

MSS.110/4/2

THE

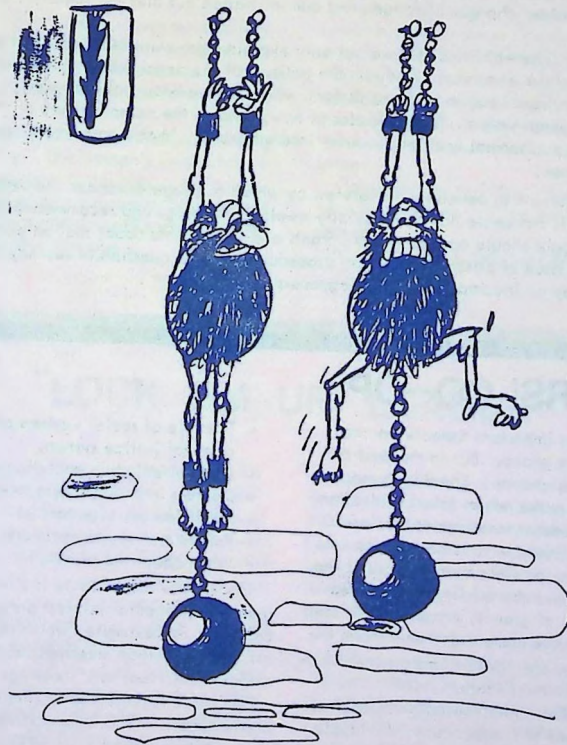
ABOLITIONIST

a quarterly journal from

January 1979

Radical Alternatives to Prison

25p



“Thank God for prison reform!”

PRISONS and * * * * * Young Offenders * * * * * Drugs * * *
* * * law and order * * * * * what the papers don't say *

EDITORIAL

Prisons are at the centre not the heart of the present law and order 'crisis'. We make this careful distinction because it is in the nature of our prison system that heart, or any constructive approach to human relations, plays no part and there is certainly nothing in the present situation when the public mood, in line with the continuing economic and social crisis, becomes increasingly punitive and reactionary.

The past few years has seen the adoption of a policy of 'alternatives to prison' which has only placed more people in the claws of the criminal 'justice' system whilst increasing the prison population. The present prison 'crisis' (by no means the first nor, unfortunately, the last) comes in the wake of prison riots, allegations of administrative and psychiatric malpractice, industrial action by prison officers and, not least, a rapidly deteriorating faith in the ability of the penal system to deal effectively with crime. As instanced by the leader writers of almost all the national press, it is generally agreed that there is far more wrong with the penal system than the poor pay and conditions of POA members. Yet it is now evident that, as in the similar 'moral' crisis which last year faced the police, the current inquiry into the prison system will offer us no more than the diversionary and cosmetic palliative of action on the grievances of prison officers with, perhaps, a few consequent marginal changes. It is ironic then, that abolitionists and others calling for a radical re-appraisal of the penal and criminal justice systems remain a tiny minority. And so it is that this first issue of 'The Abolitionist' appears when the going is at its roughest. Obviously, not a time for apology but for even greater commitment from all of us.

RAP does not have a blueprint for the future but we do believe that our ideas about and approach towards antisocial behaviour (as opposed to 'crime') are much more relevant and credible than the established logic which reflects and only serves to perpetuate an unequal and exploitative social system. It follows that we seek to remove such sentiments from the ephemeral regions they tend to inhabit and translate them into an effective force for social change.

Whilst RAP would argue that some fairly straightforward, though drastic, structural changes in society are essential components in this approach we are not suggesting emptying the prisons of their present occupants merely to replace them with another class of 'miscreants' but, rather, RAP is looking to eradicate the concept of incarceration, and all that goes with it, from the thinking of our society. Thus it is not enough to consider changes of systems and administration but also our society's conception of these institutions and how they actually operate.

In this context, in this first issue of 'The Abolitionist', we not only explain what work RAP and other similar groups are involved in and examine particular issues but we look at a recent study on the politics of the penal lobby which shows how the Home Office Prison Department greatly favours the Howard League for Penal Reform while, as we know only too well, it ignores or shuns RAP and its fundamental criticisms of the whole penal system. We look also at how, despite the patent failure of the penal system, society's unquestioning conception of crime and punishment enables powerful interest groups, in this case in the recent bogus election campaign, to strengthen that same bankrupt system.

In the struggle for change it is important to develop an overview by which to gauge advances and setbacks, but the here and now is important too. The prison system will not settle down and quietly await the findings and recommendations of the present committee of Inquiry - nor should it. The struggle should continue on all fronts and we have no doubt that on particular issues such as the abuse of prisoners by drugging, the vexed issue of prison disciplinary procedures and the question of secrecy much can be achieved. We hope that 'The Abolitionist' will play an important part in this process.

THE SPEAKERS' CO-OP

Public speaking is one of the most important aspects in the work of any pressure and information group. But in the past this essential work has often been left to chance. Speaking venues were not actively sought - we spoke when asked and often chances were missed or contacts made at meetings not followed up. RAP felt that by working closely with other groups who share our basic ideology it would be possible both to expand the speaking side of our work and improve the quality of that speaking. Letters were sent to a number of groups, proposing this idea, and as a result four organisations have come together to form the Speakers' Cooperative. The groups are Justice Against Identification Laws (JAIL), Newham Alternatives Project (NAP), The National Prisoners' Movement (PROF), and Radical Alternatives to Prison (RAP), as well as a number of independent individuals who have specialised knowledge in the areas of crime, prison and the administration of justice. The Cooperative has put together a leaflet of details of the groups involved and a list of proposed topics, although groups requesting a speaker are not restricted to the list. The purpose of the list of topics is to give people some idea of the range of topics available as well as giving the speaker an idea of the interests of the audience.

- General talk on one of the sponsoring group's philosophy and work.
- Young people and the law.
- The experience of prison.
- Law and order and the media.
- Prison secrecy.
- The politics of crime.
- Women, crime and prison.

- The role of social workers and probation officers in the criminal justice system.
- Alcoholism, drug addiction and prison.
- Doctors in prison - care or control?
- Abolition vs. alternatives.
- Police and court procedures, myth and reality.
- What about the victims?

The plan is to distribute the leaflet as widely as possible and to reach those special interest groups with whom we'd like greater contact. For example, we think that the topics will be of interest to trades union meetings, social worker and probation officer associations, teachers' meetings, schools and youth clubs. The cooperative is particularly interested in reaching young people and teachers. The Cooperative aims to spread the ideas of the participating groups to as wide an audience as possible and to get the feedback of ideas from those audiences to the participating groups.

It is hoped that in future speakers will meet together frequently to share speaking tips and develop new ways to present information - i.e. prepare more dramatic presentations for schools, using techniques such as role playing. We'd also like to have more audio-visual material available. We hope that by the groups pooling resources in the Cooperative these ideas will be brought to fruition.

If your group is interested in having a speaker from the Cooperative, contact Speakers Cooperative, c/o RAP, 104 A, Brockenbury Road, London, W.6 Tel: 01-748 5778, stating nature of group, possible dates, size of audience and topic of interest.

NEWS FROM NEWHAM

The Newham Alternatives Project was set up by some RAP members in 1974 to test out RAP's philosophy about alternatives. Operating in the Newham area of London it offers support and assistance to people on deferred sentence. The basic aim of the project was, and is, through the approach RAP advocates to reduce the number of people being sent to prison from the Newham area. An interesting booklet describing the setting up of the Project is available from RAP, price 30p. In the new year, we will also be publishing the research report assessing the first two years of the Projects' work. This will be featured in the next issue. In the meantime, here is a taste of NAP

NAP was burgled recently - can't keep these cons down - took our kettle and typewriter and Hoover and cups and saucers and Tom's bike. They also tried to take the pool table but couldn't get it out of the cellar. It's still stuck on the stairs!

Two boatloads of people went sailing (diesel) down the Oxford canal recently. The least said about that the better. We got £1,500 from two Trusts for camping and other holiday activities, too late to do much with this summer but at least we can plan properly for next year.

In July the first Newham Children's Festival was successfully organised by a NAP student and volunteer, and in spite of rain and cold wind was enjoyed by lots of kids; three and a half hours of continuous entertainment and donkey rides and face painting and vegetarian (delicious) food.

We still have a Therapy Group, and it is gradually becoming more exploratory and self-running. The Women's Group has restarted recently and has been mainly a social group, going out for cheap meals, etc. A number of new volunteers have joined NAP recently, several referred by probation officers, who then get upset when "their" client answers the phone.

We have recently put in a request to Newham Social Services for funding, as we carry out their duties for them so frequently. The list of tasks performed by us which should have been done by them is quite extensive. However we don't really expect to be successful. One local team actually asked us recently if we could take up and fight more re-housing cases for them - our reputation must be spreading. The Housing Department seem to wince when Tom and Alan appear.

We've lost a number of people to prison recently and are supporting a growing number of mums and kids. Any rumours that the deferred sentence is being increasingly used should be strongly refuted. It's not. And prisons continue to be as petty as ever. Complaints by several Scrubs inmates about ill health due to lack of exercise were taken up by NAP but ignored and whitewashed by the Governor. A guy isn't allowed his (very strong) glasses which he has to wear all the time outside, so when his eyes get inflamed he reports sick and gets, not his specs, but aspirin water. And three wasted recently to nicks, to see someone who had meanwhile been sent to court or elsewhere. Who would be a NAP worker?

We have applied to a charity for £6,600 to administer an Intermediate Treatment Scheme at NAP. This money will go towards equipment for activities such as photography, pottery, camping, silk screen printing and one worker. We see this scheme as community based, with links with other agencies in the area, which we hope will prevent the stigmatisation of at least some young people by helping them stay out of penal institutions.

Come and visit us if you ever pass through Forest Gate, and have a cuppa tea - if we can get and keep another kettle long enough.

J.C.
NAP, 56 Dames Road, London, E7 Tel: 01-555 0289

"LOCK EM UP" LEAGUE

"Someone has got to go to prison, it doesn't matter who it is, what it's for or how it's done". This grim quote was collected in Bristol when our RAP Group was preparing material for a local radio programme. We have used the quote a lot ever since, and when one compares the sentences reported in local papers or studies other judgements, our quote (and it was by a policeman) is as good an explanation as any other of how the courts operate.

Bristol RAP has however pursued one particular line of the general abandon of sentencing policy and that is the great discrepancies round the country in the percentages of all sentences that involve prison. Over the years we have produced League Tables that consistently show that just by being tried within one Police Force Area rather than another, there is a four times greater chance of being sent down.

Once, before Bristol was taken over by Avon, our City headed the League, a fact not realised by the people concerned, even though, at that time, the necessary figures were printed in the Home Office Annual Report. If any Bench now wished to compare its performance it would have to make a special application for the Tables, as does the Bristol group.

When we published the League Tables for 1976 (that was at the beginning of 1978 and based on the latest figures) our usual observation regarding the character of the worst Police Force Areas was taken up by the 'Eastbourne News', whose readers included local magistrates, some of whom were subsequently in-

terviewed by the 'Sussex Express' (Feb. 17th, 1978). No doubt their assertions of impartiality would be echoed all round the country, but the evidence shows that Sussex, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, Gloucester, North Yorkshire, Lancashire and Suffolk are consistently to be found in the top nine places of the Table. Areas of rare natural beauty, forests and heaths and practically no Labour MPs.

At the other end of the scale, every year Gwent magistrates send fewest people to prison. Areas in the industrial Midlands, in South Yorkshire and Merseyside also are always among the areas using prison sentences least.

The in-between of the Table is a general mix-up with the added confusion of a big interchange of positions from year to year, perhaps reflecting the mix of town and country. But out of the chaos the consistency of the top and bottom of the Table indicates there is a factor that sends proportionately more defendants to prison from Dorchester, Truro, Brighton and the like than from Newport or Liverpool.

The relevant Home Office Tables ('Sentences, Magistrates' Courts, Police Force Areas, Age and Sex') also shows the range of alternative penalties, and the Secretary of the Magistrates Association took up this point when he passed on to RAP the complaint from "a number" of his members (Mar 2nd 1978) of "scandalously unwarranted and inaccurate statements based only on an opinion that 'more classy areas' are top of a league table

(Continued on following page)

of jail sentences". To such factors as prosecution policy and cautioning he added "the incidence of serious crime" (the game keeper who killed a man on the Carlton Estate owned by the Duke of Norfolk in North Yorkshire was not prosecuted), "the composition (!) of the bench concerned and who was sitting on particular cases. (!!) We were also accused of making propaganda based on "assumptions only".

