

WHO

GUARDS

THE

GUARDS ?

by

Brian

Stratton

X 108/16000
X 208/10173

This is an account
of brutality
in prison,
and is so
outspoken
that

commercial publishers
refused to handle it.

North
London

PROP
is now

publishing it,
so that what happens
inside our prisons
may be widely
known.

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prison slang

| | |
|------------------|--|
| A.G. | Assistant Governor |
| BIRD | Time spent in prison |
| BURGLAR | A warder who searches cells |
| CHOKEY | Bread and water |
| CHOKEY BLOCK | Punishment cells |
| DEP | Deputy Governor |
| DIG OUT | Victimise |
| FRONT WHEEL SKID | Jew |
| G.B.H. | Grievous bodily harm |
| HEAVY MOB | Group of warders standing by in case of trouble |
| JOEY | A parcel smuggled into prison, usually containing tobacco |
| NICK | Either 'put on report' or 'a prison' or 'a police station' |
| OLD BILL | Police |



| | |
|-------|---|
| PETER | Cell |
| P.O. | Principal Officer, Principal Warder |
| SCREW | Warder, prison officer |
| SNOUT | Tobacco |
| SOUND | Trustworthy |
| SPIN | Special search |
| STIFF | A clandestine letter |
| V.C. | Visiting Committee, Visiting Magistrates |

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

Far too little is written about the British prison system. In recent years there has been next to nothing, apart from an excellent book - PENTONVILLE - by Terence and Pauline Morris. I say excellent, but, because the authors are social workers, even the scathing condemnation of Pentonville which appears in their book cannot convey to the average reader the degradation, provocation and inhumanity that men in English prisons in the year 1970 suffer at the hands of a certain type of prison warder.

This book is intended to show just what does happen in English prisons by showing the situation in one particular prison which has hit the newspaper headlines time after time during the last four or five years.

The prison is Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight, which some newspapers have described as Britain's toughest jail. In October 1969 the bloodiest riot ever to have occurred in the history of the English penal system took place in Parkhurst. This book is also intended to show the events, occurring over a period of nearly four years, that culminated in the riot. We all know the result of the

riot trial, but the blame for the riot does not ultimately lie on the heads of the prisoners; it lies on the heads of other men, none of whom were serving a sentence of imprisonment.

Brian Stratton.

1970.



PARKHURST PRISON

Parkhurst, or "the Island" as it is more commonly referred to, has long borne a grim reputation, which, unless there is a vast shake-up among the pin-stripe-wearing types of permanent civil servants in the Home Office, it is never going to lose.

A prison is a world within a world, it has its own rules and regulations quite apart from those laid down by the Prison Department; it has its own currency, tobacco, and on some occasions its own justice, meted out more swiftly and more harshly than by any outside court.

Even in such a world as Parkhurst, men live by certain rules. They have to - a prison can be run by the inmates far more successfully than by the warders.

From my arrival at Parkhurst early in 1963, Parkhurst, under the then governor, Allen Packham, was run by the prisoners. Packham's policy was to leave things alone, his main concern being security. Packham was a Quaker, hated violence of any kind, and not once during his term as governor did any prisoner get beaten up in the punishment wing.

This was not because the warders had changed in any way. In any prison the warders in the punishment block are pure sadists, who volunteer for the punishment block solely because they delight in being able to kick any man senseless and get paid for it.

Packham kept a tight rein on this particular type of warder, who are only too prevalent in every prison - not only in Parkhurst - and because of this Packham was disliked intensely by the warders, who, to a man, will not support any governor who will not condone brutality. As long as the governor is aware that brutality does go on, the warders know that that should any prisoner manage to get a complaint to someone outside the prison that he has been beaten up by the screws, the governor will cover up and whitewash all allegations. The prisoner does not stand a chance of proving his allegations and more often than not finds himself on report for making false allegations against screws who have indeed beaten him up. Small wonder then that most prisoners won't make allegations against screws.

The end of 1965 marked the departure from Parkhurst of Allen Packham. The new governor was Alistair Miller, a tall distinguished looking man, always immaculately dressed and with a friendly engaging manner. Most of the cons were immediately taken in by Miller and were full of "what a good bloke the new governor is". The wiser men, however, preferred to wait and see what Miller was like before pronouncing an opinion on his capabilities as a prison governor. They were proved to be only too right in having reserved their judgment on Alistair Miller.

A few weeks after Miller's arrival a prisoner named Mich Williams had a disagreement with

a screw. It was quite a trivial matter, but the screw rang the alarm bell for the heavy mob to come and take Willy down the chokey. Twenty-odd screws arrived upon the scene and Willy was hustled away. Within fifteen minutes a rumour flew around the prison that Willy had been given a terrible hiding down the chokey block. At first none really believed it as no-one had been given a hiding for six years. Then a redband who worked in the prison hospital told someone that Willy had been taken over to the hospital with his head split open and had had eighteen stitches inserted.

The following morning over fifty men put down to see the governor to complain about the attack on Willy. Miller blandly assured everyone he would investigate their complaints, but not for a minute did he believe his officers would attack anyone.

Next day Miller saw all the complainees and categorically swore that Willy was safe and well and it was only a rumour. The following day Willy was let up from the chokey block, as fit and well as Miller had said he was, apart from a bandage around his head covering eighteen stitches that Miller's careful investigation had failed to find. This was the spark to ignite the flame that would culminate in the 1969 riot.

Following this incident, which cost the taxpayers some £30,000 because the tailor's shop was burnt to the ground in retaliation, the free and easy, carefree attitude long prevalent at Parkhurst disappeared. The once so-called "good screws" reverted back to their natural bastard-type selves. Miller had let it be known he didn't care what went on down the chokey block. As one particularly nasty piece of work, a chokey screw named Rockhead

Hudson bragged: "the governor has given us a licence to kill you bastards now and we are going to take advantage of it".

The early part of 1966 also brought another character to Parkhurst who was every bit as much to blame as Miller for the troubles that were to occur in the prison. This unlovely person was a new screw called Frank Hurst, a short fat effeminate Yorkshireman, who could get certified anywhere in the world without any trouble. Hurst hated all prisoners pathologically. He went out of his way every minute of the time he was on duty to provoke prisoners and, in general, make their lives a misery. Even among the screws he had only one friend, another big Yorkshireman called Big Jim Franklyn. Where and how Big Jim got to be called "Big Jim" remains a mystery, unless it stemmed from the fact that he was so thick and ignorant. A trait he shared with his henchman Hurst was blind hatred of prisoners. Franklyn differed from Hurst inasmuch as Londoners or Cockneys were his favourite targets. He also shared with all his brother Parkhurst screws a great yellow streak when he was on his own, and yet for some strange reason as soon as he was with half-a-dozen other screws he got brave again. Someone should conduct a study one day as to how people like Hurst and Franklyn ever become screws.

The idea of prison is to train and help prisoners to lead an honest and industrious life when they are discharged. All that Hurst and Franklyn, together with their kind, do is to make a man far worse than he was before he arrived at Parkhurst. It was commonly thought that both Hurst and Franklyn were unnatural in their behaviour and attitudes, certainly they needed psychiatric treatment more than any prisoner.

Parkhurst consists of two long narrow buildings, each partitioned down the middle, thus making four wings. You then have A, D, C and B wings, holding 450 and 500 men.

The minimum sentence on the Island is five years (except when dealt with elsewhere); the maximum (excluding the men in the security wing) is life. There are any amount of men serving fifteen to twenty years. The average sentence in Parkhurst is nine years.

For the most part these are professional criminals; the rest are in for violence or serious sex crimes and the sex cases are shunned by everybody and stick to their own kind. The sexual offenders feel they are far better than the professional criminal. To quote: "We are'nt in here for stealing, like you". Remarks like this get them a dig on the chin if no screws are around. Sex cons are liked by both prison governors and screws because nearly every one of them is a grass. They feel that because they are not really criminals, they should report everything they hear and see to the screws. However, this book is not written to discourse on sex offenders. It is enough to say that they are anathema to every other inmate.

Because of the length of their sentences at Parkhurst, no-one looks for trouble. They want to do their bird quietly and get out without losing any remission. In Packham's time this was possible. When Miller took over it became an impossibility. Hurst and company are experts at the art of provocation.

No matter how cool, calm and collected a man might be, if he is provoked incessantly day after day, week after week, in time he will retaliate, and that is what the screws intended so they can nail him and get him

some chokey.

One thing screws really hate is for any con to retain his personality in prison. The screws want everyone to become vegetables and indeed there are many cons with great force of personality, talented in painting and other fields, and with qualities of leadership. Instead of being encouraged and channelled into usefulness every effort is made to stifle and suppress a man.

One instance to illustrate this point is a man named Joseph Lambert. He had received a sentence of fourteen years in 1961 and was an extremely talented artist. He developed an interest in music. From odd pieces of wood he built his own guitar and taught himself to play it. Having mastered this instrument he had a guitar sent in to him by his father. While Packham was governor, Joe received every encouragement to continue his musical studies which turned from pop into an avid interest in classical music. By 1967 Joe had transferred Rachmaninov's two piano concertos to the guitar and, even more miraculously, had committed the two works to memory. By this time he was getting a great deal of aggravation from the screws who didn't think he should be allowed a guitar, never mind being able to play it. Although he still had $4\frac{1}{2}$ years left to serve, Joe was already preparing for when he was discharged. Owing to the intricacies involved in playing the concertos on the guitar, Joe decided that if he could tape most of the background he would save himself twelve to eighteen months work when he got out. So he asked Miller if he could have a tape recorder sent in from outside for this purpose. Miller replied that seeing he had no interest in music he didn't see why Lambert should be allowed a tape recorder to indulge his interest.

Having anticipated this refusal Joe asked his family to see their M.P. to take the matter up. In due course permission came through from the Home Office that Joe could have his tape recorder to pursue his musical studies.

The tape recorder arrived and a delighted Joe took it back to his cell only to find the burglars waiting for him. The burglars demanded he should give them the spools of tape for the machine as they were a security risk. Joe reluctantly complied with the order and the next day went to see Miller to get his spools of tape back. Having explained to Miller that the Home Office had granted permission for him to have a tape recorder, Joe got the startling answer from Miller: "Yes, Lambert. I know you have got Home Office permission, but I consider that if you are allowed the spools of tape you may use them to commit suicide with, so they will be kept for you until you are discharged. But by all means keep the tape recorder in your cell." If any reader knows of a way Joe Lambert can record on a tape recorder without spools of tape let the author know please!

This incident is just one of many such. Who could blame Joe if he said: "Fuck it - why should I try to learn something that will earn me an honest living when these bastards can fuck me up like this." But Joe is a very determined as well as talented man who will make a successful career in music when he comes out.

The situation deteriorated in the prison throughout 1966. Men were nicked for the most trivial offences like giving one of the guard dogs a bone - this got Alfie a three days' chokey. Johnny Schofield's radio was broken. Somehow he got a book on radio maintenance and was immediately nicked.

Not because he got this book so he could repair his radio, but so he could build a two-way radio transmitter and send messages out of the nick. The simple fact that the book did not contain one scrap of information about two-way transmitters was beside the point. John lost fourteen days remission over this.

For the benefit of those who know little of prison routine, it may come as a surprise to know that bread and water is still the most popular punishment of our progressive prison system, and anyone who thinks that this can do no physical harm can come and argue the point with me.

The sheer delight on the chokey screws' faces when they open the door to give you your four slices of bread has to be seen to be believed. I'm perfectly sure some of them reach orgasms over it. Many years ago I found out how to knock the grin off their faces. It is quite simple. Prison rules state that you can do three days on bread and water to be followed by three days on ordinary diet and then three days on bread and water again up to a period of fifteen days. All you do is don't eat the bread and each time they bring you a fresh lot you hand back the last lot. It isn't hard to go three days without food so long as you have water. It really winds the screws up when someone does this. You can make the remark: "I was intending to reduce my weight anyway". This will be guaranteed at Parkhurst to get you at least a good punch in the guts, which if you are of masochist tendencies is lovely. But if you are like me and hate pain you will wish you had kept your big mouth shut.

