinct from the Police Control Committees.

5. The Special Patrol Group, which are incompatible with community policing, to be disbanded.

6. The establishment of a code of statutory rules, including statutory enactment of extended 'Judges Rules' to govern investigation from questioning to trial and for evidence obtained in contravention of this code to be inadmissible.

7. Every prosecution to come to trial within a fixed period of charge.

8. The responsibility for prosecuting offences to be taken from the police and given to local prosecution authorities.

9. The appointments and actions of local courts to be openly answerable to the local community.

10. Jury vetting to be stopped.

11. The establishment of a code of children and young person's rights.

The demand for capital punishment and for more savage custodial sentences is misguided. Long prison sentences and other penalties will not deter if the chance of detection is slight. The control of crime requires a reappraisal of sentencing and after-care policy. Assembly therefore proposes that:

12. Sentencing policy should be designed to reduce the likelihood of the offender re-offending and not exact retribution and should aim to make the offender aware of the effect of his crime on his victim.

13. Long prison sentences should only be imposed where public safety is threatened.

14. The use of custodial sentence should be greatly decreased. Where custodial sentences are unavoidable they should be much shorter than at present.

15. There be an established code of prisoner's rights.

16. Improvements in the current standards of aftercare to ensure that once an offender's sentence is concluded he can re-establish himself and no longer be treated as a criminal.

Note. Although RAP members may not applaud all the motions passed by the Liberal Assembly, it is encouraging to see a degree of sanity expressed.

from THE PRISON OFFICERS' MAGAZINE JULY 1979

POA Comments:

HULL

Thursday, 5th April, 1979 was a sad day, when eight of our colleagues were sentenced at York Crown Court.

We at Hull are a very disillusioned staff and feel that all members of the Service are now more vulnerable to inmate allegations than ever. We have however given our eight colleagues a unanimous vote of confidence and hope their appeals will be successful.

At the beginning of May our colleagues were given a notice of intent to dismissal on 26th May by the Prison Department. A branch meeting was held and the following proposal was unanimously passed:

'This branch deplores the dictatorial attitude of the Prison Department in proposing to dismiss our colleagues prior to their appeal being heard, and that from 6th May this branch will work a 40 hour week until an assurance is given that our colleagues will:

a. continue to be suspended on full pay pending their appeal,

b. that they be offered re-employment in a different branch of Government service.'

We continued to run the prison in a lock-up situation until the evening of 8th May when the Governor addressed the staff and informed us that the Department had withdrawn their intended dismissal and that our colleagues would continue to be suspended on full pay pending their appeal.

SCREWS' RIGHTS

Anna Coote writes: Prison officers who fear they may be overtaken by an urge to assault prisoners in their care can now sleep more easily. The eight officers who were last week found guilty of savagely attacking inmates involved in the Hull prison riot have been given suspended sentences. The case provides a vivid illustration of inequality of justice in the prison system.

The prisoners were alleged to have caused a riot and to have inflicted £750,000 worth of damage to property. They were 'tried' and found guilty by the Board of Visitors. They were not legally represented, nor were they allowed to call witnesses. Some lost up to two years' remission as a result of evidence brought against them by the officers who were later convicted of assaulting them. They had no right of appeal, although after a considerable legal battle the High Court ruled that, in principle it had power to review decisions taken by prison Boards of Visitors. (It has yet to review any of them individual cases.)

The prison officers were alleged to have beaten kicked, abused and humiliated the prisoners in a manner already well documented in the press. Initially, the Board of Visitors at Hull found that the prisoners had no cause of complaint against them; and a Home Office inquiry found them not guilty of maltreating the men. They were only brought to court as a result of a relentless campaign by the prisoners' union PROP, and a remarkable persistence on the part of the investigation police officers. When arrested and charged, they were allowed full legal representation and trial by judge and jury. They were found guilty and allowed to go free.

New Statesman 13th April 1979.