Nothing daunted, we got out the new County Map and the last election results, but time to sort out over 600 MPs was not forthcoming. So we are left with the "assumption", and this a second letter from the Magistrates Association also repeated. They must have got daunted at working through the MPs as well, though our letter to them tried to be helpful: "That this (the idea that Conservatives want to imprison the most people) may be offensive to some of your members (we) understand, but (we) would like to think that it is a matter of congratulation to some as well, and (perhaps) these more progressive magistrates might get some action from your association to look into this matter of the great variation in policy and really implement the strong recommendations ... that fewer people should be sent to prison. Perhaps you could instigate such action yourself." The statistics show that nationally Magistrates are using prison more.

Well, the 1977 figures have been applied for. We know what to look for and can now quickly work out the percentages, though definitely not wanting to join for too long the thousands of people who juggle with these and other figures. It is so easy to get fascinated with tables and analyses, all too easily forgetting that each digit represents political, social and personal problems. No doubt Bristol RAP will again point out that the backwoodsmen and women are much more likely to react to these problems by sending more people to prison than some of their urban counterparts.

WE ARE NOT TOFFEE NOSED

Readers may be interested to know a little more about the exchanges between RAP and the Magistrates Association and the newspaper articles referred to above. The Magistrates' Association, who removed RAP from their mailing list some years ago because they took umbrage at something we had said, were on the warpath this time because of the "extremely offensive" remark, attributed to Bristol RAP, that "where jail sentences are high, we find a generally more classy area." It was quoted in the Eastbourne News and the Sussex Express (Sussex is this year's runner-up for the Ball and Chain Award) and magistrates from the county's benches were asked to comment. They hotly denied the implication that in areas like theirs the bench is composed of middle-class backwoodsmen. "On every bench there is a complete cross-section of the population." Of the three magistrates from this cross-section who were interviewed, Lt. Col Nigel Drew (Crowborough) declined to comment, as did his colleague Brigadier Yeo. But Mrs. Viola Chadwyck-Healey, (Lewes), author of the "toffee-nosed" remark, said we were "very naughty".

WELL NOW LOOK WHO'S TALKING

The Guardian of October 14th 1978 reported the Lord Chancellor in a speech to the Magistrates Association to have recommended magistrates to "consider carefully the problem of lack of uniformity in sentencing. There are sometimes discrepancies between different benches dealing with the same sort of problems in similar areas and sometimes even as between neighbouring courts". What a 'scandalous' and 'inaccurate' remark for a Lord Chancellor to make.

PLUS ÇA CHANGE* * * *

In mid-August 1974 M. Giscard d'Estaing, newly-elected President, interrupted his Mediterranean holiday to drop in on two of France's grottiest prisons, St. Paul and St. Joseph in Lyon. He chatted with inmates in their cells, sampled the 'plat du jour' in the prison kitchen, listened sympathetically to the grievances of prisoners and staff and renewed his election promise of reform.

Since no Head of State had ever set foot in a prison before, the President gained a certain amount of kudos for his 'enlightened' gesture. His enemies on the Left denounced it as a political gimmick, another attempt to show that he was the whizz-kid President who would personally solve all problems. The hawks within his own party were biding their time. Eccentric gestures were permissible during the honeymoon period of a new government, but they knew that when it came to the crunch they would have on their side the vast majority of French citizens, punitive to a degree that makes Britain's hangers and floggers seem positively benign.

Whatever Giscard's motives - and there is no reason to suppose that they were not sincere - the fact remained that no government in France could any longer ignore what was happening in the country's jails. That summer had seen unprecedented revolts in forty prisons, with wholesale destruction and burning of buildings and a total of eight dead, all prisoners. There had never been anything on this scale before. And although the authorities came up with the routine explanation, that the riots had been fomented by a few hotheads inside, encouraged and supported by outside groups of subversives (notably CAP, the Prisoners' Action Committee) they knew very well that the main cause was frustration over long-delayed reforms and broken promises. If worse was not to ensue, something would have to be done.

And so began the reforms of 1974-5. Fifteen million francs were to be added to the prison budget, to improve material conditions and raise the pay of prison officers. Some concessions were granted immediately, for example a relaxation of censorship. Other demands would be considered, but 'only when calm is restored'.

What was not realised, except by a few sceptical observers, was the limited scope of the proposed liberal reforms. There was to be a monumental re-shuffle of French prisons and their inmates, to ensure that each institution housed 'a homogeneous population' and so guarantee as far as possible that 1974 would not happen again. 'Maisons d'arrêt', for short-term and remand prisoners, would remain. Those serving medium and long sentences would be located in 'Centres de Detention' or 'Maisons Centrales de Securite'; a liberal regime would operate only in the Centres, thus a mere 2,500 out of a prison population of 28,000 would benefit from any reform. For the others there would be a general tightening of discipline and a vigilant watch over possible troublemakers. If any such should emerge, they would be whisked off to their own 'homogeneous' institutions, most of which would be like the Alcatraz-type prison proposed for Britain by the Mountbatten report but rejected in favour of top security wings in existing prisons. France was to have these also ('Quartiers de Haute Securite') in two Centrales, but as well, nine maximum security prisons ('Maisons de Securite Renforcee') were to be added to the already existing and notorious Mende. The aim was 'to purge the other prisons of undesirables'.

Poniatowski, Minister of the Interior, might have had a get-together with Robert Carr, so similar are his maximum security establishments to the control units that had been introduced into the British system shortly before. There is the same pre-occupation with 'troublemakers', and broad agreement on what constitutes 'trouble', the same arbitrary allocation of prisoners, based on subjective criteria - no need for any overt breach of the rules; the same techniques to break the will of the inmates. There are differences, however, between the two regimes -

(Continued from previous page)

apart from the fact that the British one was forced by public opinion to recant and go underground. The French experiment is on a larger scale and affects many more people. It uses 'psychological warfare', but there also seems to be a fair amount of bashing. In spite of ministerial denials, there is no limit of stay in maximum security, no pretence, as there was in Britain, that once you have learned that you can't buck the system you will be returned to 'normal' prison life. Moreover, you don't have to be inside, you can be allocated to maximum security directly upon sentence. There are even cases of prisoners on remand, illegally removed from the judicial process by being put in a maximum security establishment.

Among the 'undesirables' who find themselves condemned to this regime - on the say-so of a prison Governor with the A.P. (Administration Penitentiaire) as the final arbiter - are "those who, after a psychiatric examination, are considered to be

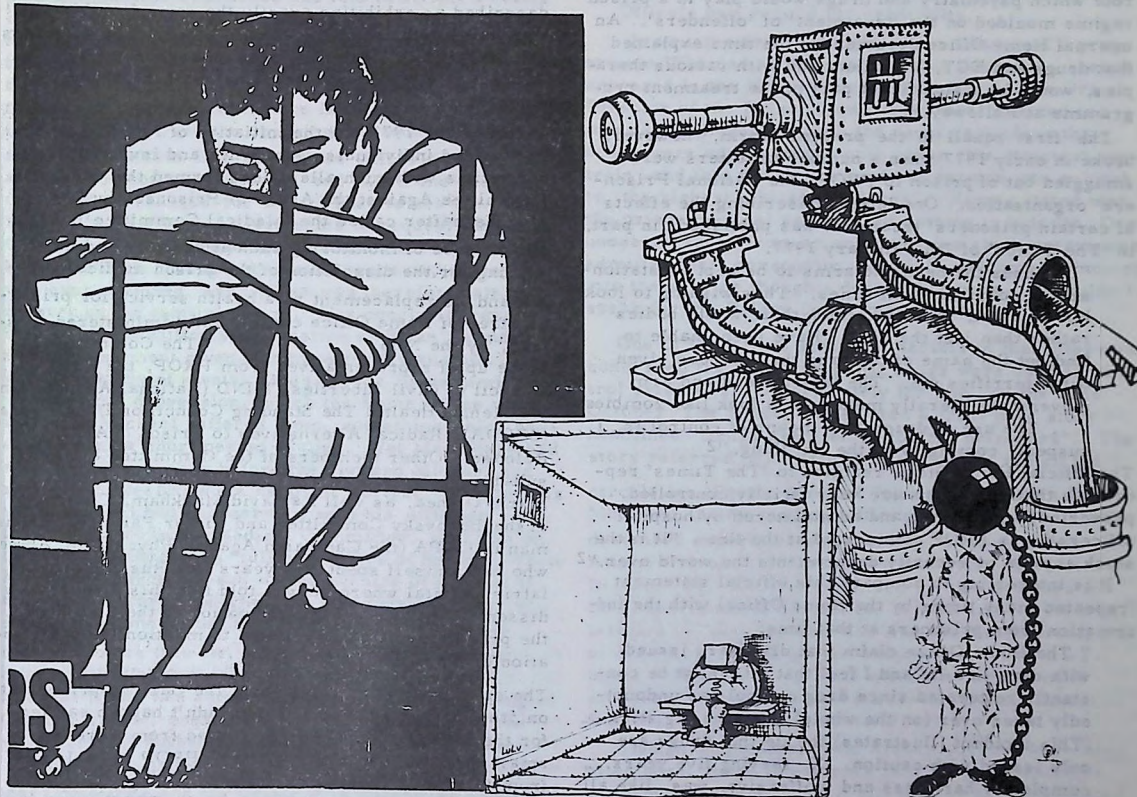
'temperamentally dangerous'" and "those who appear to be sufficiently aggressive for it to be feared that they will commit acts dangerous to others".

This criterion of 'potential' dangerousness is attacked by Michel Foucault in the Preface to a pamphlet produced by CAP to give the public the background to the case of four prisoners, on trial for holding captive three prison guards during an attempted escape from the top security prison of Lisieux.

"As far as we know, the law punishes a man for what he has done. Never for what he is. Still less, for what he may eventually become ...

And now, penal justice is becoming more and more interested in 'dangerous' people. It is turning 'dangerousness' into a category which, if not punishable per se, will at least affect the type of punishment meted out ...

We are creating the 'psychological crime', the crime of character."



Foucault asserts that if 'dangerousness' depends, not on the crime that has been committed but on how the prisoner 'might' react inside, then the onus is on the prison, not the man.

"If prison creates a danger specific to itself, then it is prison that should be suppressed."

He concludes:

"If it is prison that creates dangerousness, it is perfectly legitimate to try to escape. In fact it is essential, if one does not wish to become dangerous oneself. No man should be made to collaborate with those who are exposing him to the risk of becoming dangerous. Escape, in such a case, becomes a duty."

Prisoners' accounts of life in the maximum security sector of France's jails reproduce the dreary catalogue of brutality, degradation, mind-destroying isolation and inordinate use of

drugs with which we are already familiar - from the 'holes' of British Columbia to the 'cages' of Inverness to the control units of Wakefield to all the chokeys, punishment blocks, strong-boxes, seg units, treatment cells, of the prisons of the Western world; the bankrupt policy of penal administrators who seem unable to come up with any solution other than the rule of terror. The future looks bleak to those of us who are trying to bring about a different attitude to crime and punishment.

Betty Potts

Sources:

Aujourd'hui la Prison (pub. Hachette) by Serge Livrozet, founder-member of CAP.

CAP pamphlet on maximum security establishments and the Lisieux trial. Nos. 51-56 of the CAP journal. All obtainable from CAP, 41 bis av. de la Loire 75019 Paris.

The Home Office And The Liquid Cosh

Amid all the recent concern about the British prison system the allegations of the drugging of prisoners has loomed large and is, potentially, the most explosive component of the now acknowledged prison crisis. But involving, as this does, critical assessments of psychiatric and clinical judgements, questions of morality and ethics, and having public opinion as the joker in the pack, the issue is far from straightforward.