The chokey screws at Parkhurst were as fine a bunch of pigs as it has been my pleasure to meet. There was Rockhead Hudson, as big

a coward as ever lived, Soapy Watson, Punchy Smith, Foxy Fowler and the biggest slop of the lot, Arrell. Together, this little firm, provided they had got their kicking boots on, weren't afraid to attack any poor prisoner who was unfortunate enough to be down the chokey.

For some strange reason, though on various occasions during my seven years in Parkhurst I saw every one of these five men challenged by just one prisoner at a time, not one of the Filthy Five (as they are known) would stand up for himself. Could it be there is a lack of moral fibre when all five aren't together?

Of the Filthy Five my favourite was Punchy Cary Smith, who told everyone he was an amateur boxer and, walking around with a boxing newspaper hanging out of his pocket, wore leather kid gloves to protect his hands. He really fancied himself. One day he threatened Timmy Noonan, a man half his size, and Timmy knocked him out with one punch. Needless to say, Timmy lost the return fight. He was giving too much weight away. Between them the Filthy Five weighed at least 74 stone and not even Timmy with his 10 stone could cope with that.

In September 1966 good old Frank Hurst did it again. He was on patrol in B wing on a Sunday evening and managed to upset everyone. On the Monday morning Hurst nicked some people and a rumour flew round the nick that two of these blokes had been done as soon as they got down the chokey. Everyone else went out to the exercise yards for half an hour before going to the workshops. It was decided by the cons to have a sit-down strike in the yard and demand that Miller come out there because of the blokes supposed to have had a kicking.

Everybody sat down and refused to go to work until Miller came out. However, Miller would not come out; contrary to a report in the Daily Express that he pleaded with us for twenty minutes to go to work, he did not show either of his two faces.

Instead, he sent out the Chief Warder, a lovely character known to one and all as Piggy Pryer. Piggy came to the yard and ordered everyone to go to work but no-one moved. Piggy then departed, with a chorus of pig-like grunts following him.

In all, 187 were involved in the sit-down. I was on B wing yard with around eighty others, the rest were on C wing yard. This was separated from us by a wall so we could not see what was going on there. Unknown to us, the screws had carried everyone in one by one to their cells, but there had been no violence - which left us lot! We sat out there for another two hours surrounded by screws when the Pig appeared on the scene again. Suddenly screws appeared from everywhere - strange screws! They had called in screws from nearby Camphill nick as well. I have been in a few dodgy situations in my life but normally when trouble starts it is so fast you hardly have time to get scared. To see that advancing horde of blue uniforms coming at you and to know that you could quite easily get killed without being able to do anything about it, is not calculated to make you feel full of the joys of spring. The violence was started by a screw called Lamb kicking a con named Albert Head in the bollocks as he sat on the ground. This seemed to be the signal for them to start. Over 500 screws against 80 cons. It was a slaughter. Two screws grabbed me and dragged me away from the wall, still on the ground, when a third rushed at me like he was taking a penalty kick. His boot

hit me somewhere around my left eye. It felt as though my head had been torn off. I remained conscious while he amused himself kicking the rest of me. All around I could hear agonising screams as this was being done. I learned afterwards only one of us out of eighty got a dig at a screw and broke his nose.

I was dragged into B wing which looked like a slaughterhouse. There were cons lying unconscious all over the place. The floor was smothered in claret. Someone was being chucked down the stairs that led to the chokey. I can remember hearing him scream. The next thing I knew was coming to, lying on the floor of my cell which was wrecked; my radio shattered in a thousand pieces, photos torn to shreds. They'd really had a great time in there. I was conscious of feeling relieved I was still alive. Picking myself up, I found a piece of broken mirror and looked into it. My left eye looked like nothing I had ever seen - completely closed - a huge cut over the top and another cut underneath. The funny thing was it didn't hurt then, just numb.

I flopped down on the mattress. What the fuck would happen now. I sat waiting for them to come in and do me again, as I felt they surely would. There was very little sound from outside the door. Then I heard the guy next door banging on the wall. It was one of the two geezers we had staged the sit-down over. I went up to the window to hear what he was saying. "Brian, Brian, are you all right mate?" came his voice. "I'm not feeling all right" I replied. "What are you doing up here? You are supposed to be down the chokey in a terrible state along with Johnny Schofield. That's why the trouble started because we heard you both got a kicking." "No, mate. They never touched us when we went down. We are both O.K", he said.

The grim irony of the situation hit me then. I started to laugh though it hurt. We had given the screws a chance they had been longing for to kick seven kinds of shit out of us and the two geezers over which it had all started had never had a finger laid on them in the first place. There had to be a moral in it somewhere but I couldn't for the life of me think what it was at that moment.

I had no visits from the big hairy warders again that day, and food such as it was was brought round the cells instead of being served up on the ground floor as it normally was.

The next morning I was taken in front of the governor and charged with refusing to leave the exercise yard, etc. I looked at him out of my one good eye. "Tell me son," he said, "was any pressure put on you by the other prisoners to make you stay in the yard?" "No", I replied, "the only pressure was from your people in the shape of a boot with a screw on the end of it. What about my eye?" Miller looked at me and said "What about your eye, Strath? I can't see anything wrong with it". He turned to Piggy Pryer by his side and said "Can you see anything wrong with Stratton's eye, chief?" "Not a thing, sir," said Piggy. "If he says another word about it I'd say we can have him for false accusations against the staff as well".

I got the message loud and clear. I'd never known anyone yet, no matter how good his case, who had ever come out on top in a complaint against the screws.

Miller gave me twenty-eight days solitary, fourteen days remission lost and other bits and pieces for daring to disobey an order

and I was escorted back to my peter.

At this stage I did not realise just how lucky I was to be in that peter. The chokey block B.1. has about twelve cells so the first dozen blokes to get carted off B wing yard had been slung struggling to the chokey. These poor fuckers were charged with mutiny and assault and one man, Bernie Miller (no relative of the governor) was to be charged with G.B.H. on the screw who had got his nose broken. Everyone in the nick, cons and screws alike, knew it was not Bernie Miller who had done it.

The treatment they were getting down the chokey was diabolical. Every morning they were unlocked to slop out, one at a time; from the cell to the recess would be two lines of screws, each one with his stick in his hand, and the con had to walk or run the gauntlet with lead-loaded sticks hitting at him from all angles.

By all accounts the Parkhurst Carrot used to be there for every gauntlet run. He really enjoyed them, as did the Filthy Five. Come to that, most screws seem to love to be able to do a con. It gives them a false impression that they are men. I say false impression in fairness to them; because judging by the number of love affairs that were going on between screws' wives and cons who worked outside the nick, there can't have been a man among the lot of them. Why were the wives so frustrated? Mind you, the state of most of their wives! They had to marry screws; no-one else would have them.

One particular screw comes to mind. He was on the Works Department. His old woman was having an affair with a little Paddy who was doing five years. The burglars went

into Paddy's peter one day and found a load of passionate love letters from Big Sid's old woman to little Paddy. Never was a man transferred to Dartmoor so fast as little Paddy!

Next to get on the firm with Big Sid's old woman was not another con, by God, but none other than the then Foreman of Works for the nick. Mind you, he was in a terrific position because he kept Big Sid working all the hours under the sun, thus enabling the shrewd foreman to be rumping the arse off Big Sid's wife. However, Big Sid found out what was going on. Being a typical screw, he did not go and hit the foreman straight on the chin; Sid did a little better than that. He went down to see the Assistant Prison Director when that person paid his next visit to the prison. Sid said to him "The Foreman of Works is having an affair with my wife. Can you stop it?" How pathetic can a man be? The outcome of Sid's pathetic plea was that the Assistant Director instructed the Foreman of Works not to visit Big Sid's house unless another prison official was with him all the time. Rumours had it that a roster had to be used in order that everyone got their turn with the foreman. I repeat, that was only a rumour.

When one of the cons who worked with Big Sid asked why he hadn't knocked the foreman out instead of going to the Assistant Director, Big Sid said: "I've got my career to think of in the service." The big stupid bastard couldn't see that no matter what nick he goes to the story will follow him and he'll be the laughing stock there, just as he is at Parkhurst. I'd sooner be a villain than be like him.

As far as the screws were concerned, the

sit-down strike was the best thing that had ever happened. They had been allowed to indulge in an orgy of violence, the like of which had never before been seen on the "Island". The nick was now in a bad way. The screws were in there twenty-four hours a day in case further trouble broke out and were taking home wage packets of £70 to £80 a week, which for unskilled morons, useless for anything else except mass brutality, must have made them the highest-earning thugs in the world.

A week or so after the sit-down, the bruises around my eye had gone down sufficiently for me to see out of it. This did not please me too much because I now discovered I had double vision. One can imagine the joy I felt now I would be able to see two Hursts, two Parkhurst Carrots. In fact, a double helping of some of the most horrible bastards imaginable. It was just too much for a gentleman like myself to bear, so I went to see the Doctor, fool that I was.

Nick doctors have to be experienced to be believed. For some reason they all seem to have spent most of their practising life in places like Broadmoor and Rampton. The Senior Medical Officer at Parkhurst was no exception. After meeting him, I am convinced that lunacy is catching. I often wonder how the hell he ever got out of Rampton.

Anyhow, I finally got to see him, explained about my eye, and never once did he ask how it got damaged in the first place. He said I should see an eye specialist.

The eye specialist came. He said he wanted X-rays of my eye which were duly taken. About four months later I still hadn't heard anything more so I went to see the Senior Medical

Officer again. He seemed somewhat vexed that I had the temerity to see him about my eye again. But he got the X-rays out and started telling me in Latin what was wrong with my eye. By the time he had finished his very impressive diagnosis, I felt it was time to tell him I hadn't understood a word he had said. Being a thorough gentleman, he then translated his Latin into English and told me I was suffering from double vision. I was greatly relieved to have my own diagnosis confirmed after only four months.

Natural born pest that I am to the nick authorities, I deigned to ask what could be done to cure my double vision. The answer was that they could certainly operate but that I would have to take the chance that my eye could be worse after the operation. I then asked if it was a bad operation to cure double vision and he said yes, one of the most difficult operations known to surgery. By pure coincidence I happened to have in the Hardy-Amies-designed prison uniform jacket pocket an article from the preceding Sunday Times in which a doctor stated just how simple it was now to cure double vision. When I produced the article to the Senior Medical Officer he had a sort of psychotic attack and accused me of being a trouble-maker, wasting his valuable time, and the man in the Sunday Times didn't know what he was talking about. That I should get out of his office. My eye was all right. What about people who were totally blind? Why didn't I think about them? He'd had enough of me. I thought it was an opportune time to leave.

Of course, nick hospitals weren't news to me. Parkhurst's has the best record of any nick hospital in the country - for mistakes, that is. A Hungarian refugee named Knetchel, nicknamed Sylva, started to get pains in his

left leg. He went sick and was given aspirin water - the standard prison cure for cancer downwards. His leg and foot continued to trouble him so Sylva went sick again and was immediately nicked for malingering and given three days chokey. Finishing his chokey he went sick again and was nicked again for malingering. More bread and water. Yet again he went sick and lost fourteen days remission this time. Shortly after this he collapsed and was taken to hospital where it was discovered gangrene had set into his leg. The leg was amputated below the knee but no apology came from the hospital. If he had been treated earlier maybe he wouldn't have lost his leg. I don't know, but the least the bastards could have done was to give him back the remission they took from him when he was supposed to have been malingering.

Sylva has tried every way - M.P.s, petitioning the Home Secretary - to get compensation for negligence, all to no avail. Discussing the matter with him once I remarked "You couldn't possibly win against the nick." He asked me why not. I replied "Simple: in your case you don't have a leg to stand on." I'm glad to say in spite of all he had been through he still retained his sense of humour.