Allegations of drug abuse on prisoners is not new. The use of Nazi prisoner, and prisoners in America, as guinea pigs for new drugs is well known and officially acknowledged. Jessica Mitford's book 'The American Prison Business' detailed the role of the psychologist and psychiatrist there. In Britain, during its campaign against the rebuilding of the new Holloway prison in 1972, RAP itself was drawing attention to the role which psychiatry and drugs would play in a prison regime moulded on the 'treatment' of 'offenders'. An internal Home Office document of the time explained that drugs and ECT, in conjunction with various therapies, would be a significant part of the treatment programme at Holloway.¹

The first squall in the present storm, however, broke in early 1977 when a number of letters were smuggled out of prison to PROP, the National Prisoners' organisation. One letter, describing the effects of certain prisoners' treatment was published, in part, in 'The Times' of 7th February 1977.

"It causes the head and arms to be kept as stationary as possible at all times. Thus wishing to look left or right, these men turn their whole bodies rather than just the head. Have been unable to find out the name of the drug they've been given but it terrifies me. The lack of head and arm movements literally makes them look like zombies The use of drugs as a means of control is, I suspect, coming to be the 'in' thing."²

The official Home Office reaction to 'The Times' report was that "all drugs are very strictly controlled, prescribed by a doctor and administered by hospital officers" - as PROP commented at the time, "it is the stock answer by security departments the world over."²

It is interesting to compare this official statement (repeated many times by the Home Office) with the information from prisoners at that time;

"The Home Office claim that drugs are issued with care is a lie and I feel that this must be constantly reiterated since drug control has undoubtedly taken over (on the whole) from the big stick... (This incident illustrates) the lie that drugs are only issued with caution. X, serving five years... completely harmless and inoffensive, was, like all of us I suppose, finding his time a bit hard to pull. Dr. Smith, with his usual cure-all, put him on tranquillisers which were so powerful that on several occasions X collapsed shortly after taking them and had to be put to bed by staff. On one occasion he was so befuddled that whilst attempting to fill his tea jug with water from the boiler he scalded his hand badly. Despite all this, he was not removed from drugs."²

Another letter says:-

"Since I've been at this prison I have had to seek medical advice. It is through this I am complaining as I am dissatisfied with the treatment I've been subject to. Right from the start I was prescribed drugs named Largactyl and Triptfin which I now find after 8 months is standard pres-

cription for all cases no matter what the complaint is. Whilst I have been taking the prescribed drugs I've found my memory has suffered greatly, at times I've literally felt completely disorientated and my whole character reduced and my co-ordination between mind and limbs has been non-existent. Each time I've complained that the drugs are having a mind-numbing effect on me, nothing has been done except the dosage has been raised. . . . In the hospital everyone was given this treatment, but all the patients' illnesses was different and still there are prisoners being held against their will in the infirmary."²

This latter letter is particularly noteworthy because at about this time there were vivid reports in the national press of the condition of dissidents incarcerated in Soviet 'psychiatric' hospitals. The dissidents were described as exhibiting exactly the same 'zombie-like' symptoms detailed in the above letters. The dissidents had been administered the drug chlorpromazine. Largactyl is the British trade name of the drug chlorpromazine.

In November 1977, on the initiative of PROP, various groups and individuals, concerned and involved for some time with such allegations formed the 'Medical Committee Against the Abuse of Prisoners by Drugging' (hereafter called the 'Medical Committee') with the purpose of monitoring such allegations and campaigning for the dissolution of the prison medical service and its replacement by a health service for prisoners free of Home Office control and administered, instead, by the NHS. The Committee is made up of representatives from PROP, the National Council of Civil Liberties, MND (National Association for Mental Health) The Standing Council on Drug Abuse (SCODA), Radical Alternatives to Prison (RAP) and Release. Other members of the Committee are consultant psychiatrists Dr. Tony Whitehead and Dr. Marie O'Shea, as well as David Markham, Chairman of the Bukovsky Committee and Victor Fainberg, Chairman of CAPA (the Campaign Against Psychiatric Abuse) who had himself spent five years in a Russian psychiatric hospital where he was told that 'his disease was dissent'. Announcing the formation of the Committee, the press, significantly, failed to mention the participation of Markham or Fainberg.

The only surprising thing about the Gartree prison riot on 5th October 1978 was that it didn't happen earlier, for the letters I have already quoted from were only a small part of those which came to PROP in early 1977 from Gartree. Indeed, the case of George Ince, a prisoner in Gartree at the time of the PROP revelations was much publicised and his allegations of medical mistreatment have been substantiated sufficiently for the case to now be the subject of legal proceedings.

Nobody has disputed the cause of the Gartree riot to be the fears of the prisoners concerning medical 'care' at the prison, though whether such fears are justified is, of course, hotly disputed. To a public completely ignorant of these previous allegations, the Home Office was able to dismiss such fears as groundless. The Home Office explanation of the incident concerning Michael Blake, which sparked off the riot was that "At 1.00 a.m. (on 5th October) Mr. Blake was found in his cell tying a towel tightly round his neck. Prison officers intervened and asked him why he had done it. Mr. Blake said he hoped he would put himself to sleep and "get shot of the bad thoughts in my head". He took

a moderate dose of a widely used sleeping draught and spent a quiet night". (Daily Mail 7.10.78.) 'The Mail' continued "a top psycho-pharmacologist said that the prison doctor's treatment was 'entirely appropriate' for a man in Blake's diagnosed condition". The crucial question here is Blake's "diagnosed condition" for, at a press conference on 20th Oct. '78 called by the Medical Committee, Blake's father told a very different story. Mr. Blake said that he saw his son at 8.30 p.m. on 6th October and was astonished at what he saw. Michael was walking with a stoop and behaving very sluggishly, "not the Michael I know". Mr. Blake explained Michael's account of the incident which had led to the riot. Michael Blake had rung his cell bell for attention because of bad stomach pains and was given a white liquid (probably indigestion medicine). Later, he was taken to the prison hospital where he was met by a number of officers and told to strip. Feeling something was wrong, he refused and was placed in a hospital cell. After a while he was given a meal and that was all he could remember until the afternoon of the riot. After the riot Michael Blake was transferred to Leicester prison, where the family claim he was put in a straitjacket and the drugging continued. The Blake family was afraid that the prison authorities would attempt to 'nut off' Michael and when the Medical Committee arranged for Dr. O'Shea to see the family Michael's solicitor was instructed to request the Home Office to allow an independent examination of Michael by Dr. O'Shea. Despite two such requests, no reply was ever received, and O'Shea was therefore left to remark on the family's story. Her conclusion was that both the Home Office's explanation of Blake's condition and the treatment given to him were implausible. There was no history of mental illness in the Blake family nor was suicidal depression, which the Home Office were inferring Michael suffered from, something which developed over a short period of time. Yet Mr. Blake had seen his son a week before the riot and Michael had said he was feeling quite happy at Gartree. The previous week Michael had an interview with his solicitor who, in a statement to the Medical Committee, said that on that visit Michael was "full of the joys of Spring". When Mr. Blake asked his son on the evening of the riot if the suicide story was true, the reply was "Daddy, you should know me better than that". If the diagnosis seems dubious then Dr. O'Shea was not impressed either with Blake's treatment, "the treatment which Michael Blake was administered in the hospital wing of Gartree prison, does not accord in any way with the symptoms the authorities claimed he suffered from.

Obviously somebody is lying here but is it the Medical Committee and the people it is concerned about, whom the Home Office accuse of being "trouble-makers" and of issuing "mischievous statements" or is it the Home Office itself? When casting stones, the Home Office seems to be curiously complacent about its own credibility, which relies more on public apathy towards the prison system and an unquestioning acceptance of, or connivance with, Home Office statements by the majority of the media, rather than an objective assessment of the facts. In 'Prison Secrets' (RAP and NCCL 1978) Stan Cohen and Laurie Taylor showed not only the extent of Home Office lies and 'dirty tricks' but described how the whole prison system operates under a blanket of secrecy, security and control. The Medical Committee itself attempting to parry the inevitable Home Office attack on its credibility, said, at the press con-

ference of 20th Oct:

"There are obvious difficulties in obtaining legally admissible evidence. It is precisely to hinder the accumulation of such evidence that the Home Office fights tooth and nail to maintain its stranglehold on information from within the prisons. When faced by such a powerful system of official obstruction and secrecy, any critics of the Home Office face inherent difficulties in establishing their credibility Having taken the precaution of ensuring that the only information to come from prisons has, of necessity, to be smuggled out, the Home Office then attacks its critics for not naming names - when to do so would clearly involve the informants in disciplinary charges. . . . We ask the media to judge the allegations we are making - allegations which have been officially refuted but not disproved - in the light of the Home Office's own record for credibility. . . ."

In an interview that night on the Thames TV programme 'Thames at Six' a potentially dangerous breach appeared in the Home Office dyke. Dr. James Orr, Director of the Prison Medical Service, reacted to that day's allegations with the usual rejoinders that drugs were administered only under "the strictest controls" and that the prison medical service was subject to "the highest ethical standards". Having stated that the prison medical service had nothing to hide Dr. Orr, under pressure from an unusually insistent interviewer, admitted that, personally, he would welcome an inquiry into the service though - despite his rank - he couldn't speak for the Prison Department itself.

One of Dr. Orr's strongest denials in that interview concerned the allegations that drugs were used to control prisoners. Unfortunately for him, on the 22nd October 'The Sunday Times' ran a front page story headlined "Drugs are used to control prisoners". The story referred to an article in the highly restricted circulation 'Prison Medical Journal' in which a Dr. McLeary, an ex-medical officer at Parkhurst Prison described experiments carried on at the adjacent Albany Prison. In "Treatment of Psychopaths with Depixol" Dr. McCleery outlined the use of drugs in this experiment to control the behaviour of prisoners, labelled as 'psychopaths' and who presented problems of discipline for the prison authorities. The newspaper article went on: "the men, he (McCleery) stresses, were 'regarded purely as Albany discipline failures' and were not mentally ill".

Though only Gartree and Albany prisons have been cited here, there is evidence that similar practices operate elsewhere. But if allegations are not limited to a particular prison nor are they limited to a particular abuse. One such abuse was outlined in a 'Sunday Times' article on 12th Nov '78 concerning the implantation of hormones in sex-offenders to reduce their sex drive. One side effect of this treatment is the growth of breasts and all the men who underwent this treatment had to have mastectomies. Disturbing though these particular revelations may be, they are also relevant to a more important consideration.

The Home Office has never denied the use of drugs in prison but insists that drugs are never used for the purpose of control - unless a prisoner is a danger to himself or others - and that they are never administered without the prisoner's consent. On the face of it, this appears to be the case here. The doctor concerned in the hormone treatment, Dr. O. W. S. Fitzgerald,

denied that he was 'a salesman for sex treatment' and claimed that prisoners often begged him to use drugs on them. But why? Because it was a possible means of freedom. As the doctor admitted:

"One cannot possibly conceal from (prisoners) the likely effect of this situation on a parole board." (Guardian 16th Nov.) The question is: Would these men request, or agree to, such treatment if it was not a possible means of freedom? Again the Medical Committee has evidence that the answer is no. One such case, currently the subject of legal proceedings, is particularly relevant here.

The concept of 'consent' or 'freedom of choice' in prison is very different to what it is beyond the walls. The effect of the carrot of parole in such cases as the above is plain to see, but there are other influences at work too. Groups such as the Medical Committee whilst alleging that drugs are often administered without a prisoner's consent, also admit that many prisoners do take drugs 'voluntarily'. But caution is urged here too.

"In Parkhurst ... I asked the prison doctor ... for permission to 'rest in cell' as I had a headache and did not feel like facing the noise and vibration of a busy machine shop ... The answer was an outright refusal, and the offer instead of something 'that will make you not notice the machines'. I refused.²"

Again:
"... a prisoner ... was allergic to working on machines ... he did not ask for favouritism ... he was prepared to take anything - so long as it was not on machines. Each time he was brought to the workshop he stood it for a couple of hours and then stopped work. Result - report ... a week down the block and then back into the workshop. Three times this charade was played out, then the governor advised him he should go sick ... he reported sick and was offered, instead of a change of labour, medication that would make the work tolerable. At the time I left Parkhurst ... he was still holding out against this 'treatment'. Many would have accepted it and settled down to a half doped existence among the machines instead of the continual harassment of reports and punishments."

Technically, both examples support the statement by Mr. Wigginton, then Governor of Brixton, that "prisoners are quite free to refuse medication if they wish" ('The Times' 28.3.77). Technically, but in reality? Much has been said here of medicine as control, but there is also a great deal of evidence which suggests a complete bankruptcy of any kind of medical care for prisoners. Space does not allow me to go into this aspect but surely there is a prima facie case for a public enquiry into the prison medical service? Still, the allegations of medicine as control must remain the prime concern.

Prison is an extremely important component of society's apparatus of social control. When considered in the context of other developments, such allegations as cited here take on a more sinister complexion than mere psychiatric malpractice or adventurism. The attempt in the new Holloway prison to redefine female criminality from 'bad' to 'mad' behaviour has already been mentioned. In September 1978, a Parliamentary Expenditure Committee took a big step towards extending this attitude to male offenders. The Home Office was recommended 'to recognise the need for its Prison Department to expand its own psychiatric facilities, ... and ... the appointment of a Director of Psychiatric Services ... charged specifically with developing the

psychiatric side of the prison medical service'. This conclusion seems to have been reached on the basis of unquestioned evidence from the Home Office and other groups that a high proportion of prisoners are mentally ill. That, for various reasons, mentally ill people do end up in prison is not in question but, as the Medical Committee commented:

"it is pertinent to consider ... our prison population is now the highest in Western Europe ... this country (England and Wales) has 42,000 men and women in prison, Holland has just 60 women and 3,100 men! Allowing for the different sizes of the countries, this is still a ratio of 4:1 ... when the Home Office speaks of a high proportion of our 42,000 prisoners it is referring to some 30,000 or so who would not be in custody at all in some other countries ... Are we, then, seriously to believe ... that our people suffer from some strange affliction which Dutchmen, Swedes or Danes somehow manage to escape?"³

One reaction to this argument is to support the consensus that now exists throughout most of the political spectrum that the prison population must be drastically reduced. But the consequent search for 'alternatives' needs careful consideration. Ideologically, if not in practice, the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act was a milestone in this process. Whilst rejecting incarceration as a suitable response to juvenile criminal behaviour, it sought to introduce a 'treatment' oriented approach located in the community itself. In such a situation, if one accepts the logic as expressed, for example, by the Howard League for Penal Reform that society should "return the prison to the community and the community to the prison"⁴ without a radical reappraisal of the purpose and goals of social control then we are clearly heading for trouble. Stan Cohen has remarked that even such tendencies as psychiatric abuse within the penal system look innocuous next to some recent technological breakthroughs in behaviour control:

"In the very near future, a computer technology will make possible alternatives to imprisonment. The development of telemetering information from sensors implanted in or on the body will soon make possible the observation and control of human behaviour without actual physical contact ... The possible implications for criminology and corrections of such ... systems is tremendously significant."⁵

If, then, in our prisons, we have progressed from the use of the wooden cosh to the 'liquid cosh' without knowing it, what is to prevent us, at a time when the penal system is expanding and clothing itself in less familiar uniforms, from falling under the control of even more wonderful coshes?

Frank Keeley

Sources

- 1 Home Office: "Holloway Redevelopment Timetable" Internal document circulated 1970-71
- 2 PROP Paper (April - May 1977)
- 3 Medical Committee Against the Abuse of Prisoners by Drugging - Press statement 20.10.78.
- 4 Annual Report of the Howard League for Penal Reform 1973.
- 5 Stan Cohen 'Human Warehouses' New Society Nov 1974

RAP's first major campaign, in 1972, was against the re-building of Holloway as a 'prison-hospital' for women. We were protesting against the extension of prison building nationwide as well as the imprisonment of women and the concept embodied in this new prison, that people who break the law are sick - 'mad, not bad'. At a rally in Westminster Hall, ROGER WODDIS read a poem he had written for our campaign.

Governments have come and gone, but Roger's poem is as relevant today as when he wrote it.

The Ballad of Holloway

In Holloway, by Kentish Town, there burns a sacred flame,
The faith of women rescued from a life of sin and shame,
And every night, on banded knees, they bless Keith Joseph's name.

I never saw a man who looked with such a modest pride
Upon the money he had spent a prison to provide,
Or felt such deep compassion for the wretches held inside.

The felonies that took them there send shudders down the spine,
There are some who purloined property, and some drank too much wine,
And others, lost to decency, who failed to pay a fine.

Such crimes must place the criminal beyond the social pale,
For theft and fraud and cruelty deserve a term in jail,
Unless you rob within the law and on a bigger scale.

If you can fleece a pensioner, or raise the price of tea,
Or make a million out of land, or con an employee,
You'll end up in the Honours List and earn an OBE.

The law applies both to the rich and to the common herd,
And when we're caught we needs must pay the penalties incurred,
Some do it from the petty cash, and some by doing bird.

Some innocents, like fragile flowers, are broken at the stem,
Some victims wear a crown of thorns and some a diadem,
Some sell their souls by robbing banks, and some by owning them.

Some women tuppence coloured are and some are penny plain,
But each must hear the message clear that's dinned into her brain:
'The goal to which we should aspire - pursuit of private gain.'

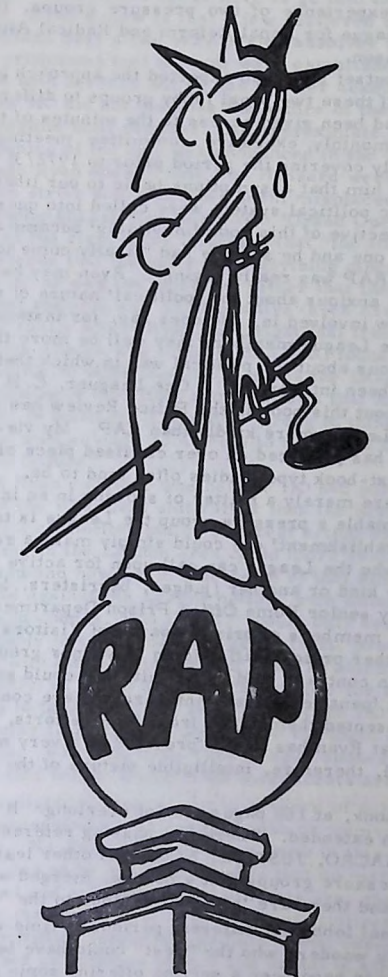
And those who dwell in prison cells are there for their own good,
Although the judge who sentenced them was barely understood,
Except that he was seen to be the rich man's Robin Hood.

When women go to Holloway they bear a shameful brand,
And often leave a child behind who lacks a mother's hand,
But such harsh laws must be because this is a Christian land.

Some women cruel husbands leave and some their lovers jilt,
But all who come to Holloway sustain an equal guilt,
Though less, perhaps, than people who want Holloway rebuilt.

There is a way to heal the sick, to cure the soul's decay,
It can be done by simple love, or giving equal pay,
But withering the human heart is the most 'hollow' way.

By kind permission of the 'New Statesman'.)



Strange Days In Strangeways

Herbert Johns is the man at the centre of the row about Burnley Council banning dogs from its parks. Mr Johns openly flouted the bye-law and then spent five days in Strangeways Prison, Manchester, after refusing to pay his fine. A man who had never been in trouble with the law before and who chose to go to prison on a point of principle. As the following is an extract from an interview Mr Johns gave to the Daily Mail of 4/11/78 - not a paper noted for its soft line on criminals - we feel it makes interesting reading.

▲ The prison was little more than an open sewer. I can only tell Ronnie Barker that Porridge has got it all wrong - it is much worse.

It was the most demeaning experience, almost beyond description.

Only if someone was to lock himself in his garage for 24 hours a day could he begin to get an inkling of the mind-destroying boredom involved.

On top of that comes the degradation you suffer at the hands of the prison officers, some of whom take delight in making you feel two inches tall.

They pick on you until you are like a mule robot. You lose your self-respect. They just force you into line until you are completely under their thumbs.

It was the kind of ordeal that made me realise that the more I see of humans, the more I love my dog.

My hunger strike was made that bit easier by the state of the food, with which I would not insult my dog.

It was just a question of lying back and looking through the bars, watching the pigeons until every

minute seemed like an hour. How long-term men stay sane, I don't know.

There were obviously times early in the week when I wished I had paid my fine before I got to the state where I no longer suffered hunger pangs.

But as time wore on, I became more and more determined, despite the psychological pressures of the food being left there and the prison officers urging me: "Come on lad, get it down you."

The whole thing was a huge eye-opener. The atmosphere was so bad you could cut it with a knife and there were some real villains inside.

I can see only too plainly how someone can go inside for something trivial and come out a hardened criminal.

There is nothing I would hate more than being jailed again. The threat would bring out my jungle instincts. But if I must, I must.

I am no martyr but if you feel deeply and passionately about something, you have no alternative but to see it through.

TAP OR RAP.

The burden of what Mick Ryan, a lecturer in politics at Thames Polytechnic has to say in 'The Acceptable Pressure Group' (Saxon House, £7.50) is that pressure groups trying to bring about change have to carefully consider how to proceed lest on the one hand they be ignored and isolated for demanding change of a too radical or fundamental nature or, on the other hand become too reformist and achieve less than they would otherwise. To illustrate his thesis Ryan compares the approach and experience of two pressure groups, the Howard League for Penal Reform and Radical Alternatives to Prison.

At the outset Ryan had expected the approach and experience of these two penal lobby groups to differ but after he had been given access to the minutes of the League's monthly executive committee meetings (though only covering the period prior to 1972/3) it dawned on him that assumptions basic to our liberal democratic political system were called into question. The perspective of this book 'inevitably' became a 'political' one and he says he had "finally come to grips with what RAP was really saying". Ryan may have been quite anxious about the 'political' nature of what he was now involved in. He does say, for instance, that "some League members may well be more than a little anxious about the political way in which their work has been interpreted". One Leaguer, C.H. Rolph writing about this book in the Police Review has said it treats the League more kindly than RAP. My view is that Ryan has produced an over civilised piece of writing, as text-book type studies often tend to be.

If it were merely a matter of showing in an instant how acceptable a pressure group the League is to the 'penal establishment' one could simply make a roll call of those who the League can call upon for active support of one kind or another (judges, barristers, MPs, many very senior Home Office Prison Department officials, members of prison Boards of Visitors as well as other prison staff holding 'governor grade' posts). In contrast, and by default, one could easily show that 'penal establishment' circles have conspicuously absented themselves from RAP's efforts. However, what Ryan has in fact provided is a very much fuller and, therefore, intelligible picture of the situation.

This book, at 160 pages, is not overlong. It could have been extended. There are passing references to PROP, NACRO, JUSTICE, NCCL and other lesser known pressure groups that emerged, merged or passed away and there are 'blind' allusions to the "rest of the penal lobby" at different periods of time when one really wonders who the "rest" could have been. So there should have been a section offering some guidance on the wide range of interest groups and individuals that would fall within the penal lobby compass, either permanently or temporarily, on an issue or topic basis.

The book proper opens with a brief Introduction and closes with an equally brief Conclusion. Sandwiched between the two are four further sections. These start with one on 'Pluralism' which looks at the growth from the 1950s of consensus and pressure groups politics within the context of a liberal democratic political tradition. Political analysts have apparently mapped pressure groups into a three tier hierarchy of "first, second and third world" groups. Like sociologists, political analysts lay a few eggs and it all seems to become the accepted wisdom of the day. So it is that the textbook and academic world works for the survival

part one.

of the species. At the head of this hierarchy are the most powerful 'first world' groups. Ryan locates the League among the second most powerful grouping (but moving into the top bracket) while RAP is among the least powerful 'third world' group.

Ryan points out that various objections have been raised to pressure group politics. For instance, by definition, the more powerful groups enjoy continuous access to government ministers and their Whitehall advisers and because they tend to confer in private the agreements they reach, and the terms on which they negotiate, are not open to public scrutiny. He notes too, that powerful pressure groups may be elitist, may have an undemocratic structure and that leaders of those groups may reach agreements not in keeping with the wishes of those they purport to represent. Relevant though the discussion in this section is, it might have been shorter and the various critical objections instead raised with more force, directness and application in the later sections that look in detail at the League and RAP.

The structure of this book reflects the basic imbalance in the subject matter under review. One 50 page section dealing with RAP is preceded by two sections about the League comprising some 70 pages. RAP is only 8 years old while the review of the League covers a much longer period (1866/1976). Add to the problem of structure that of definition and it is obvious that Ryan was faced with a very difficult task.