Another classic was the man who went into the hospital to have the big toe on his left foot amputated. The operation went according to the Senior Medical Officer's plan. The only thing that went wrong was - yes, that's right - they took off the big toe on his RIGHT foot. Sure enough, the con swallowed it after that. I think he was scared if he went back to have the left one off he'd quite probably have been castrated instead, seeing that the hospital made a balls of everything they did.

The moral where Parkhurst hospital is concerned:

if you are seriously ill don't go sick -
it's safer to just die.

There was an instance of this happening when a bloke in D wing was taken seriously ill in the middle of the night. He rang the bell to call the screw on night patrol. The screw must have been a bit deaf because although the con pressed on the bell for three hours the screw didn't come. Next morning when they unlocked his door he was stone dead. The door was unlocked at 6.30 a.m. At 7.20 a.m. I personally saw the hospital screws going up to the poor sod's peter with oxygen to try to revive him, so it took them fifty minutes to get 100 yards from the hospital to D wing with the oxygen. The doctor never even showed up at all. Still, you couldn't expect a doctor (even a nick doctor) to get up that early in the morning just for a con.

Needless to say, all efforts at bringing this bloke back to life were unsuccessful. An inquest was held inside the prison. A close friend of mine saw Miller and said he wanted to give evidence at the inquest. Miller asked what evidence. My pal replied, evidence that the deceased was ringing his fucking bell for over three hours before he died and your poxy screw was too lazy to go and see what was wrong.

The request to give evidence was quickly denied, and not one con was called by the coroner. And a nice verdict: "Death by Natural Causes" was returned, clearing up what was a nasty mess for the prison authorities. But with the Home Office on their side who can do anything about it? Maybe one day there will be just one screw with enough guts to say fuck to the Official Secrets Act and tell what goes on in Parkhurst. If everything is open and above board in Parkhurst and in every other nick why the hell should screws be required

to sign the Official Secrets Act anyway? It must be particularly hard on most screws because they can hardly read and write anyway. As somebody once said when he applied for the job, they have to sit an intelligence test. Then if they pass the test they don't get the job. It's that simple.

Anyone who has read this may have come to the conclusion that I do not like screws. How can you like nothing? Admittedly some screws when they join have every intention of doing a worthwhile job and are interested in helping blokes to go straight, but then they come up against the Hursts and Franklyns and Parkhurst Carrots who are terrified of prisoners going out and going straight in case it puts them out of work in time to come. If there were no nicks 98% of screws would be on National Assistance. They certainly couldn't do a normal job. They just aren't mentally equipped for it. Their whole life is prisons. They have little or no outside interests. They live in kennels owned by the prison. The only place they go to for a drink or any social activities is in the screws' club.

The public in general do not want to know them. Yet I have never met any member of the public who wouldn't talk, drink or scialise with a criminal. It is a well-known fact that while the average member of the public does not condone the activities of criminals, he finds them fascinating to know.

Find me a person who thinks a screw is glamorous, brave, clever etc, and I'll bet you've found another screw.

There isn't one of them who wasn't either a commissioned officer, senior N.C.O., a ship's captain or a fighter pilot - never

one was less than a sergeant. I guess I must have been in the wrong army. When I was in, it seemed nearly everyone was a private, but there again I was in a National Service army, maybe that's different.

These mugs strut around the nick in uniforms that even a pop group wouldn't wear. Plastered across their chests are yards and yards of coloured ribbons they've bought from an army surplus store. One mug was walking around with the Korean campaign medal up. Breaking a cardinal rule, "never chat to screws", I asked him what mob he'd been with in Korea. He replied: the 1st Battalion the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. It just so happened I remembered the Warwicks arriving in Korea in 1953 after the armistice was signed. They never saw a shot fired in anger, not their fault I know, but I got a bit tired of this Korean veteran telling of his heroic deeds so I pointed out to him he shouldn't be wearing the ribbon he had on. The only men entitled to wear it were the men who had been in action in Korea, i.e. those who were there before and up to the signing of the armistice. Those who came after the armistice got a different type of medal to wear. Anyhow, this mug got the message and next day he came in just wearing the ribbon he was entitled to wear. Actually he was lucky. It is a criminal offence to wear decorations to which you are not entitled. I slipped up by not reporting him to the War Office or someone.

It's a funny thing with these screws. They can plant gear in your cell and nick you for it, provoke you and nick you for it. If you feel a screw's picking **on** you, as they do, prison rules state that you can make a complaint to the governor. Miller will then tell you to put your complaint in writing. Any would-be

villains reading this book take note, never write a written complaint about a screw or, true or false, you will be in plenty of trouble.

To quote: in the shoe shop at Parkhurst was a little Welsh con named Moses, known of course as Taffy. We had a screw put in the shop just to drive me personally mad. I'll get around to him and me later in the book. This screw named Jones had nicknamed himself Dangerman when he first arrived at the nick. I've seen more dangerous cream puffs. Jones discovered that Taffy got very enraged if, when Jones searched him before going out of the shop, Jones felt around Taffy's balls. Luckily for Jones, he did not try this with the rest of us, but Moses was fifty years old and very tiny. So Jones figured he could get away with it. Anyhow, Moses asked him to stop touching his private parts and Jones replied he could do what he liked.

Taffy went to see Miller and said Jones persisted in touching him where he shouldn't. Miller told Taffy to put his complaint in writing and provided a nice sheet of foolscap paper for the purpose. Taffy came to see me and asked for my help in writing the complaint. I refused at first because I knew what would result from it, but Taffy insisted if I didn't help he would do it on his own. So between us the complaint was written exactly as the offence happened on various occasions. At the bottom of it was written that Moses would call as witnesses Jack Marsh, Michael Andrews, Ronnie Piper, Brian Stratton and other men in the shop. The complaint was handed to the governor and Moses disappeared into the chokey so fast it was unbelievable. Later we heard that Moses had appeared in front of the visiting magistrates and was charged with

making false allegations against warden Jones.

We all expected to be called as witnesses, but once again prison justice triumphed and failed us. They refused to let Moses call witnesses for himself. So five men who saw all the incidents were not allowed to say what happened. Poor old Moses lost twenty-eight days remission and got a further twenty-eight days down the chokey for making false allegations. What chance have you got against a system so diabolically tipped against you before you start? In fact, you are completely in the screws' power and they use that power to make your life in jail far worse than it need be. So I started to do them back at their own game. If I saw one of them having a smoke I'd go and tell a P.O. The P.O. has got to do something about it under prison rules. Screws are not allowed to smoke when they are on duty, as it is called. If I saw them drinking tea or eating prison food they were in trouble. They really started to hate me, but it worked well for me. If I couldn't have a smoke in the workshop why should a screw be able to? I got quite a kick stopping the bastards from doing what they stopped me from doing.

A con extremely adept at fucking screws about was an old lag named Steve Jackson. Jackson was the most cantankerous old bastard I ever knew. He was an extremely clever bloke with his hands and used to work at teddy bears, moccasins and all kinds of things when he was in his cell. He paid for all the materials out of his own money. Anyhow, Miller put up an order stopping all hobbies in the peters. Apparently instead of occupying a man's mind it had been decided that all these hobbies could be used in an escape. I suppose that the teddy bears might have come to life and then strangled all the screws, thus allowing

us all to escape. These hobbies had been allowed for twenty years or more in Parkhurst until Miller put the clock back twenty years.

Jackson was exceedingly vexed over the hobbies being stopped as like most of the other cons, all the toys he made he sent to the local orphanage or spastics' home. Anyhow, Miller's order was that all cell hobbies were to be placed in a man's property in the reception block. For over three weeks after this, Jackson trotted down to reception two and three times every day, carrying parcels wrapped up in newspapers and tied with cotton, telling the reception screw each time that he, Jackson, was complying with Miller's order to put his cell hobbies into his property. After three weeks Jackson had eighty-four parcels in his property and a funny smell began to emanate from the reception block.

The reception screws, being of tender disposition, tracked the smell down and traced it to Jackson's eighty-four parcels. They fetched Jackson and said, there's a terrible stink coming from your property. What's in these hobbies parcels? My hobbies, that's all. The governor's order, you know. Security and all that jug, Jackson answered the screws. The screws then started to open the parcels which were full of shit, old rubbish, bottles, bones, rotting cabbage etc. What the hell's all this, Jackson? It's my hobby, sir. I collect shit and rubbish and the governor ordered all hobbies to be put in reception so I've just done so. I don't want to get nicked for disobeying an order, do I? Just keep it all for the next three years until I'm discharged.

The screws went berserk and rushed Jackson to the Chief Officer. The Chief immediately ordered all Jackson's parcels to be burnt,

leaving Jackson screaming for compensation for his property they were burning. Jackson definitely came out on top in that encounter.

Jackson worked with me in the shoe shop. The first thing you were told by the civilian instructor was never under any circumstances repair screws' boots or shoes. One day we had a screw in the shop with us nicknamed Pinhead Smith. Pinhead's tiny mind reasoned he could get his shoes mended for nothing while he was there. He called Jackson over to him and asked if Jackson could repair his shoes. Jackson surprised me by saying "Yes, sir". Pinhead took his shoes off and gave them to Jackson, who took them to his bench, picked up a knife and immediately cut both shoes in half. Pinhead nearly collapsed at this. "What have you done?" he screamed. "My shoes, my shoes!" We were in hysterics by now, but Jackson wasn't finished yet. He rung the alarm bell and the heavy mob came running into the shop with a P.O. "Who rang the bell?" demanded the P.O. "I did, sir", said Jackson. "You did?" said the P.O. "What the hell are you ringing the bell for?" "Well, sir, Mr Smith was threatening me with physical violence and I was very scared so I rang the bell." The P.O. turned to Smith who was sitting on his stool trying to tuck his shoeless feet under him. "What's going on here, Mr Smith?" asked the P.O., who as yet had failed to notice Pinhead's unshodden state. Jackson intervened: "Sir", he said, "Mr Smith ordered me to repair his shoes and I couldn't disobey an order, but when I looked at the shoes I found they were beyond repair and in accordance with shoe shop procedure I condemned them." The P.O. was livid at this but he knew Jackson was within his rights as Pinhead should not have given him the shoes in the first place. Pinhead was ordered to leave the shop, and

a sight to behold he was, his face a nice shade of scarlet. He walked out in his stockinged feet; both his socks had great holes in the heels. He should have let Jackson have the socks and get them condemned as well.

Jackson always had little deals going whereby he made a bit extra snout, but his most lucrative income came from a screw named Mills. Every few weeks Mills would come to Jackson's peter and give him a two-ounce tin of Old Holborn in return for which Jackson would write a note saying there would be an attempted escape from the compound the following Saturday or Sunday. The note Jackson placed in the mail box in the wing. The censor would read it and hand it over to the Chief Officer and the following weekend all the screws who should have been off duty would be called in on overtime to foil this escape attempt.

The times the old Parkhurst screws have pulled this stroke is beyond belief. If someone in a position to check facts went into it, he would find that come September or October every year for years now there has been a rumour of an escape coming up at Christmas. They never fail with this one. It's a rumour of an escape or a gun smuggled into the nick etc. that puts all the screws on unlimited overtime right up until Christmas.

While on the overtime bit, there's a neat little fiddle practised down there which may be useful to people in other fields of life. There seems to be no way to stop it, so I feel that if lousy screws can get away with it, so can the man in the street.

It is quite simply this. Warder Bloggs is married and has four kids so therefore pays

little income tax. Warder Bloggs 2 is single so pays a lot of income tax. When Bloggs 1 is called upon to do overtime he says to Bloggs 2, I don't want to do it. You go in my place. Bloggs 2 then goes on duty in the name of Bloggs 1, so therefore Bloggs 1 gets paid for it under his code number allowing him to claim for his four kids. He then gives the money to Bloggs 2 who gives him a drink out of it. Somehow or other the income tax people should stop Parkhurst warders from using this tax dodge, because the screws walk around bragging about how smart they are and it sets a bad example. Especially to cons who are trying to go straight. I mean to say if the screws are at it, how the hell can you expect a con to change his ways. The screws are supposed to set an example, it's no wonder nearly everyone goes out and straight back at it.