Ryan gives a good account of the League's accomplishments and rightly concludes that they have been considerable. He is able to show that throughout its existence the League has worked in close harmony with the Home Office and prison authorities. He instances numerous examples when the League has taken great pains to maintain its close links with those in power. He takes a critical look at the widely held view that the League is wholly in the pocket of the Home Office in that it is never outright in its condemnation of Home Office policies. Ryan says this view is an unfair 'caricature' but as he cites only one or two instances when the League has or may have adopted a position of confrontation over Home Office policy one remains unconvinced. On balance, the examples in his book show that the League time and time again, despite all its good work and much effort on many issues, has aligned itself with the Home Office over critical issues or has declined to support active campaign groups for fear of losing its coveted inside-track position with those in power.

Ryan gives some indication that the League is rather an elitist group (and this is certainly more openly true the further back one goes into its past) not over-concerned about democratising its highly centralised structure and by that means increasing and encouraging an active and critical membership. My feeling is that Ryan has been over-kind in this respect because despite all League credits where due, those professions close to and falling within the political and legal establishment are conservative and elitist to such an amazing extent. The League most definitely, in my view, reinforces those traits and traditions and like certain other pressure groups, provides individuals with opportunities to increase their status and career prospects. Just as, in an inverse way, certain critics from academia can find kudos and confirmation of their standing with the radical milieu by making boringly repetitious attacks on the League on any and every opportunity.

This is certainly not an unsubtle book. It does get to grips with the nature of the League operation but in some ways doesn't seem biting enough about how the 'establishment' networks really work. Notwithstanding the stress the League puts on hard facts and its civilised approach (both very laudable within reason) there is something very unpleasant and complacent about the unctuous air of deference which infects League conferences. This has also to be coupled with the fact that the League never produces a single ex-offender as a speaker or even workshop leader - indeed, not even among the audience except by sheer chance. It is this almost studied lack of opposing viewpoints at League functions that leads me to believe that the League actually fronts for the Home Office on certain occasions. One doesn't question that the League should mark the 200th anniversary of the publication of John Howard's 'The State of the Prisons' with a commemorative meeting but one is very sceptical about its decision to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the State's centralisation of the prison system.

Ryan is right that the nature of the League operation helps to define it as acceptable to the establishment and that by contrast RAP's fundamental and highly critical stance, calling for complete change, helps to define it out of the power system. But within the range of penal and associated pressure groups there is a tendency for an establishment clique to develop. The tendency is for groups such as the League, NACRO, Amnesty, NCCL and Justice to more readily identify with one another than with such groups as RAP, PROP, Up Against the Law (when it existed) and JAIL - another reason why the absence of a general overview of the penal lobby is really a sad omission from this book. I'm not suggesting that clique groups never cross-collaborate because they do. But only rarely and extremely rarely (never in some cases) on major issues or projects.

Because this book doesn't deal in any detailed way with the operation of the prison system or with the wide range of issues related to prisoner's rights it also doesn't address itself to the extent to which the League is obviously in receipt of a mass of privileged information and the extent to which it obviously connives in its further suppression. This was an issue that was particularly vexatious at the time of the 1974/5 campaign to abolish the then established Control Units. The League clearly had inside knowledge of the prisoner screening and selection procedures at national and regional levels, but never disclosed this information although as many as ten pressure groups acting in concert were trying to wage a critical campaign.

There was also a classic example of the penal pressure group upper clique pulling together on this occasion. The Control Units Action Group (CUAG) had agreed to issue only joint press statements showing a united front on the issue (an important point not made in Ryan's account) but the League repeatedly featured in the press making statements that were conciliatory towards the POA and the Prison Department. Consequently, on a vote, the League were made to resign from the CUAG. Immediately, at the very same meeting, NACRO announced that it would have to withdraw on the instruction of its executive committee and, so too, in very quick succession did the NCCL. NACRO then as now, following their recent move, shared the same offices as the League and my guess is that they had an agreed strategy for the camp-

aign whereby NACRO (as they did) took a very militant line while the League a conciliatory one so that its favoured position with the HO and the POA would not be jeopardised. It is within my certain knowledge that the League has made strategic arrangements of this sort at other times.

Ryan's account of the Control Unit campaign is inadequate and it is his charge that RAP was 'naive' (whereas by implication 'moderate' groups like NCCL, NACRO and the League were wiser) which seems 'naive'. There isn't space here to go into this in great detail. Ryan's view is that a few scattered references in Hansard over a two year period absolves the HO from criticisms that the unit were established and operated with secrecy but he has to later acknowledge that the HO did not disclose the nature of the Control Unit regime until pressed. An approximate date for the opening of the unit was announced in the Commons although Ryan doesn't note that Hansard were at that time on strike and what does seem misplaced is his hyperbolic phrase that this was a 'Grand Opening'. Is Ryan on the right track in saying that "the HO made no pretence that the units were anything other than punitive" or was the objection rather that the pretence was that the unit was LESS punitive (even harmless) than it really was? Ryan isn't right that from the outset those groups who formed the CUAG found it almost impossible to work together. It was the League alone that sabotaged the effort and it follows that Ryan is incorrect in stating: "It would be wrong to think that the League's ill advised comments to the press caused the CUAG's failure".

Did Ryan consider whether the HO had purposely opened the Wakefield unit rather than the Scrubs unit so that a committed policy to direct action or protest picketing in the London area could more easily be thwarted and how would a decision of that kind have weighed against the League notion, with which Ryan seems to concur, that the HO "would only respond favourably to restrained and sympathetic protest"? Taken with other criticisms of Ryan's (which we return to shortly) in which he faults the League for being unwilling to take a radical stand against the HO over particular issues, it is hard to see the logic in Ryan's position. What you often hear League spokespersons say is that prison department bureaucrats are civilised, enlightened types, far in advance of public opinion (as represented by the average man or woman in the street). No doubt there is some truth in this but what always has to be borne in mind is that no matter how civilised and enlightened HO officials are, the massive system they operate is definitely not civilised. And it is daily putting into effect decisions that cannot but be described as ruthless in fact and brutal in effect. And against this, for instance, voting the League off the CUAG hardly bears comparison.

Ryan does consider the fundamental issue of whether the League in adopting a hard facts, collaborative, civilised approach in its dealings with the HO accomplished as much as it would have done had it sometimes been willing to use more strident tactics. Surprisingly, at that point, Ryan's view is that the League should have taken a more strident attitude on occasions. He goes even further, too far probably, saying that anyone looking at the 1970s was "intellectually dishonest" if they thought the League had "delivered the goods" and as a clincher points to "the tightening up of prison security after Mountbatten, the emergence of the

(Continued on following page)

MEDIA. A mad, sad, bad scene.

'Confronted with how much news ISN'T used I realise now, if I hadn't realised before, the amount of news which the media pour out. And I begin wondering to what extent journalists are aware of how they un educate people with information about events that depress and confuse them while not at the same time offering a way out from feelings of impotence. And are they conscious that news has become a marketable commodity to whose 'packaging', like all commodities, special attention must be paid? Do they constantly question themselves, scrutinise their decisions in order to maintain a delicate balance between the demands to decorate the package and the responsibility to present it accurately? Not always easy. Accuracy may be boring, too complex, often bewilderingly contradictory. Contradictions in a complex world must be a difficult commodity to sell.'

Rather a long opener from 'Journey into Journalism', Arnold Wesker's account of Sunday Times journalists at work in 1971 - which would have seen the light of day in 1972 instead of last year had not certain journalists at that paper found Wesker's mild commentary intolerable, despite his offer to incorporate their criticisms in with his text. At a time like the present, when there is a law and order crisis and so many issues falling within that compass are featuring in the news media, Wesker's pointed comment about the problems posed to journalists and public alike is especially relevant.

It is hard not to conclude that while there are journalists and news organisations that do appreciate the problems that confront the public in trying to assimilate and understand law and order issues, there are, as well those that don't and more than a few among those that

surprising. We have seen the Sunday Observer, a reputedly 'quality' paper, emerge from its recent libel action as clearly having conspired with the Special Branch to provide a pretext for large numbers of police to make an anti-terrorist raid on the Workers Revolutionary Party educational centre in Derbyshire, despite the fact that both the Observer and the police admit that they disbelieved certain vague allegations about arms being hidden there. And more, that all the specific allegations of which WRP members complained in the libel action were held to be untrue by the jury.

Of course a police - press operation such as that visited on the WRP could equally have involved one of the other national newspapers. Those in doubt are referred to 'Four Line Whip', a novel by Paul Carden (Pan Books 1969). Carden, then a Daily Mirror sub editor, stressed in publishing the novel that as he was in close touch with the news those events on which his novel were grounded were especially realistic. What the novel actually portrayed was the emergence of a right wing political organisation and the way in which the Home Office, Security Services, Special Branch and the press closely collaborated in a joint operation to smash it. By coincidence the operation that they mounted was almost a carbon copy of that which is now publicly known to have been put together against the WRP by the Observer, the Special Branch and the Derbyshire Constabulary. Carden's 'op' ended with a contrived police raid on the organisation's country headquarters precipitated by a statement from a liberal within its ranks who had misgivings and who was willing under pressure from all sides to connive with the authorities in swearing a false declaration that there were 'drugs' on the premises. The intermediary was a wily crime reporter who had access to the corridors of power at the highest levels.

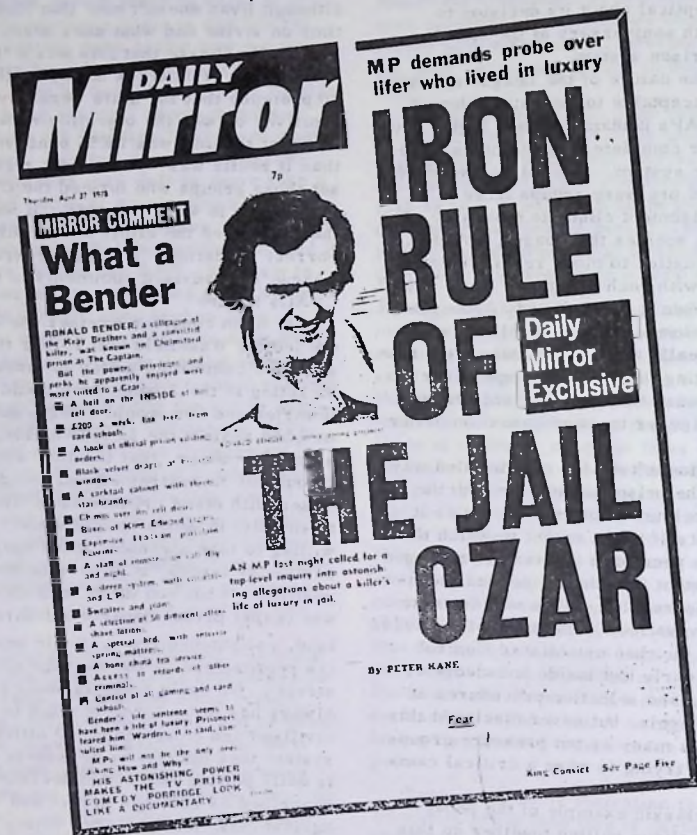
What confuses isn't simply the wide variety of news and issues carried in the press, their depressive nature or the fact that readers feel themselves impotent - though these things are relevant. Equally important to the process of assimilation, understanding and formulating a critical reaction is the need to get at the news behind the news - that is, figuring out how the world of journalism actually operates; the very information that the press seems very careful to leave unexplained. That Wesker had to wait 5 years for permission to publish what are no more than mild criticisms well illustrates this predisposition.

Very little in-depth material has been published on police, crime and court reporting. Steve Chibnall's 'Law And Order News' (Tavistock, 1977) is a welcome exception, but even that is too academic to recommend as widely as one would like. And although in content it is fairly wide-ranging there are many aspects not covered, so there is much room still for further enquiry into the wide range of tricks and propaganda techniques resorted to by journalists in both the newsgathering and newsreproducing processes.

Of course there are occasions when the predisposition of the press not to disclose its own wheeling and dealing provide one competitor with a scoop over a rival, and then disclosure is the order of the day. From this sort of circumstance has come perhaps one of the best accounts of how journalists and news organisations compete with one another in the circulation war, when they knew that one competitor had a head start. Anthony Delano (a Daily Mirror hustler) in 'SLIP UP' (Arrow Books, 85p) describes how the Daily Express secretly collaborated with the Yard over the 'Biggs is in Brazil' scoop of 1974 so that it would have got its scoop even if the Yard had got its robber (although, alas, other problems intervened where the Yard were concerned): how Colin MacKenzie the Express reporter, having brought the scoop to his employers, was double-crossed and outwitted by them and how the muscle-power of other news organisations enabled them to contrive situations and shape reality because of their sheer ability to reproduce those situations as actual 'news' events.

Journalists attempt to objectify news and feature items by suggesting that what is in progress is some kind of Law and Order debate. There's no more than an element of truth in the notion. Wesker's view is more realistic because what might pass as part of an alleged 'debate' - newspaper editorials and feature articles, specially commissioned or otherwise - represents no more than a rather tame tail trying to wag an exceptionally unruly dog comprising a whole army of Monsters, Maniacs, Kings, Queens, and Emperors of Drugs, Vice or Violence, not to mention Mr. Big, Mr. Fixit, Masterminds ad infinitum and of course Public Rippers, Panthers and 'Enemies Number One'. These populate the dubious hierarchy of law'n order journalism as in fact does the similarly hierarchical crew of super-sleuth cops and punitive judges who in the mythology keep the whole in order.

Ian Cameron



do who, for a variety of reasons, on occasion choose not to face the responsibilities that that knowledge should entail.

We had a fine example in the latter tradition back in April when a Crown Court murder trial involving the appearance of numerous witnesses both for the crown and the accused over a two week period, was grossly misrepresented by Peter Kane of the Daily Mirror. Kane wrote nothing about the trial in the first week and when he did he chose not to give those details that would have afforded readers a proper understanding of the court proceedings. Instead he ran a sensational front page series alleging that a defence witness lived, as a life sentence prisoner, in great luxury and even

ruled Chelmsford Prison, where the murder had been committed. That Kane, for the Mirror, chose to run on the allegations - despite HO denials - for two days after the trial ended and was thus able to continue the non-story as a major controversy to coincide with and possibly counter the public reaction to the final episode of the 'Law and Order' T. V. series that featured the brutalisation and drugging in prison of a long term prisoner, added a sinister dimension to the role of Kane and the Mirror on this occasion.

That the Mirror could well have had a sinister motive in sensationalising the 'Luxury Lifers' allegations at the particular time they did, knowing from long experience that almost certainly they were rubbish, isn't

tap or rap. contd.

Movement for the Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners' (PROP), the prison riots of 1972 and the recent and brutal prison disturbance at Hull". I think these developments beg questions of responsibility larger than prison groups specifically can be tied to (this includes RAP as well as the League). I don't think any prison reform group today can realistically predict the impossibility of a future major crime wave, a law and order crisis or a related shift in sentencing policy that could set reform or rehabilitation back. Otherwise one could hold penal reform groups responsible for, say, the exploits of the Wembley Bank rob-

bery network or the increase and influence of urban terrorism (both at home and abroad) and the increase in sentences and prison security.

Another mistaken view, a 'caricature' according to Ryan, is that the League in the early 70s were not interested in alternatives to prison. But that's an issue we take up in 'TAP or RAP' part two which will look more specifically at what Ryan has to say about RAP.

Ian Cameron

('TAP or RAP' part two will appear in the next issue.)

FORCE RULES O.K. — The Future of the CYPA '69

On January 25th 1978 the 'Daily Mail' ran an article by Fenton Bresler, a noted legal journalist, which announced among other things that 'the Vicious Generation' was upon us and went on to demand a return to harsh methods of discipline for young offenders, namely more prisons, borstals, detention centres and attendance centres. "But what most of all is needed," Bresler wrote, "is a new resolve, a new determination to counter violence with strength - not the soft approach. That has been tried and failed." A month later on February 21st 'The Times' gave Patricia Morgan the opportunity to make the same point, albeit in more sophisticated language: "The Children and Young Persons' Act 1969 sought to abolish punitive and custodial approaches to delinquency and to treat instead 'symptoms' of emotional deprivation. However, since then not only have juvenile delinquency and recidivism grown apace, but the evidence suggests that the move to the permissive, therapeutic community dedicated to personal relationships has accelerated the deterioration in success rates of institutions." A few days later in a parliamentary debate on law and order, Mr. William Whitelaw reaffirmed the commitment of the Conservative Party to tougher measures for young offenders, complete with military-style glasshouses.

The view that the soft approach has been tried and failed runs like a scarlet thread through all the criticisms that are currently being made of the CYPA 1969. Erstwhile supporters are confessing their mistakes, long-term opponents are saying "I told you so" and the country is being urged to come to its senses. The social work profession, where the nucleus of support for the 1969 Act lies, is becoming an increasingly isolated group, because their continuing insistence that treatment 'works' has less and less credibility. They are right, nonetheless, to point out the central fallacy in the hardliners' argument - the 1969 Act has never been implemented in full - even though they are wrong to assume that more of their treatment would be helpful in the long run.

The kind of controversy which rages about the 1969 Act is nothing new, in the sense that hardliners of some description have criticised every piece of delinquency legislation which has operated this century. But the 1969 Act is unique in having been so controversial that, nine years after it was passed, it is still essentially unimplemented. The sections which gave the police formal powers of caution, and which transferred some executive power from magistrates to social workers have been implemented, and have made some difference to the way kids are dealt with. But the sections which would have compelled liaison between police and social services before decisions are taken about particular offenders (Section 5), raised the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 (Section 4), restricted the use of borstals to over 17 year olds and abolished detention centres completely (Section 7) have been conveniently forgotten. It is doubtful if sections 4 and 5 would have made much difference overall, but section 7 obviously would, and given its non-implementation, it required an ideological sleight of hand to portray the 1969 Act as soft legislation. To explain how this happened one needs to examine the development of the ideas embodied in the Act itself.

DISCIPLINE AND TREATMENT

With regard to young offenders in this country concern for welfare and a desire to rehabilitate rather than punish can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century. From then until the 1960s 'welfare' always involved removing an offender from the community, and tight discipline was regarded as a necessary feature of all residential and custodial establishments. During the fifties the meaning of 'welfare' had begun to shift from training to treatment and a pseudo-medical element crept into the language of policy developers. High rates of recidivism from all forms of residential establishment led to scepticism about this kind of approach, particularly in view of its expense, and the notion of community prevention was mooted as a serious alternative, trading directly on a disease model of delinquency. The CYPA

1963, based on the Ingleby Report, formalised this way of thinking; it questioned the ambiguity of the juvenile courts' role, its dual commitment to both welfare and punishment, and it empowered local authorities to take preventive action with the families of delinquent children. In 1964 a Labour government came to power and a study group chaired by Lord Longford reaffirmed the link between deprivation, neglect, and delinquency, called for a switch from residential to community care and proposed the replacement of the juvenile court by a civil Family Court. These ideas were further developed by the Home Office and published as a White Paper, 'The Child, the Family and the Young Offender' (1965). The magistrates, and the Conservative Party generally, opposed its suggestion that the juvenile court should be abolished but responded more positively to the 1968 White Paper, 'Children in Trouble'. This proposed that the juvenile court should be retained but with the jurisdiction of the magistrates restricted to establishing guilt and merely indicating, rather than enforcing, appropriate sentences. Reluctantly the Conservative Party accepted this and the White Paper became the basis of the CYPA 1969. By the time it had become law its fortunes had become inextricably linked with those of the social work profession, whose status had been boosted by the Seeborn Report (1971) and whose stated aim was to provide "a family service" for all its clients, not just young offenders.

And there was equally enthusiastic cheering for those who urged corporal punishment to deal with thugs and football hooligans.

When one speaker wondered who would carry out the floggings, a man in audience shouted enthusiastically, 'Me! I will.'

Daily Mail, Thursday, October 12, 1978

Unfortunately, less than a year after the Act was passed a Conservative government returned to power and, with the backing of the Magistrates' Association, the Justices' Clerks Society and the Police Federation it failed to implement crucial sections of the new legislation. Those sections which were implemented coincided with the reorganisation of local authority social work and the resulting provision varied considerably throughout the country, according to locally defined priorities. In Scotland, the situation was somewhat different because there the juvenile court was abolished, following the recommendations of the Kilbrandon Committee, and replaced by a system which completely separated judicial and welfare functions. The decision to charge young offenders remained with the police, but the decision to prosecute was passed to a new figure, the reporter, while the question of disposal was given to panels of lay people, whose job it was to act "in the best interests of the child." Although the panels' recommendations closely follow the suggestions of social workers, their powers are limited by the facilities available, which in Scotland as in England still includes a large number of custodial places.

WELFARE AND SOCIAL CONTROL

It is wrong, however, to think of the 1969 Act and its Scottish equivalent as purely humanitarian pieces of legislation whose benevolent intentions were thwarted by reactionary forces in national and local government. This is how social workers see them, and while it is certainly true that professional 'benevolence' was curtailed by hardline groups it is also true that the 'welfare ethic' embodies a notion of social control which is every bit as repressive as that of the hardliners. The debates about

young offenders which began in the early sixties can be seen in terms of a disagreement between liberal and conservative groups within the state about the 'methods' but not the aim of social control. To put it simply, possibly to caricature it, the liberals had a vision of lower class communities being infiltrated by social workers and psychologists, of kids and families being referred to child guidance clinics, while the conservatives stuck to their old ideas about deterrence, and the imagery of police and courts incarcerating kids in institutions. If the economic situation hadn't changed at the end of the sixties, if Labour had stayed in power and social services had been expanded, it is interesting to speculate how far the liberal line would have been pushed because there is no doubt that, under certain circumstances, it could be a most effective means of social control. But by the time Labour returned to power in 1974, the impetus to develop new means of social control had been lost and policies towards offenders continued in more or less the same vein they had always been in.

'More or less', because there have been some changes. Social workers, for instance, have developed intermediate treatment (IT) schemes as the Act required, some of which are useful ways of working with young offenders if they don't regard them as psychologically disturbed individuals whose problems 'only' arise because of an unhappy family life. RAPS views on intermediate treatment have been documented elsewhere, the thrust of the argument being that IT, far from being the alternative to custody which it was intended to be, has become a mere adjunct to it, just one element of the system which deals with offenders rather than the hallmark of the system itself. For in the nine years that the Act has been in force more people not less have gone through attendance centres, detention centres and borstals, as well as into local authority care - the very opposite of what the Act intended. As if this is not enough, the development of secure accommodation - custodial units attached to community homes and in the control of local authorities - is proceeding apace, far faster than IT has, and with more government support.

And yet the belief persists that the soft approach has been tried, when all the evidence shows that since the 1969 Act the network of custody has expanded. Contrary to a report in 'The Economist' (5 August 1978) that "borstals and detention centres are being phased out" more are being built, and attendance centres for girl delinquents are being planned. Although there is a token conflict between the Home Office and the D.H.S.S. about the development of these facilities, nothing is being done to stop their construction. The social services departments seem as keen to build secure accommodation as the magistrates are to make secure care orders, although the former claim it is for treatment purposes and the latter for the protection of the public. Either way, if it is built, it will be used. Whither community care now? Whither Section 7? If this has been the soft approach, heaven help us when the hardliners come back!

He complained that the present system of dealing with offenders had failed and called for more attendance centres to deal with hooligans and effective procedures to enforce the payment of fines.

But harsher penalties were also needed and those who disagreed must face reality. The hardened young thugs and violent and vicious criminals must be dealt with.

Mr Whitelaw also promised to restore to magistrates the right to commit young offenders to Borstal and detention centres, and he repeated his call for a system of short, sharp sentences of up to 28 days to deal with the worst young offenders.

Daily Mail, Thursday, October 12, 1978

The cruellest irony of this increase in custody is its expense. Nine years ago the state was only too ready to admit that the cost-effectiveness of imprisonment was minimal, and yet now it is prepared to sanction high levels of expenditure in order to give substance to the switch from a social welfare to a law and order ideology. Geoff Pearson describes what this means in the context of social services: more money on offenders, less on the elderly, the handicapped, the mentally ill, all of whom have equally pressing needs and who are more likely to benefit from having money spent on them, given the form that expenditure on offenders will take.