If I digress at times from the real purpose of this book, which is to give the reader and possibly the faceless ones at the Home Office the real facts of what caused the riot, please bear with me. To the best of my ability I wish to portray the screws for what they are, the prison system for what it is and Alistair Miller for what he is.

I had it on good authority before I ever started to write this book that because I had been trying to get M.P.s to do something about conditions in Parkhurst, the regime there had said that if I ever went back again I'd never come out, so please tell your friends to buy this book as well. I'm too young to die. Seriously though, I do not regard it as an idle threat on their part. It's only too easy for it to happen to me and for an inquest to say I'd committed suicide. It wouldn't be the first time it had happened in English nicks. It's happened twice in the last seven

years at Pentonville and once at Wandsworth. The boast of Rockhead Hudson "we have got a licence to kill you bastards now" is only too true, and I state here and now that I do not suffer from suicidal tendencies, no matter how bad the going may get. I'm a great believer in "there's always tomorrow".

The type of person who would go into someone's cell when it was empty and put Harpic into the con's tank of tropical fish that might have taken years to breed, or go in and break the battery leads on a con's radio, or tear up his photographs of his wife and kids, or put Brasso in the potatoes that are being served for lunch, or forget to unlock his cell when it's time to go and watch television, or forget to give him his mail at its proper time - this is the kind of man they have as prison warders at Parkhurst, and the type of man who is responsible for the events of October 1969. If you treat men like animals then sooner or later they will react like animals. No-one needs to be a genius to know this.

I'm not saying all the screws there are dogs - just about 95% of them. The other 5% are powerless to curb the activities of the rest so they just close their eyes to everything that goes on and treat the cons a bit more decently than the majority of screws do. But one thing to be remembered is that no matter how decent the screw may seem to be, if the Governor or Chief or P.O. order them to give you a good hiding, they'll do it - every last one of them. They say it is their job to take orders. If I were told to do something that is morally wrong like helping five or six other screws to give someone a kicking, I wouldn't do it. And I'm supposed to be a right unprincipled bastard. Violence in that sense of the word means nothing to me,

yet screws thrive and live on violence, because sadism is the creed they live for. And like all bullies, when the same thing is done to them it is wrong. Never mind the fact that through their own acts they caused violence to be brought on themselves. Like Hurst says, he is there to dish out the kind of treatment we dish out to people when we are outside. But he would do well to remember that only a small percentage of Parkhurst cons are actually serving sentences for violence. Hurst would also do well to remember that if you are prepared to hand it out then you must be equally prepared to take the same punishment yourself sometimes. Anyone who heard Hurst's pathetic testimony on the witness stand of how Mark Owen attacked him with a chair should also know Mark Owen had good reason to attack Hurst, as did nearly every con in the prison. Considering at the time of this alleged attack Hurst was armed with a riot stick, far longer than the one produced in evidence, he wasn't exactly defenceless. A riot stick is far more useful as a weapon than a chair. What Hurst in fact neglected to tell the court was that at this particular moment he was beating a man named Aylott senseless. Aylott took no part in the riot whatsoever yet Hurst, who went berserk finally, had to be pulled off Aylott by other screws.

Mark Owen has suffered terribly from his arrival at Parkhurst, mainly I think because he is coloured. He had escaped from Dartmoor before coming to Parkhurst, which the screws didn't like him for. He did not go out of his way to be awkward to screws, but neither would he back down if they digged him out.

In 1967 Mark Owen and Stanley Thompson tried to escape from the exercise yard. The escape bid failed. No violence was used by either

of these two men in their attempt. Thompson was taken quietly off to the chokey while Mark was beaten senseless in the exercise yard by Hurst, Franklyn and company. Why did Mark get done and not Stan? Because the screws had been dying to get to Mark and this was their chance. If he had offered any kind of violence maybe there would have been some justification in them beating him up. But he didn't lift a finger and still they did him.

One of the blokes Mark got nicked with, Freddy Sampson, came to Parkhurst from the security wing at Brixton. They took him off the bus straight into B wing where Hurst, Franklyn, Punchy Smith and Hudson proceeded to knock Fred from one end of B wing to the other - just welcoming him to Parkhurst, they said. Fred never even had time to open his mouth.

Sammy Monogan, fifty-six years old with one lung, was beaten senseless down the chokey because they were bored and he looked like he needed a kicking. I've never met an ill man yet who I thought looked like he needed a kicking. Maybe it's some new cure for illness that the screws have discovered but it couldn't have been very effective because he looked a lot worse than before he went down to the chokey.

I think the chokey screws and the hospital ones are on a par except that before they give you a licking in the hospital you are slightly drugged first, then put into a straight-jacket to make doubly sure. You can't offer any resistance when they attack you. Mind you, the chokey screws don't take any chances either. Their methods vary somewhat from the hospital routine. Your cell door is opened and two of them

come in holding a mattress in front of them. So adept are they that they will crowd you to the far end of the cell allowing more screws to come in behind them. The latter screws wield riot sticks and just batter you to the floor. The mattress is dispensed with and they really get to work on you with their boots. Your buttocks are the favourite target as you roll up in a ball and let them kick the rest of you to their hearts' content. When they are satisfied you have lost all interest in the proceedings they depart, closing the door behind them. You, who have been shrewdly lying there feigning unconsciousness (which is hard when you are being kicked silly) think to yourself it is over and you start to move maybe a leg or an arm. That's it. The door crashes open again and in they come. There is no mistake this time. When they do depart you are not feigning unconsciousness. I thoroughly recommend B.1 at Parkhurst as a place not to spend any time. The food is atrocious, the accommodation disgusting and the natives positively hostile. Unless of course you are kinky for this kind of thing, in which case you'll just love it.

The morning after last being beaten up, you will find yourself before Miller once again, this time charged with assaulting five screws at once and all the screws in their evidence will say how violent you were and what a hard job they had to restrain you.

There will be those members of the Duncan Sandys' "hang them and flog them" brigade who will no doubt be delighted at the Parkhurst way of curing the criminal. To these people I say this: most of you don't know what you are on about. Do any of you know intimately a man who has had the cat? I do. I know quite a few, in fact, and ladies and gentlemen,

it doesn't cure them-or deter anyone. In fact, it makes them far worse. So what does it achieve? If it fails to make the impression it was intended for, then the whole system of corporal punishment has failed. The same thing is where one innocent man is hanged, which is more than enough for capital punishment to be wrong. I am firmly of the opinion that with the hanging and flogging brigade it is a case of an eye for an eye. If this is so, there is no further need to talk about it.

Screws scream for capital punishment to be restored just as they are always screaming for more money. Who takes any notice of them? All they are doing is trying to justify an impossibility - their existence. How many screws do you see walking along the streets in their uniforms? Unless you live right on top of a prison, none. Why not? Because they are too fucking well trained to be seen outside the nick in their poxy uniforms. When they haven't got their uniforms on, they think they are just the same as anyone else, but they can't be, else they wouldn't be in the job they've got. You don't see servicemen or even "Old Bill" ashamed to be seen out in their respective uniforms. I know some villainous "Old Bills" but compared with the Parkhurst screws these "Old Bills" are babes in arms.

If you get a crooked screw, he is worse than any villain in the nick. The one I've got in mind at Parkhurst is still at it. You can make arrangements to send £20 to him. He will get your dough and if you are lucky you will get three or four ounces of tobacco. By rights if you send him £20, it is a tenner for him and a tenner for you. With this geezer you are lucky to get £1 out of it, never mind the whole whack. I had one trade with this screw. I gave him a £5 note and it took me

four months to get the snout out of him. I think the only reason I got mine while most others didn't was because I drove him stone raving mad about it. Like I said, even then it still took four months and believe me I can be a pest if I want to.

Another great racket at Parkhurst is education. This department is run by a face whose title is "Tutor Organiser". He draws a fabulous wage for doing next to fuck all. But the best part is anything you may want to buy such as paints for the art class or wood for the carpentry class - in fact anything you have to order through the Tutor Organiser. He has got places owned by friends of his where he buys all this stuff and these places are always the most expensive. An example of this: someone wanted some leather off-cuts to make moccasins with. The Tutor Organiser got him some off-cuts and charged the con £1. Later on, this same con sent £1 off to a firm in Northampton and got back a sack full of off-cuts, enough to make a hundred pairs of moccasins.

After you have paid the Tutor Organiser for the leather and made a pair of moccasins, you then have to hand the finished article to the Tutor Organiser and it is placed in front of what is called a Pricing Committee. The Mafia have nothing on the Parkhurst Pricing Committee, whose members consist of the Tutor Organiser, Deputy Governor and the Steward. Between them they decide that the moccasins are worth £1.50 and you then have to pay another 50%, bringing the total to £2.25. Once you have paid the £2.25 the moccasins (for which you have already bought the leather and which you have made in your own free time) are then yours to send home or whatever you wish. It is small wonder that the attendance at classes is negligible. You don't volunteer

to be robbed, do you now?

Another very sore point at Parkhurst is the food. I can remember eleven or twelve years ago when the Labour Party were in opposition, one Lord Stonham, nee Victor Collins, taking up the cudgels for prisoners on the food question. He stood up in the House of Commons and accused the Tory government of starving prisoners. The food allowance in those days per man per prison was something in the region of 13/6. Stonham announced to one and all: "My wife spends 15/- a week feeding my cat". Lo and behold, years later we have a Labour government and who is the Under-Secretary for State at the Home Office? None other than Lord Stonham. Has the food allowance been raised since Lord Stonham has taken over? Of course it hasn't. The man may have had good intentions years ago but now they seem to have got lost somewhere in the corridors of power. Stonham, take note - the food at Parkhurst is without doubt the worst at any nick in the country. I had numerous rucks about the state of the food with the Governor and it was always the same whining excuse - the cost of transporting the food over to the Island on the ferry. Now I won't deny it isn't more expensive in the Isle of Wight than anywhere else in the country but what I would like to know is with Camphill prison right next door to Parkhurst with a fucking great farm full of pigs and cows and screws and all on the farm, why does Parkhurst prison have to have all their vegetables brought over on the ferry at an exorbitant price while Camphill prison sells its vegetables and dairy produce at the market price which, of course, is far less than Parkhurst pays for their food. It just doesn't make sense.

As I said, the food is vile. The cook is very aptly named Shakespeare - the original

one was a moron compared with the Parkhurst one. This geezer doesn't write books, he makes up menus which should be published in Private Eye (the only magazine that tells the truth). If the food in the nick is reasonable you can put up with the nick as a rule. But if the food is as consistently bad as Parkhurst food is, this causes great discontent among the cons. You will get blokes who normally never say boo to a goose who will be up in arms over the stodgy food and you can't blame them. The whole nick gets stale bread with their meals and the new bread made with the prisoners' rations is sent to the screws' mess and sold to the screws. The profits from the screws' mess go towards paying for parties for screws' kids. So in effect, out of the lousy fourteen shillings or so, the cons are subsidising the screws. Again, this is strictly against Prison Rules, but who is going to stop it? I shall dwell no longer on the subject of food. There are matters of more importance.

I mentioned earlier that one of the ways you can air a grievance in prison is to petition the Home Secretary. You do this on a form obtainable from Miller. On the top of this form in large letters it clearly states "Do not write between the lines". Where the hell are you supposed to write if not between the lines? I have long been of the opinion that these petitions rarely leave the prison, unless they are of extreme importance. The average time to get an answer to a petition is five weeks, although I do know a geezer who waited $2\frac{1}{2}$ years for an answer. If someone at the Home Office is responsible for these petitions it is a bloody certainty that the Home Secretary never sees them. I would dearly love to meet this bloke just to find out how the hell I got an answer to a certain petition. When

I wrote the petition I was in Hull prison and I was trying to get a transfer to Parkhurst (this was in the days of Allen Packham and not Miller). I put the petition in and three weeks later all of us long-term prisoners in Hull were suddenly transferred to Parkhurst prison anyway. After I had been at Parkhurst a few weeks the Assistant Governor called me up and told me he had got an answer to my petition for a transfer. The answer read as follows: "The Secretary of State has carefully considered your petition but can see no grounds for authorising your transfer to Parkhurst and you will remain at Hull". This illustrates the usefulness of petitions. I am still awaiting the answer to a petition I put in six weeks before I was discharged.