Many of the 'welfarist' arguments that were acceptable in the sixties are now dismissed as sentimental, sometimes with good reason. It is in this area that social workers have been least helpful in sustaining the positive elements of the 1969 Act, because their ever increasing commitment to various forms of psychotherapy doesn't have much impact on rough inner city kids, and doesn't reassure the public that they know how to deal with anti-social behaviour. It takes a certain kind of person to get through to rough kids, but they're not usually the sort of person who fits into bureaucracies, and for that reason they don't turn up in social service departments. It obviously isn't desirable to let working class kids get away with crime, not least because their victims are usually part of the same class, the same community, as themselves. Often they are other kids, sometimes they are old people. Someone needs to work out ways of encouraging these communities to consume their own smoke, to police themselves, to show solidarity - but without reacting more punitively than the external agencies which police them now. The people themselves should be given greater say in the processes of justice; reconciliation, not retribution, should be the aim.

Meanwhile the debate on the 1969 Act has polarised, with representatives from the treatment and punishment camps taking up extreme positions. Some social workers have suggested that children's panels be set up in this country while the magistrates are adamant in their demands for power to guarantee custody for some 'persistent' offenders. One of their number has actually suggested a return to the CYPA 1933, with its approved schools and remand homes - the very legislation which the 1969 Act sought to replace. It would be in nobody's long term interests to turn back the clock this far, but nor would it be desirable, even if it were possible, to implement the 1969 Act in full, in all its Brave New Worldish glory. The good bits need to be salvaged - the spirit of IT, and the promise to minimise custody - and the administrative aspects rethought in new legislation.

Law alone, however, will not solve the juvenile crime problem because, like the crime problem generally, it is related to wider political and economic processes. It is complicated too by the ambivalent status of youth in advanced capitalist societies and any response to young offenders will necessarily reflect society's attitude to young people generally. Right now, society seems particularly threatened by youth and prepared to come down with a heavy hand, ignoring the fact that many of the values which permeate delinquent activity - selfishness, machismo, hedonism - are core values in society itself. Society's sense of threat reached absurd proportions earlier this year in the reaction of some newspapers to the story of a four year old and a six year old being implicated in the death of an old lady. Headlines like 'Tiny Tot Killers', innuendos of sexual assault and special emphasis on the nationalities of the parents represented an all-time low in reporting standards for this kind of occurrence. It was used quite explicitly to bring the 1969 Act into disrepute even though children under ten cannot be prosecuted as criminals. It was part of a fairly self-conscious attempt to create a climate of opinion in which repression could be justified, and for several weeks afterwards reports of the old being victimised by the young were 'de rigeur' in all newspapers.

It would be a mistake to dismiss all these reports as sensationalism, for such events do, unfortunately, happen. We live in that kind of world. Certain sections of contemporary youth are very violent, and it is no use being sentimental about them. They are not immune to the currents of racism and sexism - and even ageism - which pervade this society; quite often they express these currents more sharply than adults, because of their relative immaturity. Whoever works with rough kids has to take their violence into account, as well as understanding the roots of that violence in the society around them. Quite how the demands of the state and allied pressure groups for tougher measures fits in isn't clear, for custody itself is just another sort of violence, and the only lesson it teaches is that force rules okay.

Mike Nellis

LAW 'n ORDER PARTY GAMES

16

"The time has long passed when the punishment should fit the crime. (Today) a life sentence does not fit the crime. You could be more severely sentenced if you fiddled taxes. Innocent children are gunned down at point blank range... the reintroduction of capital punishment would discourage the carrying of firearms... people are sick of excuses - broken homes, psychiatric treatment - rubbish! Birching and the stocks would solve the problem." Such was the straightforward advice given by a Mrs Collins from the Womens Advisory Committee to the Conservative party conference in October 1978. It was, of course, received with rapturous applause. Such sentiments were typical of the law and order debate at the conference and could hardly have come as a surprise to anybody. The debate, after all, was merely a rallying point in the long running and carefully orchestrated Tory law'n order election show.

For those who are not exactly sold on these policies of assorted legal brutalities and the perennial calls for a return to some mythical golden era of parental responsibility, 'discipline' and 'morality' which Tories are convinced once existed, though not so sure as to exactly when, there is no particularly convincing alternative perspective offered by either the Liberal or Labour Parties. When I contacted the Liberal Party to request information on their policy on law and order, I received four pages of information detailing Liberal Council and Assembly pronouncements on the subject since 1961. My haul from the Labour Party was the 1978 Party conference motion on law and order plus a short statement made by the National Executive Committee (NEC). On the other hand, Conservative Central Office sent me ten times as much with apologies that the pressures of the party conference prevented a greater supply. The Tory policy on law and order then, if rather unpalatable is at least well known via press handouts, official pronouncements and various large poster sites. But what of Labour?

Probably the best opportunity for assessing, or simply discovering, the policy of the Labour Party on crime was afforded at the Party Conference in October 1978 when a motion on law and order was accepted for debate. Such a debate is a rare enough occurrence but, it seems to me, both its timing and tone are significant. Whether or not there is a law and order crisis or whether it is simply a product of Tory propaganda as many in the Labour Party would like to make out, it is evident that Labour now realises it will be a crucial issue in the next election campaign and one which they will ignore at their peril. The crucial question, of course, is what will Labour's position be? The motion itself does not give much grounds for hope that Labour will present anything radically different from the punitive approach of the Tories. Labour will, of course, couch the argument in terms of the need to avoid taking a simplistic approach to the problem of crime and references will be made to the part which social deprivation plays in causing crime. But

as the motion made clear, the policy makers are going to find it difficult to resist the demands for "Visible action" to be taken against criminals as well as the current whipping dogs of society - young people. The motion called for "bold and resolute action" to be taken "to combat the menace of vandalism, wanton destruction and needless violence". The NEC was instructed to "consider ways in which greater support can be given to law and order by investigating the causes of the general increase in crime and reviewing the question of appropriate and consistent punishment".

The ensuing debate was interesting, characterised by a whole array of vitriolic attacks on the motion, the sentiments of many of the speeches concurring with what RAP has been saying for years. For example, a delegate from Richmond CLP said "The whole repugnance of this motion is that its central theme is punishment... this has been handed out for centuries... but there is not one statistic that proves that punishment cuts down crime. You don't have to be a sociologist to see why it (crime) goes on." A delegate from York CLP said of the motion "The real problem is that it is a simplistic argument concerning a very complex problem. We must look at the underlying reasons (for crime)... indeed, the environment should make us wonder that crime is not greater". Yet, despite such a hostile reception, the motion was passed by a two to one majority. In considering this, it is surely an important point that both the proposers and seconders of the motion were CLPs from hard core working class areas - West Derby in Liverpool and Pontefract and Castleford - while most of those who attacked the motion came from areas which could hardly be said to be working class - York, Richmond, Homerton, etc. I would not want to dispute the correctness of the arguments advanced by those who opposed the motion but I do think they were missing a crucial point.

I think it is true to say that among the left in general, including the left of the Labour Party, whenever crime is considered as a serious issue it tends to become submerged in the dogma that it is all caused by social conditions and when those conditions are changed then it will disappear. In emphasising the fundamental importance of social conditions to both the causes and resolution of crime, RAP itself has been accused of having the same dogmatic and naive approach. However, what such a dogmatic approach fails to recognise is that for many people, working class people in particular, crime is a very real issue. We may dispute the degree to which crime, or serious crime, does occur but to simply dismiss such fears as fictions of the media and Tory Party propaganda - no matter how responsible for such fears these groups may be - is a dangerous error. Not only is the opportunity missed to advance a more relevant and constructive response to anti-social behaviour but by abdicating the responsibility to engage in this argument, another field is left open in which people's fears are open to exploitation by reactionary forces.

Eric Heffer, whilst intimating that Labour Party NEC were concerned about the thinking behind the motion which was passed so that the Party could get to grips with the problem. "There are deep feelings about the rise in crime amongst ordinary people and we must realise it... When we MPs meet constituents they constantly raise these points. We cannot ignore it, we must be concerned". The NEC statement itself said "This conference is deeply concerned by the continuing increase in violence, organised crime, theft and vandalism. No advanced industrialised country has escaped this new and disturbing social trend... conference declares that its policy is based on a comprehensive and intelligent approach to the causes of criminal behaviour in our society. Labour rejects instant solutions which exploit punitive instincts alone... conference believes that rapid social and technological change within a society of inequality; the weakening of the family unit and the decay of the inner cities, have each contributed towards our present problem. Crime and vandalism breed in areas of physical and social deprivation." Whilst the statement failed to avoid the hobby horse of police and the desperate need for more of them, it did, nevertheless, attach a greater importance to more realistic measures, "the principal remedies are to be found in the community, by providing local authorities with the resources to rehabilitate urban council estates and provide urgently needed play and recreation facilities; through greater involvement of the community in their schools and by greater action to discourage the building of high-rise flats and by involving the tenants in the management of their estates"

It is easy to be cynical about such policies and describe them as, at best, piecemeal. But such words do at least show a more relevant and constructive approach than that of the Tories. A leaflet published by the Conservative Central Office, headed by a picture of police involved in a punch-up at Grunwick, is headlined "Protecting the Citizen". After announcing that a government's first duty is to "uphold law and order and to protect people from the mugger, the burglar and the armed robber" the leaflet gives ten reasons why "you should support the Conservatives", which are, that the Conservatives will: "raise police pay and recruit more policemen, toughen up detention centres to teach young thugs discipline, encourage courts to impose prison sentences for crimes of violence, give magistrates power to deal firmly with young offenders, clamp down on the pornographers who exploit young children, encourage the use of attendance centres where young thugs can be sent in their free time, urge broadcasting authorities to avoid excessive violence on television, help to provide more recreation for young people, bring together schools police and parents in a joint effort to stop truancy and crime, and support the formation of police task forces against vandals." No doubting the tough image here. Crime will be beaten down with more police and tough discipline. The only sop to the importance of social environment is a promise to

17

"help" with "more recreation for young people" though one might be forgiven for wondering just how many young people would be left to benefit from this after the Tories had sated the desire of magistrates to punish, toughened up detention centres and encouraged attendance centres!

I'm not attempting to drum up votes for the Labour Party in saying all this. Indeed, it would be wrong to say that there weren't Tory Party members who disagree strongly with the official line on law and order. At this year's party conference a very brave character from the Conservative Students Association stood in front of the baying audience and told them he was against the motion. "The motion" he said "is far too simplistic because there is no attempt to consider the causes of crime... a deterrent is only part of the story. We must consider why so many offences are committed by the working class. Poor education is like a prison sentence. At sixteen they have unemployment. This is not making excuses, we have got to face up to the fact... The next government, in addition to deterrence must also give attention to bad housing and poor education." However, the reaction to this little homily gave me the distinct impression that this young man was about to become the first victim of the mass of hangers, floggers and stockers who were in the hall. Decorum finally prevailed, though, and the merest smattering of applause could be heard, tempered, no doubt, by a strong instinct for self preservation.

The Labour NEC statement and the speeches made against the law and order motion at the party conference do show, however, that there is a much greater and sympathetic audience for the RAP type of approach to crime and punishment within the Labour Party than any of the other parties. It would be too much to hope at this stage, that anything other than an essentially punitive approach will find its way into a Labour election programme. However, there is obviously an influential section of the party that would agree with what groups like RAP and PROP are saying. Perhaps such organisations should pay more attention to this.

Frank Keeley

A SENSE OF FREEDOM * * * *

I am told that it is all the rage amongst Scotland's young arty set to wear Barlinnie Prison T-shirts. The coming of the Special Unit has certainly sunk into the national consciousness. No-one I chatted to up and down the length of Scotland was unaware of Jimmy Boyle and the Special Unit.

The Unit must be unique in the world, but what exactly is it like? The extraordinary thing is that it is not being monitored by an outside worker. Jimmy keeps a detailed daily account of everything that happens, and knowing his organisational ability he will certainly put this to good use in the future. But when the Prison Dept. offered to research the Unit itself, prisoners and staff refused, saying they wanted an independent research worker. This has not been provided.

You can visit Jimmy with miraculour ease, just by arranging an appointment by letter. No V.O. is needed. When I arrived at Barlinnie prison in August, the old familiar prison scene was all there - worse than England, in fact, as smoking is forbidden during visits, and the prisoner remains behind a wire grille.