The other way of airing your complaints is through the Board of Visiting Magistrates, who are usually a group of retired army officers who come to the nick once a month to hear any applications from prisoners. These people are completely powerless. If you make a reasonable request even, they send you out of the room and ask the Governor what they should do. And as you have already seen the Governor about the matter beforehand and he has already refused whatever it is you wanted, there is no point in seeing the magistrates because it is still the Governor who will say "no" again. The Visiting Magistrates' other function is to hear the cases of cons who have been charged with something too serious for the Governor to deal with. Yet again, the magistrates get their instructions from the Governor. I long ago tried the argument in front of the Visiting Magistrates' Court that if, as they told me, they were a duly constituted magistrates' court convened to hear the case against me, I was entitled to have a solicitor to represent me. This request was refused

point-blank. These kangaroo courts are really terrific. The Governor and screws can call anyone they wish to to give evidence against you but you are not allowed to call anyone to give evidence for you. You just stand there wondering how much remission you are going to lose this time and how much chokey you'll get. No-one ever gets proved innocent on a V.C. You can't even cross-examine the witnesses giving evidence against you. You have to ask the magistrates what you want to know and by the time the magistrates have repeated it to the screw even that dim-witted bastard will have thought up an answer.

For many years one of the main talking points in nick was "parole". In 1967 the much publicised parole scheme came into effect. The idea behind the scheme was very good. After you had served one third of your sentence you were then eligible to be considered for parole. Unfortunately Lord Hunt, as chairman of the National Parole Board, is being used as a figurehead only. The parole scheme is nothing but a farce. It is not Lord Hunt and his Board that select the few men that get paroled, but faceless wonders at the Home Office. Parole and the people running it are to blame for much of the tension in prisons today. To a long-term con, parole can obviously make a difference of years spent in prison. For instance, the con who is serving twelve years would normally do eight years out of this sentence. Under the parole scheme, theoretically, he could be released after four years. He would then have to keep a steady job, lead a stable home life and report to a Parole Officer once a week.

As I said, in principle the idea is very good. If I could get out in four years instead of eight, even I who hate work would

be more prepared to go to work for the next four years. Who knows, I might even like it. Over me would be the shadow that if I did just one thing wrong I would go back to do the other four years, plus whatever sentence I got for the latest transgression. I feel if it worked properly the parole scheme would help quite a few men to keep out of future trouble, because once you have completed the whole of your sentence you get discharged with four lousy quid and a letter to the Ministry of Social Security. And after lying about in Parkhurst for six, seven, or eight years you do not come out feeling very much like going straight. The system doesn't want you to go straight or more would be done to help discharged prisoners. Three months after you are interviewed for parole you hear the result. I had put a strong case forward for myself, i.e. a certain well-known public figure had a good job waiting for me. I had been inside for over five years then and had about eighteen months left to do. So in theory I should have been in with a chance and there were others with far better cases than me. However, of the 136 prisoners interviewed for parole, 136 were refused. Our cases did not even get to Lord Hunt's Parole Board. Somehow or other they got to the Home Office first and some pin-striped-trouser ponce there had dealt with them. Try as I did, I could get no satisfactory answer as to why my case had gone to the Home Office instead of to Lord Hunt. It was completely the opposite to what was supposed to happen. Hunt and Company were supposed to make their recommendations and then send them to the Home Office.

After this, I thought fuck the parole system. I'll stand anything once, but not twice. Another year of aggravation went by, then I was sent for by a member of the local Parole

Board who kindly informed me that I was now eligible for parole consideration again. I promptly told him where to stick his parole scheme. I wasn't going to be taken for a mug two years running. Stratton, he said, don't you want to get out of this place? Certainly, I replied. In a matter of a few months I go out and I'll owe you bastards nothing. He then started to sell me on his parole scheme. I cut him short, saying "Look, no-one in this nick is going to get paroled. So don't let's waste each other's time". He then asked me if I would sign a form saying I declined to be considered for parole. I signed and departed thinking that was the end of the matter. About thirty other blokes also declined. They felt the same as I did about parole. Unlike me though, some of them still had years left to do. But they felt there was no point in being made a fool of again when you knew you had no chance anyway. The news that some of us had declined leaked out to a certain newspaper. The reason given as to why we declined was that we were all of us institutionalised and could not face life in the world outside prison, which was nothing but a fucking lie that the Home Office and prison authorities used rather than admit that we had told them what they could do with their parole system because it was a farce.

Three weeks after I had declined parole, Miller sent for me. I walked into his office and there he sat with a big grin on his two faces. "I've got some bad news for you, Stratton. You've been refused parole". I started laughing and Miller asked me why I thought it was funny that parole had been refused me. "It's quite simple", I answered. "I refused it. So how the hell can anyone tell me I can't have it?" Miller then handed me a form from the Home Office. On this form it stated that the Home Secretary had carefully

considered the personal representations that I had made to him as to why I should have parole, but he, the Home Secretary, could not see fit to grant me parole at this stage. Seeing that I had made no personal representations to the Home Secretary or anyone else I was rather intrigued as to why this knockback form had been handed to me. I studied the form closely but like all official Home Office forms there was no signature on it. I asked Miller where the form had come from. "From the Home Office, of course," he snapped. "I don't believe you," I replied. "I think this form is issued by someone in the prison." "Don't be ridiculous", said Miller. "Now get out of my office". So I got out.

My suspicions were now well and truly aroused over this piece of paper. During the course of my enquiries I found that all the rest of those who had declined to be considered for parole had also been given little pieces of paper telling them that the Home Office had carefully considered their cases too.

I gave some thought to the matter. Here we had a situation involving men serving extremely long sentences being fucked about from arsehole to breakfast by people who got paid vast amounts and who quite obviously did not know what the fuck they were doing. Luckily it wasn't a serious issue. It was only a matter of whether men stayed in or went out on parole.

I made my monthly pilgrimage to see the Visiting Magistrates. "Good morning, Stratton," said the chairman, "what is it this time?" I pulled my Home Office form out of my pocket and read the contents out to the Board of learned gentlemen who all sat there huddled and nodding away to my words. I finished reading and asked the chairman "Why was I

given this form?" "I beg your pardon?" he asked. "Why was I given this form?" I repeated. "Obviously because you applied for parole and it was refused," he answered. "But", said I, "I declined to be considered for parole, so how and why this form?" The chairman and the rest of the farcical Board were stricken at this. "I ... I ... I" stuttered the chairman, but before he could stutter any more the Deputy Governor, one Long John Heald, interjected: "You still get considered, Stratton, even if you refuse". "I didn't come in here to see you," I answered again. "I came to see the Visiting Magistrates". Long John did not like being spoken to as such. "I'm telling you, Stratton. You've got your answer, now get out". Beginning to get annoyed with this cunt interfering, I was about to give him a volley of abuse when one of the farcical gentlemen magistrates sitting on the Bench actually spoke and said to the Deputy, "Just a minute, there is a procedure to be followed in cases like this". I was dumbfounded. A Visiting Magistrate had actually opened his mouth and spoken. I waited in anticipation for the pearls of wisdom to fall from his mouth. Carrying on, the Magistrate turned to me and said "If a prisoner declines to be considered for parole he is asked to sign a form stating this and the form has to be witnessed by the Visiting Magistrate. Now you could not have signed such a form, in which case you are automatically still considered". Got you, you cunt, I thought. "As it happens I did sign such a form," I answered. "Who witnessed it, then?" sneered the Deputy. "The Magistrate sitting on your left", I replied.

My answer shattered him. There were coughs and stutters and they didn't know what to say. "Well," I asked the chairman, "can you see my point now?" I carried on "If I wasn't

considered for parole how come I get this letter telling me I have been considered and where has this come from?" The Deputy was glaring murderously at me. Still, he always glares murderously at me as I make him feel inferior, which is understandable. The Magistrates were muttering among themselves and after a few minutes the chairman said: "Well, Stratton, we don't know what has happened". As usual, the Visiting Magistrates knew nothing and could do nothing. "Well, I don't want to waste any more of your valuable time," I said. "I'd just like your permission to send this form out to my M.P. so he can find out what it was given to me for". They had no alternative but to let me send the form out to Stan Newens, M.P.

Newens sent the form off to Lord Stonham at the Home Office asking for an explanation. In due course the explanation came from Stonham, who apologised and said it was an oversight. A clerk had made a mistake in sending the form to me.

What, I wonder, would have been the outcome if I had got a form saying I had been granted parole. This mistake-making clerk would have been fired. One other point is the thirty other cons who also got a knock-back form when they refused parole anyway. Those were just thirty more clerical errors, but there again it is only men's freedom involved, so it doesn't really matter.

I hope the above example illustrates just what a farce the parole scheme is to Parkhurst prisoners. Parole is another piece of fuel added to the already explosive situation. Parkhurst prisoners are entitled to the same chance in the parole system as any other nick, but they don't get it. Why not? According to prison rules every prisoner should be

treated exactly the same as another. Why does this rule not apply to Parkhurst?

In 1961 James John Robson received a total of 21 years imprisonment for robbery and the possession of explosives. A savage sentence, doubly worsened by the fact that Robbo was given a sentence of 14, not 21 years at the Bristol Assizes for the actual robbery. Unfortunately, he was arrested in London. The police alleged that the explosives they said were in his possession at the time of his arrest had been used in the safe-blowing at Bristol, but instead of having all the charges dealt with by the West Country Court, Robbo got a further seven years for being in possession of something he was already charged with using elsewhere.

Robbo has now served over ten years of his sentence. Each year since the parole scheme was introduced in 1967 this man has applied for parole. In spite of the fact that his conduct inside has been exemplary for ten solid years, Robbo has been given a blank each time. A company director personally wrote to Lord Hunt and to the prison to say he would employ Robbo if he was given parole. Mrs Robson has also written to the Parole Board to try and help her husband. In fact, at no time has anyone visited Mrs Robson or the company director to verify the facts for giving Robbo parole. Only after months of ceaseless letter writing did Mrs Robson finally get a letter from Lord Hunt in which he categorically denied ever receiving any letters from her or from anyone offering Robbo a job. One of the faceless pin-striped wonders had intercepted these letters along the way, so Robbo is left to rot in jail with no hope of even getting a fair hearing in front of the Parole Board. It stands to reason that people serving sentences like

Robbo is should be given a chance of parole after ten solid years inside. The sociologists reckon that after nine years in prison a man begins to crack up. Well, for once I agree. I've seen it happen too often. They develop the shakes, their minds live totally in the past, and they are no longer men, but zombies. Luckily, Robbo's made of sterner stuff, but surely to Christ he should be given a chance. Why should his remaining years depend on the whim of some parasitical Home Office civil servant and his recommendations? Let's dig these faceless ones out and get rid of them. Then maybe the people who were appointed to the Parole Board can do the job they are there for instead of being just meaningless figureheads.

Late in 1967 a close friend of mine arrived at Parkhurst from Broadmoor. This was Timmy Noonan, a man who will turn out in time to be the straw that broke the camel's back. Timmy, a short, slightly built Irishman, belies his looks. Next to Frankie Fraser he bears a fearsome reputation which (again like Frank's) has been earned the hard way. When people meet him for the first time they cannot believe this is the Timmy Noonan they have heard so much about. Timmy was doing a five. He got it at the Old Bailey in 1966. From the Bailey he had gone to Wandsworth nick in South London. Next to Parkhurst, Wandsworth is about the second worst nick in the country. Its governor in 1966, Michael Gale, of whom much will be heard later, hated Timmy intensely. So Tim never had a chance to prove he wanted no trouble in Wandsworth. Right away the screws were having a go at him. So he knocked one out. Down the chokey block he went and was duly obliged in the standard chokey screws' fashion - slung into a strong box. Every chokey has strong boxes. They are cells within cells

specially designed and sound-proofed so that no-one can hear the screams of the victims as they are being done. From a chokey screw's point of view a strong box is a perk that goes with the job. It is very nice in the strong box. Your clothes, such as they are, are torn off you by the hairy-handed Gestapo warders. I'd better explain about Gestapo hats. The screws' uniforms were obviously designed for freaks (they had to be). No amount of alteration can make these uniforms look smart. Come to that, a Hardy Amies suit couldn't make 99% of screws look smart anyway. Pardon me if I digress. The hat is probably the best part of a screw's uniform. For what do most screws do? They attack the poor defenceless hat with a razor blade by slashing it across the front, which causes the peak to droop. They then insert a triangular-shaped piece of cardboard in the front of the cap, which causes it to look like a Gestapo thug's cap. When worn, the peak comes right across the nose limiting the wearer's vision severely, so in a screw's case he can't do his job properly by keeping a clear observation at all times on the prisoners in his keeping. I am quite sure that Gestapo hats have aided many an escape. For some reason known only to screws these hats make them feel more powerful. You will see a new screw without a slashed hat walking around looking very self-conscious and nervous. But the next day the same screw is swaggering around the nick looking like Irwin Rommel himself. Why? Because the night before, he slashed his hat. I will also just add that it is an offence for prison warders to alter their hats in any way whatsoever and as every minor rule is enforced to make life harder for cons, it is about time this rule was enforced for screws.

Anyhow, there you are lying in the strong box, stark naked. There is no bed, no furniture,

fuck all except a dim light burning in the ceiling. You don't have to worry about getting cold in there as the screws come in regularly to warm you up, which quite breaks the monotony.

One of the rules of the prison is that no man should be held in a strong box longer than twenty-four hours. Yet again, this rule is totally ignored. Timmy, for instance, was in a strong box at G wing in Wandsworth for $3\frac{1}{2}$ months and was beaten up every day he was in there. At the end of the $3\frac{1}{2}$ months he was certified as being violently insane.

This insane bit I have quite a lot to say about. Frankie Fraser is referred to in some Fleet Street rags as Mad Frankie, and why? Because he has been in Broadmoor. It is a pity the newspapers don't bother publishing all the facts instead of putting nicknames to people just to make the headlines more impressive. A very good example of this is the cunt of a reporter who dubbed Roy James "The Weasel". Never before the train robbery was Roy James known as the weasel, but I suppose some reporters can't help it. It has got to be scarface for some poor bastard who cut himself shaving, or the Mad Axe man, etc. They just make me sick.

For many years in any prison it was a simple matter to certify anyone insane. The nick doctor could do it. A classic example was, of course, Frank Mitchell, who started off doing a two-year sentence in Pentonville in 1966. One particular screw at the "Ville" took an instant dislike to Frank simply because Frank was so big. He persecuted Frank day in and day out. In the end, Frank clouted him, for which he was given the cat. The screw still had not learned his lesson and proceeded to persecute him again, so

Frank did him again. The outcome of this was that Frank was certified violently insane, simply because the prison authorities at Pentonville wanted to get rid of him. As he later proved, Frank was not insane, and indeed had never been insane. But because he had been certified it cost Frank fifteen years inside and finally it cost him his life. All because one skinny-gutted screw tried to prove he was bigger than Frank.

Timmy Noonan, Frankie Fraser and Martin Frape, three of the defendants in the riot trial, were all certified under the same circumstances as Frank Mitchell. I am not saying there were no lunatics around but as far as I am concerned these four men were no nuttier than me. And I defy any doctor (except the nick ones) to find grounds enough to have me certified. But it is a different matter in a nick when they want to get rid of you. Once you have been stuck with a certifiable tag you never lose it. I know one thing - if the men in the long white coats were allowed to examine everyone in Parkhurst, there would be more screws than cons taken away to the "funny farm".

I was the first one Timmy spoke to when he came to Parkhurst. When I heard he had arrived there I felt sick because I knew the screws would be after him, even though none of them had ever met him before. Tim came to my pater. They had put him on the same landing as me in B wing. He asked me what the nick was like and I told him fucking useless. He told me emphatically he didn't want any trouble, he just wanted to do his bird quietly and get out. Inevitably, it was not to be.

Hurst, Franklyn, the Parkhurst Carrot and their followers were after Tim right away.

Every chance they got they made remarks to him about being an "Irish potato picker" and various other names, not calculated to win them Timmy's friendship. For four months Tim suffered this treatment which was no mean feat on his part. At times he was nearly crying with rage and told me he would have to do one of them, even though he knew that it was what they wanted him to do. I used all the influence I had on him to stop him playing into their hands, but a man can only take so much, and in the end Timmy hit one of them on the chin, a nasty vindictive screw named Hall. Hall was our landing screw. A quick illustration of Hall as a screw is this: also on my landing was a little front wheel skid called Eli. One day Eli asked me if he could borrow a couple of my paperback books. "Sure," I said, "come and have a look at what I've got and help yourself". Eli then turned to warder Hall, standing close by us, and asked whether it was O.K. for him to go into my cell and sort out a couple of books for himself. Hall gave him permission to do so. I heard him. Three landings below was Frank Hurst. Hurst happened to look up and spot Eli going into my cell. He nicked Eli over this and Eli was carted away to the dungeons. I immediately went up to warder Hall and said "You told Eli he could go into my peter, so how come Hurst has nicked him?" Hall wouldn't answer me, so I said "Are you going to tell the Governor you gave Eli permission to go into my peter?" "I can't go against a fellow warder", he said. "If Mr Hurst has nicked him, there is nothing I can do about it". Fuming about this, I put down to see Miller. Unfortunately, before I saw him he had already dealt with Eli, taking fourteen days remission from him. Eli had asked his permission for Hall to be present but this was refused. So Eli had another fourteen days bird to do because he

had been given permission to do something by one screw and then been nicked by another screw for doing it.

On seeing Miller I explained what had happened. "Don't be silly, Stratton," he replied. "If Mr Hall had given permission for Eli to go into your cell I'm positive Mr Hurst would not have put the man on report. You are just trying to make trouble for the staff again. Now get out of my office".

So much for warder Hall. After Timmy clouted him, Tim was carted down to the chokey and duly attacked by the Filthy Five. Now I'm not unrealistic. If a pal of mine got done I would be inclined to give whoever did it a few digs if the chance came. Old Bill practise this. If you do a copper you can expect to get done when you get captured. It is all part of the game. The difference between screws and Old Bill is the screws aren't satisfied with doing you once and then letting you go in front of the V.C. and lose six or nine months remission and all the rest of the trimmings. They then keep doing you three, four or five times a day for weeks on end. The official punishment isn't good enough for them.

BLUNDESTON PRISON

While this bit of barbarism was going on, I suddenly got the long-sought-after transfer to Blundeston prison, Suffolk. It had taken eighteen months' effort by both my M.P. and myself to get this move. Blundeston was opened in 1963 and reckoned to be the most progressive prison in the country. On my arrival there I could not have found a greater contrast to Parkhurst. There was no wall around me, just a high fence topped with barbed wire; the actual nick itself looked more like a school surrounded by a garden. When I walked into the place the first thing that hit me was the atmosphere, free and easy, the direct opposite to what I had left behind at Parkhurst. The Reception screw absolutely shattered me by calling me Mr Stratton and he actually kept saying please when he asked me something. This was unheard of. A screw with manners.

Getting to the main wing from Reception I found some pals of mine waiting for me. They had arranged for me to go straight into the dormitory with them. The dormitory consisted of eight cons in one big room. You had a toilet and washroom, and you could have a bath or shower any time you liked.

After the one bath a week routine at Parkhurst, this was an unexpected luxury. As far as I was concerned the best thing of all in the dormitory was a television set, for which eight of us paid fifteen pence a week out of our nick wages. I like a bit of television in the evenings as it is a great time-killer.

The screws all wanted to call me Brian as this was the new system. I scotched this first-name terms with screws. I didn't need it. A screw came up and introduced himself as Mr Holland, my section screw. "You can call me Dutch", he said. "I don't want to call you Dutch," I replied, "just as I don't want you calling me Brian again either". He looked at me a bit old-fashioned and then said "If you have any problems you can always come and discuss them with me." I thought it was some kind of joke when he said it but he was quite sincere. "No, governor," I replied, "any problems I have I will sort out myself. I won't bother you and you don't bother me." Apparently I wasn't supposed to say this. I was expected to say "Yes, Dutch, I'll discuss any problems with you" and then I would have been off to a good start at Blundeston.

Next day they put me in the printers' shop to work. I didn't like this at all. Even less did I like the civilian instructors in there, who were as bad as the screws. One of the cunts came up to me and said "We have a nice job waiting for you" and took me to a bench on which was piled masses of sheets of paper. "Your job is to fold these pieces of paper in half", he said. Maybe this bloke thought I was a bit thick. He demonstrated how to fold a sheet of paper in half. I stood and let him demonstrate this job, the intricacies of which would have been beyond a lesser genius than myself.

It was poetry in motion as he deftly placed corner to corner and creased the paper down the middle with one sweep of his dirty hand. Watching him, I knew that finally after all my years in the nick I had met and seen at work the ultimate in prison craftsmen. I felt beside myself with joy that this much talented man was willing to teach ignorant me how to fold pieces of paper in half. Having done one he turned to me and said "Shall I do another, just in case you are not sure how to do it?" "Don't bother", I answered. "You think you can do it then?" he asked. "Yes, I think I can do it. It is just that I am not going to fold your grotty bits of paper in fucking half. You must think I am a right cunt to try and get me doing this job". For some unknown reason the prison craftsman paper-folder took umbrage at my words. "Everyone else does it", he said, pointing all around him, "why can't you?" "I just told you," I replied, "I am not a cunt. If other people are happy folding bits of paper for eight hours a day, good luck to them. But I'm most certainly not going to do it." "We'll see about this," he snarled and walked away, returning a few minutes later accompanied by another prison craftsman. I knew this bloke was a prison craftsman because he walked with a limp. Limpy stuck his face close to mine and snarled "What are you doing?" "Nine years," I replied. "How long are you doing?" "Don't try to be funny with me. I'm in charge of this shop," he explained, "and what's your name?" "My name is Fred and what's yours?" He sort of did a little dance of rage at this and he must have been feeling ill as he was finding it very hard to speak. Eventually, he did manage to utter "Haven't you got any work to do?" "Not that I've noticed," I said. "What about folding that lot in half?" he screamed, pointing to the bench. "I'm sorry, I'm not doing it and that's final, and I will

tell you something else, if you don't get out of this workshop I'm going to wreck it and you." The two prison paper-folding craftsmen speedily departed to an unknown destination, leaving me alone. A few minutes later two screws came in and one of them said "I'm sorry, Mr Stratton, but they don't want you in the shop." I still hadn't got used to the Mr bit and I was well pleased to get out of the shop. I spent the next week or so lying on my bed all day, apart from one attempt they made to get me to go to work in the tailors' shop where, when I arrived, they wanted to give me a pair of scissors and a job cutting odd pieces of cotton off about ten tons of material. I politely declined this job as well, on the grounds that my glasses were being mended and as my eyes were so badly damaged by the screws at Parkhurst I couldn't see the pieces of cotton at all, and I would mistakenly cut up all their nice material instead. They got the message O.K. and I left the tailors' shop. Anyway I was beginning to get the pox with Blundeston, Britain's newest prison. As they only offered me these poxy jobs I decided to retire.