I sat waiting and a smiling uniformed officer came to collect me. He took me through the courtyard and to a locked door. I thought of H. G. Wells' short story about the green door in the wall that wasn't there when he returned. He unlocked the door and Jimmy greeted me, radiating tremendous energy and friendliness. He provided a lovely lunch in his cell, showed me the building and introduced me to Ken, the officer in charge whom I had read about in Jimmy's book 'A Sense Of Freedom'. It was a bizarre experience to sit chatting in an office with a small, cultured person who had been "the most dangerous man in Scotland", and a warm, sincere, open-faced prison officer whom I felt instinctively I could trust completely. Jimmy and Ken seem close working partners and meeting them both was quite moving.

They have worked hard for six years to develop and preserve the Unit. At the moment they feel its existence is secure (and they have built up a wide network of outside supporters), but they are anxious about the effects of a Tory government. They welcome visitors as they know that their work is safer as more and more people learn about it.

The entire wall of the downstairs landing is covered by a beautifully painted mural which symbolizes the prisoners' perception of the way society works (an analysis which RAP members would accept!). The prisoners did this together and it seemed to be a monument to the collective strength and mental freedom they can achieve.

There are rooms for sculpture, pets, exercise, art and so on; and in material terms, the men provide for themselves well. They have a common fund to buy extra food, which is so important on long sentences. Kitchen items such as metal cutlery are taken for granted by visitors, but to the prisoners they represent a huge victory over the times when only plastic was given out.

The conclusion that Ken and Jimmy have reached is that three distinct types of 'special units' are needed - one type like the Barlinnie unit for prisoners with the personality and mental organisation to use the freedom it offers; a second type with more routine for less 'adequate' men; and a third type for those with deeper psychological problems.

I asked whether a man like Larry Winters, who died of a drug overdose in the Unit, needed a more traditionally therapeutic place. Jimmy's opinion was that Larry could have made it at the Unit if there had not been so many political pressures from outside which caused anxiety inside. The place is not staffed by 'specialists' or psychiatrists, but the innate abilities of everyone are mobilised to work together. The biggest success they can point to is a man who had never stayed out of prison for long. He left the unit and has stayed out for three years.

I left Barlinnie as though I had just awakened from a dream. It is so much ahead of anything else in any penal system. The Unit people feel they have far superseded the attempts at Grendon.

And yet later, on more sober reflection, I wondered how much I had really learned. After all, I was only given the chance to hear two people's views. I would have to spend a longer time, meet everyone, including people who have been thrown out or who asked to leave, before I really understood the totality.

How do we, as abolitionists, feel about a 'progressive' arm of the prison 'service'? In immediate, practical terms, the Unit is obviously a million times more desirable than the unspeakable cages (the 'cages' at Portersfield prison, Inverness) where intransigent prisoners have been put. But what sort of a society do we have when people have to go through poverty, violence, imprisonment and degradation before a government department decides to offer the benefits of a 'special' unit to its battered prisoners? Our emphasis must continue to be on the social conditions which give rise to prisons.

I asked Jimmy if he thought prisons were needed. His answer was an immediate 'yes' for people who had been as violent as he had. He still feels terrible at nine o'clock every night when his cell door is locked, but he has chosen to cooperate with the system. He doesn't feel he's been won over though; someone who's been through his experiences has no illusions about the authorities! When he leaves prison, he plans to spend his time working with young people who are heading the way he went. He's already received 2,000 letters from youngsters who have read his book.

Before I left, I asked how he had come by a copy of 'Crime and Punishment' by Dostoyevsky, a book which was a landmark in his development. "Oh, a screw at Inverness chucked it into my cell. He didn't know what it was, and I suppose he thought a book about crime was suitable for someone like me."

Ros Kane

* * * * * A SENSE OF DOOM

The officers deny that their motives are to secure more overtime because of the intense supervision involved with the cages, and say that they are concerned only to stem the rising tide of violence against prison staff. Yet the Scottish Office has been unable to provide figures that would back up such a claim. Indeed, it is only last year that it stated that violence had actually decreased since the closure of the cages.

Not all screws think like that. As in England, there are some who are disturbed by the dehumanisation which is affecting everybody in the prisons, staff and prisoners alike. In Scotland the progressive voice has an obvious rallying point in the Barlinnie Special Unit.

(Continued on following page)

The segregation unit at Portersfield prison, Inverness, notorious throughout Europe as 'the cages', is to remain an integral part of the Scottish prison system and is available for use at any time.

That was the assurance given to the Scottish Prison Officers' Association on November 13th, 1978 by Bruce Millan, the Secretary of State for Scotland. The SPOA had said that unless the unit was brought back into use (it was last occupied 6 years ago) industrial action might be taken by the prison officers. But the assurance was insufficient to placate the prison officers who clearly want to see prisoners in them now. Against the advice of its own executive, a special meeting of the SPOA voted 17 to 4 in favour of industrial action to support their claim that the unit be brought into full operational use immediately.

ABOUT RAP

Radical Alternatives to Prison (RAP), is a publicity and pressure group whose central aim is the eventual abolition of imprisonment. Formed in 1970, RAP differs from penal reform groups in that it does not seek to improve the penal system but to work for its dissolution.

Prison is a discriminatory and destructive institution which is used to uphold the values of a materialistic society based on the acquisition of property. It is no coincidence that the crime for which the majority are in prison is theft. Statistics show that most thefts that end up with a prison sentence are petty, committed by people with low incomes, bad housing and poor education.

Prison has two stated aims: to deter people from breaking the law and to 'rehabilitate' those who do. The fact that crime figures continue to rise, as does the prison population, and recidivism rates are high shows that prison has failed to deter or 'rehabilitate'. In fact imprisonment is more likely to increase rather than decrease the likelihood of a person committing further offences. The prisoner is isolated from family, friends and community, is degraded and embittered by his or her experiences inside and is unable to find employment on release because of the stigma of having been in prison.

RAP seeks to replace this destructive and self-defeating philosophy by a new and constructive approach to antisocial behaviour. Consequently RAP is as concerned with society's attitude to crime as it is with what society does to its criminals.

Despite our name, we no longer see the provision of alternatives as a complete solution. When RAP started in 1970 we concentrated on researching and publicising various experiments that were being tried out in an attempt to bypass custodial treatment for some categories of offender. We are sceptical about most alternatives now because we have seen too many of them being used as a form of control and punishment just as prison is. Nor do most of these 'alternatives' have any relevance to the fundamental changes in social conditions and attitudes which give rise to the majority of what is termed 'crime'. Only through such changes and a questioning of why certain people are called criminals, and others whose acts are harmful to the community are not, will society really begin to react effectively and humanely to those people who indulge in genuinely antisocial behaviour.

Soon after RAP started in 1970, we were fortunate enough to attract the support of the Christian Action organisation. This support continued until April 1978. Although Christian Action continues to support us in various ways, as have the Allen Lane Foundation and the Westcroft Trust, we rely mainly upon memberships fees, donations and publications sales for our income. We desperately need new members to support and extend our work.

Membership rates: £5 pa or £3 pa for those on low incomes or free to serving prisoners and their families. (Members receive The Abolitionist, newsletters and reduced rates on RAP publications.)

RAP Publications

ALTERNATIVES TO HOLLOWAY (1972) @ 50p - A pamphlet produced by the RAP campaign against the rebuilding of Holloway Prison. Attacking the concept of the new Holloway and its psychiatrically oriented regime, the pamphlet details the futility of imprisoning women and proposes some alternatives.

CONTROL UNITS AND THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME (1974) @ 25p - an analysis of the importance of the control units to the thinking of the prison system and its obsession with control.

RAP MEMORANDUM ON STREET OFFENCES (1975) @ 15p - a call for the decriminalisation of these offences.

RAP MEMORANDUM ON THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS ACT, 1969 (1974) @ 15p

THE NEWHAM ALTERNATIVES PROJECT (1976) @ 30p
A practical guide to how the project was set up as an informal alternative to prison, why and how others can do it.

PRISON SECRETS (1978) (RAP/NCCL) @ £1.25 - A detailed account of the system of secrecy which protects our prisons, and those who run them, from public scrutiny and accountability. By Stan Cohen and Laurie Taylor.

IS THIS 'A FUTURE FOR INTERMEDIATE TREATMENT'? (1978) @ 20p - A critical report by the RAP Young Offenders Group on recommendations concerning the development of intermediate treatment.

INTERMEDIATE TREATMENT AND ABOLITION (1978) @ 20p
Is Intermediate Treatment an important step towards decarceration, or is it another dangerous diversion? - From the RAP Young Offenders Group.

All the above publications are available from the RAP office.

(Continued from previous page)

The Special Unit, with the responsibility it demands of everyone within it, is not an easy option for prisoners or for prison officers. But, in prison terms, it works. One would like to add that it worked in prisoners' terms as well but there is an obvious contradiction in Jimmy Boyle's development and undoubted influence on the Unit and the fact that he is, nevertheless, still on the inside of it.

Despite that, the reputation of the Unit, surviving the hysterical attacks made on it last year, has clearly influenced public opinion, so that it is the would-be cage keepers and not the volunteer officers of the Special Unit who appear out of step. The 'Glasgow Herald', heading its leading article "No return to the cages", went on to say "Scotland's prison record is a national disgrace. There are more Scots behind bars, Per head of the population, than any other nationality in Western Europe. It is a bleak picture and made more depressing by the ... demands

within the ranks of Scottish prison officers for the reopening of the infamous 'cages' at Portersfield prison."

And 'The Scotsman', also in a leading article, spoke of the "important contribution" made by the Special Unit, and said, "It is regrettable that pressure should have arisen again for the reopening of the Inverness cages."

The National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), has supported the call by the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties for the units to be not merely taken out of use but physically demolished.

A letter to that effect, to the Scottish Secretary of State, has been sent by NCCL and endorsed by PROP and other organisations.

(Originally published in PROP Newspaper Dec. '78.)

prison films



"See how violent the convicts are?"

Prison movies, particularly American ones, are almost a genre of film in their own right although they are often regarded simply as a kind of gangster movie. To date, their influence on public conceptions of imprisonment has not been assessed. RAP hopes to rectify this by showing three such movies followed by the documentary 'Attica', early next year at The Scala Cinema, Tottenham Street, London W1, tel: 01 637 9307 (nearest tube station: Goodge Street). Each film will be followed by a discussion with a guest speaker.

- January 6th - 'Riot in Cell Block 11' - Don Seigal's statement about prison conditions derives from his own producer's, Walter Wanger's, experience of imprisonment.
- January 13th - 'The Criminal' - Joseph Losey's film about professional crime is one of the few to deal seriously with imprisonment in England.
- January 20th - 'I Want to Live' - Robert Wise filmed the story of Barbara Graham, a convicted murderess, to campaign against capital punishment.
- January 27th - 'Attica' - The filmed account of America's most famous prison rebellion.

Each film will commence at 1.00pm on the date shown.
Admission: £1.60p or £1.10p for students, claimants and OAP's.
(Ring RAP of Scala for further details).

RAP welcomes articles, news items, diary entries or letters for inclusion in The Abolitionist. Deadlines for next issue: over 500 words - 9th February. Others - 2nd March.

Our thanks for this issue to the usual cronies plus Pam Massman, Geoff Coggan and our friend across the road for help and advice above and beyond the call of duty.

The Abolitionist is published by RAP, 104a Brackenbury Road, London W6. Tel. 01 748 5778.

Useful addresses

PROP, 104a Brackenbury Road, London W6 (01 748 5778)
Release, 1 Elgin Avenue, London W9 (01 289 1123)
JAIL, 271 Upper Street, London N1 (01 359 8034)
NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC1 (01 278 4575)

HOT WATER

On 3rd Jan 1978 a prisoner in Wandsworth petitioned the Secretary of State at the Home Office. The prisoner asked that in view of his great dislike of tea and the unavailability of coffee at this particular H.M. hotel, he be allowed - in lieu - one cup of hot water, morning and evening. The S. of S. turned down this request, at which point a certain advice centre took up the matter with the Home Office. Back came the reply confirming the inability to meet this request, explaining "... it is only possible to supply an alternative to tea where there are medical reasons for doing so. To supply hot water daily to an individual prisoner would create a precedent and thereby encourage others to seek a similar privilege."