However, it gets a bit boring doing absolutely fuck all. So when a geezer I knew asked me whether I fancied a job in the kitchen I took it. Sure enough, what was the job? On the spout machine. Of the twenty-odd cons working in the kitchen only about half-a-dozen were trustworthy as far as I was concerned. The rest were grasses and grovellers. Blundeston, in fact, was a haven for both police and prison informers and child molesters. They get sent to Blundeston from every nick in the country because it is figured that at Blundeston they are less likely to get hurt for their sins, owing to the fact that as the nick is so free and easy nobody would risk getting chucked out of there back to Parkhurst for "doing" a grass

or sex case. While this is all very nice for grasses and sex cases it rather defeats the purpose for which Blundeston was intended, i.e. a progressive system never before tried in England whereby a prisoner is left to his own devices and is encouraged to pursue any particular field that may help him when he is released.

Admittedly, the grasses are encouraged to pursue their particular vocation, informing. One particular P.O. at at Blundeston asks all new arrivals if they would pass on any information they get to him and he will see that they get well-rewarded with extra remission. I feel that if you are going to have such a nick as Blundeston then for fuck sake use it. If only 50% of the people who go through there go straight it is a bigger success than any other nick in the country, but as long as it is full of grasses and sex offenders sent there from other prisons for their own protection then the place is not being used in its true capacity.

One thing there which could be incorporated into every prison with no trouble and at no expense is the monthly meeting of Governor, screws and cons where anyone with a grievance or suggestion can make his point, and the matter is then thrashed out by the parties concerned. As long as Miller is Governor at Parkhurst this idea will not be introduced, as it will be too much trouble for Miller to leave the golf course and attend the meetings, which is a pity as a hell of a lot can be achieved at meetings of this kind.

Comparing the two systems, Parkhurst and Blundeston, it is interesting to note that since Blundeston opened in 1963 - a period of seven years - just once has a screw got attacked there. Take Parkhurst from 1966

onwards and you have a screw getting done every week near enough. Certainly Blundeston screws are far different in their attitudes and their treatment of prisoners. Just comparing the difference in the amount of assaults on screws in the two places says a great deal for the Blundeston way of doing things.

Unfortunately for me, regardless of what nick I am in, a screw is still a screw. At Blundeston I could not change my attitude towards them and I don't suppose I ever will.

There were two screws in charge of the kitchen. One was a Suffolk man complete with the "have you got a leight" accent and the other screw was of Jewish extraction (don't think I don't like Jews either - I was the only guy at Parkhurst who backed them in the Six Day War and I cleaned up a lot of snout) known as Hymie. He didn't like me very much because I wouldn't converse with him like the grovellers did. I used to do my job and depart. There's nothing in prison regulations to say Stratton must talk to Hymie, but Hymie immediately classed me as surly, unco-operative and anti-social and I just couldn't get to sleep at nights for worrying about his opinion of me.

One day we got some sacks of cauliflower in. The cauliflower had gone bad and stunk to high heaven - putrid in fact was the word. Hymie told me to get this shit ready to be cooked for lunch. "you're joking," I said. "You can't feed that to anyone, it's rotten." "It's good enough for you lot," he replied, "get it ready." "Not me," I answered, so he got a couple of grovellers to do it. I was fuming over this and when everyone trooped into the dining halls for their lunch I went out and warned them not to touch the cauliflower

as it was rotten. This resulted in hordes of cons charging into the kitchen to complain to Hymie that the cauliflower was rotten and that they wanted something else in its place. This little episode was a declaration of war between Hymie and me. Unfortunately he wasn't very bright, but then, of course, he was a screw. A couple of days later it was scrambled eggs for tea. While we were preparing the scrambled eggs, which was not my department, I decided to watch Hymie and his snidey pantry man Frank make it. According to prison rules everyone is allowed two eggs per week. At Blundeston they get one fried on Sunday mornings and the other one goes into the scrambled egg during the week. This particular day with 273 men in the nick, 273 eggs should have been scrambled. I was a little surprised to see the weasel Frank put precisely six dozen eggs out to be scrambled. Even with my limited mathematical ability I knew we were 201 eggs short. I said nothing for a bit but carried on watching. Possibly Hymie was Jesus Christ in disguise and would miraculously turn 72 into 273, but lo and behold, instead of producing eggs Hymie produced cornflour and proceeded to mix it with the 72 eggs, thus conjuring up a mixture that would look like enough scrambled eggs to feed 273 cons and would taste like fuck knows what.

"Where's the other eggs then?" I asked him. The two of them looked at me as though I was mad or something. "Where are the rest of the eggs?" I asked them. "They are all in there, scrambled," said weasel Frank. "Don't give me that old bollocks. You've only given me six dozen eggs. Where have the other 201 got to?" I asked. Hymie discreetly kept quiet and started to edge away, leaving me alone with the weasel. "Well," I demanded, "where's the eggs?" "What's it got to do with you?" Frank asked. "Everything," I replied, "you

don't think I'm going to eat that shit you've knocked up there, do you?" A knowing look appeared on Frank's weasel-like features. "No, Brian," he said, "you don't have to eat it." He then said "Come into the pantry and you can have what you like. A bit of steak or some ham - anything you fancy. Help yourself. This shit is for those mugs out in the dining room." "I've got some pals out in the dining room," I said, "and I don't like to think of them eating this shit either. There's supposed to be 273 eggs in that mixture and I want to see 273 eggs go into it." "But we never put more than six dozen in," said Frank. "Well, where do the rest go?" I asked. "I sell them to the cons at half-an-ounce a dozen," he replied. My computer-like brain clicked into action. 201 eggs at half-an-ounce a dozen run out at eight ounces of tobacco, which Frank would change for about £6. So Frank made six quid a week selling the cons their own grub. "You make a few quid from this then?" I asked him. "Yes," he replied, "I usually make about £4 a week but I split it down the middle with Hymie else I couldn't get away with it, but now you've spotted us we'll cut you in." "No you won't. I'll just have different grub for me and my pals, that's all," I answered. "O.K., Brian, you just tell me what you want any time."

I watched Hymie and Frank carefully from then on. Hymie was trying hard behind the scenes to get me moved out of the kitchen, but the Governor and the Chief wouldn't stand for it. They were pleased that I had actually stayed in the job and had no intention of having me out of work again if they could help it.

Hymie took a cookery class every Friday night and a fishing club every Sunday morning. I discovered that these classes were paid for

by the Suffolk Education Authority, so Hymie drew £3 a week for his cookery class and £3 fortnightly for the fishing class. However, three weeks out of four Hymie never even bothered to come in for the cookery class. He just left some grub out on the Friday evening so the blokes on the class could cook themselves a meal and he stayed at home or went out and got paid £3 for it. He loved to brag how shrewd he was to the grovellers in the kitchen. He slipped up, though, by mentioning in front of a pal of mine that he never paid income tax on the money he drew from the Education Authority. Patriotic type that I am, I acquainted the income tax people with Hymie's problem and they solved it quite easily by sending him a nice big bill for the back tax he owed. Still, he no doubt paid it from the money he was making on our food, but at least some of his ill-gotten gains went to a good cause.

But he still didn't mend his evil warder-like ways. There were half-a-dozen diabetics in the prison who had to have special food. One morning a joint of silverside beef arrived for them - it really looked nice, that bit of beef. Owing to Hymie and Frank nicking most of the grub the diabetics had been having a lean time and they kept complaining to the doctor they weren't getting the right kind of food. This doctor, who had been slung out of a hospital for negligence before going into the prison quacktice, finally just had to ring Hymie and say he was going to visit the kitchens on the day of the arrival of the beef. This was unheard of, although by rules the doctor (as well as the Governor) is supposed to visit the kitchen every day and test the food. The doctor was too idle ever to do this.

Come lunchtime the doctor still hadn't shown up. After lunch we all buggered off for a

sleep and as I had left my snout tin in the kitchen I went back for it. Over the years I had sort of acquired a habit of walking noiselessly. Entering the kitchen, I found it empty except for Hymie, who didn't hear me come in as he was busily cutting in half the nice big lump of silverside beef I had been admiring earlier. He then wrapped up both pieces of beef in greaseproof paper and stuffed both parcels into his screw's mac pockets. (Home Office, please note: give your screws bigger pockets in their macs, then they won't have to ruin nice bits of beef by cutting them in half.) "Hallo, Hymie," I said. He nearly died at the sound of my voice. "Oh ... oh ... I thought you'd gone," he managed to stutter. "I forgot something," I said. "Nice piece of beef that, isn't it?" "What beef?" he asked. "Those two lumps of diabetics' beef you've got in your pockets," I answered. "You're a nice cunt; you'd even nick sick men's grub." Sheepishly he took the two parcels from his pockets and unwrapped them and put them back in the fridge. If ever a man was gutted, he was. I picked up my snout tin and left.

However, I had underestimated Hymie's cunning and bravery. When I returned to the kitchen an hour or so later I looked in the fridge and the beef had gone. I looked over to where Hymie was sitting with a big smirk on his face as though to say, I fucked you anyway. I was a bit vexed with him getting away with the beef after I had captured him, but not only had he got away with the beef - he'd fixed me up as well. A screw came into the kitchen and said the Governor wanted to see me. Off we went to the Governor, who informed me he was taking me out of the kitchen and the reason was that I had been stealing rations. "A piece of beef is missing from the kitchen. Mr Hymie knows you are responsible for its being missing but he can't prove it, so I must take you out

of there. I can't have this sort of thing going on." I was sick; not only had the slippery bastard nicked the meat after all, but he had told the Governor that I had nicked it and got me slung out of the kitchen. Two birds with one stone, so to speak.

"Where do you want to go, Stratton?" asked the Governor. "Nowhere," I replied, "Fuck to work, I'm retiring." "Please yourself, Stratton," he replied, and I left his office absolutely raging mad with Hymie and stormed up to the kitchen where Hymie was, with his group of grovellers all around him. The grovellers took one look at my face and scattered, leaving Hymie alone. "You rat bastard," I snarled at him, "you're not a man, you're a fucking rat." "I am a man," he squeaked. "No, you are not, you're a rat. You won't even look at me, you cunt." Mad as I was I still wanted him to sling a punch at me first so I could steam into him, but he wasn't having any. I stood and called him every name I could think of. "Go on, you cunt, hit me," I begged him. But he wasn't having any. He just stood there. I went back to the dormitory and wrote a letter to the Assistant Chief Constable of Suffolk asking him if he could send someone to investigate the wholesale thieving of our grub. I posted this letter. The next day the Assistant Governor sent for me and we had a meeting in a room on our own. "Now, Stratton, this letter you've written to the police." "Oh, that letter, what about it?" I asked. "You don't have to go to these lengths. We can do without the police and handle this matter ourselves. You just tell me which prisoners in the kitchen are stealing the food." "I never mentioned prisoners. You show me where in the letter I have said that cons are nicking the food." He looked at me with an expression of horror. "You are not insinuating that my officers are stealing,

are you?" "No, I'm not insinuating, I'm telling you. It's just one screw." The A.G.'s face and attitude changed immediately. "Well, if you wish to make allegations against a member of the staff, you must make them in writing to me," he said. "Oh no, I'm entitled to see the law at any time I like," I replied. "I want the law to investigate it, otherwise you lot will cover it up and nick me for making false allegations. Just post my letter to the Assistant Chief Constable." "I'll have to send it to the Home Office first," he said. "All right," I agreed, "but I want to see the law as soon as possible."

A couple of days later I was lying on my bed reading a paper. I heard a bit of a commotion downstairs and went down to see what was going on. Lying on the floor of the washroom was a particularly horrible sex con by the name of Vallis who was doing fourteen years for raping an eight year old blind girl. Looking carefully at Mr Vallis I decided he was not asleep but indeed unconscious. I suspected foul play had occurred. What made me suspicious was the hole in the top of Vallis' head, plus the fact that the washroom was splattered with blood all over the walls and floor. Whoever had obliged Mr Vallis must have supported a football team that wore red and green colours for they had also emptied a tin of green paint all over him. It was quite a colourful effect - the blood running out of his head and mingling with the green paint making a nice shade of mauve. I should have been a forensic expert because my thoughts were "Ah, ah, this is a water paint, otherwise it wouldn't have mixed with the blood." Having satisfied myself that Mr Vallis had been well and truly obliged in the fashion prescribed for child rapists, I went back upstairs and carried on reading the newspaper which, by pure chance, carried an article

about a new kind of treatment for sex offenders. I knew that Blundeston was progressive, but I was a bit surprised that the new treatment had arrived so quickly for Mr Vallis to get it before lunch.

Come the evening of the day of Mr Vallis' new treatment, I was flopped out on my bed watching a scintillating Anglia television programme when, lo and behold, our dormitory was invaded by seven screws and a P.O. There were eight cons in my dormitory, but as soon as those pushy faces arrived I knew it was me they were seeking. The P.O., who by virtue of the white shirt he wore was in charge, asked me if he could have a word with me outside. It struck me as a bit peculiar that he should bring seven screws with him if he just wanted to chat to me, but friendly type that I am and always too pleased to co-operate with prison warders, I accepted his kind invitation (I didn't fancy eight to one odds if I declined). As soon as we got down to the chokey block - yes, even progressive Blundeston has a chokey block - they locked me up in a cell. A right liberty this was. So I rang the bell and a bloodshot eye appeared at the spy hole and a cultured warder-like voice enquired as to what was my pleasure? - i.e. what the fucking hell do you want?

"Why the fuck am I down here?" I demanded. "The Governor will be down to see you in a minute," replied the cultured warder-like voice and the bloodshot eye disappeared from my spy hole. Around fifteen minutes later the door was opened and I was told the Governor wanted to see me. I was taken to a room and there sat the Deputy Governor accompanied by the Chief and five screws. "Sit down, Stratton," said the Deputy Governor, pointing to an empty chair. After

satisfying myself there were no electric cables attached to the chair, I sat down.

"I've ordered you to be placed on Rule 43," said the Dep. "Why?" I asked. "Because a prisoner was savagely attacked in D wing this morning and you did it," he replied. "You're joking; I never touched him." "We had three witnesses who saw you attack this man. There could well be a murder charge. The man is still unconscious and on the critical list." This is fucking lovely, I thought. Some sex case gets done, and who gets the blame? me. The Dep went on "I know that since you arrived at this prison you have carried on a campaign of terror against a certain type of prisoner. For instance, last week you set a man alight in the dining room." "This would have been brilliant," I answered. "The dining room full of grasses and I'm supposed to set someone alight. You'll have to do better than this." "I'll tell you what I'll do," said the Dep. "If you plead guilty to setting the man alight we will deal with you in here and forget the incident today." I started laughing at this. The Dep thought he was a real shrewd nut, getting me to plead guilty to the less serious of the two offences; maybe he really thought he was doing me a favour in this.

I have always been averse to pleading guilty to things I have not done. Come to that, even the things I have done I never plead guilty to on principle.

I declined the Deputy Governor's kind offer and the Dep got a bit upset over me not taking advantage of the said kind offer. "We have three statements by people who saw you do it," he screamed. "Also the victim himself has identified you as his assailant." "I thought you said he was still unconscious?"

If so, how the hell could he have said it was me?" I asked. Somewhat deflated by his slip of the tongue, the Dep tried another tack. "Look, Stratton, just between the two of us" (no mention of all the screws also in the room with us) "I don't blame you for disliking sex cases. I don't like them either, but you have gone too far this time. The man can easily die of his injuries." "Good, he is no loss to anyone," I replied. "You will get ten years for this unless you do a deal with me," he wheedled. "I'll get fuck all for this. I never touched the cunt. If I had, he would be dead. People like him aren't worth getting nicked over, and as for me doing a deal with you, go and fuck yourself," I said.

"Take him out," said the Dep to the screws. "The police will be here to see you in the morning," he said to me. "Well, you just make sure there is a solicitor here, else I don't see the law. Also, I want my M.P. informed about this." I was then taken back to my cell in the chokey block.

I flopped out on the boards which are supposed to be a bed and reviewed the situation, which I didn't like very much. If they got a couple of screws to say they saw me in the vicinity when Mr Vallis got his treatment then this wasn't good enough for me to go to trial. But if they produced some cons to say they saw me do Vallis I was in trouble and, believe me, there are plenty of parole-seeking cunts in there who would make a statement putting someone in it if they thought they would get parole. The Dep had been bluffing, but I knew how easy it would be for them to fit me up for doing Vallis. Oh well, I'll see what the morning brings, I thought. And went to sleep on my Slumberland hardboard bed.

Next morning the Governor came to see me and

went into the same pathetic spiel: "Plead guilty and be dealt with by the V.C. for setting light to the bloke in the dining room and we'll forget Mr Vallis." From this, I deduced that Mr Vallis had not yet passed on. "Sorry, Governor, but I don't know what you are on about," I said. "If you can't see sense, Stratton, I have no alternative but to bring the police in," he said. "They will see you later on this morning," he continued. "Oh, will they? Not unless I have a solicitor here they won't." The door was slammed and I was left alone with my thoughts. All of a sudden it hit me what they were up to. Like any government department they'll whitewash anything in regard to one of their employees. I had Hymie by the balls. Before I ran into him, a parcel containing snout, money, drugs etc. addressed to Hymie had been mistakenly delivered to his next-door neighbour, another screw. The screw's wife, being curious about the London postmark on the parcel, had opened it, seen the contents, and taken it straight to the Governor. Hymie had had to do a lot of explaining as to why this parcel of goodies had been sent to him, but he wriggled out of it by saying someone had sent it to him in order to frame him. This excuse was accepted by the Governor, but, in fact, if someone had tried to frame him in this way, once the parcel had been posted the first thing they would have done would have been to inform Old Bill that such a parcel had been sent to a screw and the law would make doubly sure the parcel was delivered to the correct address. So it was no frame-up, but a joey that Hymie was to have taken into the nick for someone. Having got out of this dodgy situation, a few months later I come along and discover Hymie is nicking our grub, amongst other things. My letter to the Assistant Chief Constable is written and once

more Hymie is in the shit. Mr Vallis gets his and right away Stratton is blamed for doing Mr Vallis. No-one is going to take much notice of my allegations against Hymie if I'm on an attempted murder charge. I was up shit creek now. Just how right I was was borne out later in the day. The Assistant Governor came to see me alone. Right away he said "Stratton, you are in serious trouble if this case goes outside. You can get another ten years. Now I still have that letter that you wrote to the police about food being stolen. Do you still insist this letter is posted?" I asked "What happens to me if I say: forget the letter?" "If you forget the letter you will be transferred back to Parkhurst tomorrow and you will hear nothing more about Mr Vallis or anyone else." Now a martyr I am not. Getting bird is easily achieved without getting more because someone has obliged a sex case. I had no option but to agree to the A.G.'s offer. I couldn't risk getting another sentence just to get Hymie done. There was no value in it for me, so I said "O.K." and the A.G. departed. The next day back to Parkhurst I went, a somewhat wiser man. Once again THEY had fucked me and saved one of their own, but, vindictive bastard that I am, I have not forgotten Hymie and he may have noticed by now.

PARKHURST AGAIN

Arriving back at my beloved Parkhurst, I thought what the hell, I've only got a year to do, so why worry? The screws at Parkhurst on my return thought I had been out and got nicked again and was back doing another sentence. Literally having orgasms in their trousers they were when they saw me. "How long have you got this time, Stratton?" they asked, hoping I was going to say something nice like a fifteen-year stretch. Their bitter and twisted faces collapsed when I said it was still the same sentence. I've just come back to finish it here because I like all you screws so much.

Absolutely gutted they were to hear I wasn't doing a fresh lot. They really love it when they read (those who can) in the papers that someone who has gone out of Parkhurst has got nicked again. Maybe this makes the screws think their jobs are secure for a bit longer, or perhaps their limited mentality refuses to allow them to see that they are failing in their job if someone goes out and gets nicked again straight away.

The situation at Parkhurst had not improved any during my absence. A screw named Harry

Jackson had been nicked for offences under the Official Secrets Act and trafficking in snout. A number of cons had reluctantly given evidence against him. I say reluctantly because if you go to court and give evidence against a screw you are in trouble. However, the law had assured these cons that whatever the result of the case against Jackson, the cons would have nothing to fear in regard to reprisals from Jackson's warder pals. I personally wouldn't have taken any notice of these assurances from the law because the screws are the law in the nick.

Jackson was acquitted and there was some mystery surrounding his acquittal. The wife of a prisoner who had been at Parkhurst contacted the police and said she had some documents from her husband's prison record that she had obtained for a price from Harry Jackson. For some unknown reason the police did not produce this additional information during the case. Now I honestly do not know whether Jackson was at it or not, but I do know if I'd been in the dock every scrap of evidence they could have laid their hands on would have been used against me.

After his acquittal Jackson returned to duty at Parkhurst. This in itself was diabolical. If the man was innocent as he had been judged he must have been extremely bitter towards those cons who had given evidence against him and here he was back in the nick in a position of immense power over them. Normally in a case like this, if the screw is acquitted he is always transferred immediately to another nick so as to avoid any animosity, which is reasonable. Jackson, however, was back in Parkhurst before he was eventually transferred three months later to Oxford prison.

Some of the blokes who had given evidence

against him were pals of mine and they all said they were awaiting the consequences of having given evidence against a screw. The first one to get it was Jackie Marsh. Jack loved football and was a qualified football referee. Because of this he often refereed the football games in the nick. He refereed a game one particular Saturday afternoon in the compound. After the match he returned to his cell to find four screws waiting for him. The screws informed Bold Jack it was a special search. Jack shrugged his shoulders. It was nothing new to get a spin like this. Jack is also a keen artist so consequently he had tins of paint in his cell. The screws searched his cell thoroughly and found nothing. One of the screws took one of Jack's tins of paint saying "I'll just check that you are supposed to have this particular tin of paint, otherwise you are O.K." and the screws left. The event occurred at 4 p.m. on Saturday afternoon. At 9.45 a.m. the next morning the same group of screws visited Jack's cell again. The one who had taken the tin of paint on the previous afternoon was still carrying the tin. Jack asked them what they wanted. "We just wanted to show you this, Marsh," they said. The one holding the tin of paint took off the lid and said "Well, well." And then "What have we here?" Inside the tin was a roll of betting slips and a drawing of a master key. "Now you fuck off," said Jack. "You planted that stuff in there. It wasn't there when you searched me yesterday. You cunts had the tin all night." "Ah," said the screw, "but I only thought to look inside the tin this morning, didn't I?" You're fitting me up because I gave evidence against Jackson, aren't you?" "Are we?" said the screw. "Just pack your gear, you're going down the chokey." And down the chokey Jack went.

Jack had never made a book at Parkhurst at

any time. I was a bookie there and so were a number of other people, but a roll of betting slips planted in your cell says you are a bookmaker too. The roll of betting slips, plus the pattern of the key, meant that Jack was in plenty of trouble. He went in front of the V.C. and the screws said they had searched and found the articles on the Saturday afternoon. Marsh was well known to be the prison bookmaker, their evidence continued, and he had been watched taking bets on the previous afternoon in the compound. He was also known to be an expert locksmith and was, no doubt, going to use the key pattern to make a key so there could be a mass escape. Jack pointed out to the V.C. that the tin had not had the things in it when it was taken from his cell and he insisted the screws had planted the stuff in the tin and had come back with it in the morning. He also pointed out he had been refereeing the football match in the afternoon for the whole ninety minutes he had been in the compound so he couldn't have possibly been able to take any bets. And he asked the V.C. to verify the fact that he had been refereeing the match. Not much to ask in the circumstances, but they refused to do this and awarded Jack six months' loss of remission, fifteen days bread and water and fifty-six days days solitary confinement. None too pleased at being fitted up like this, Jack petitioned the Home Secretary about what had taken place and offered to take the truth drug or lie detector to prove his innocence. The Home Secretary declined Jack's offer. Jack then wrote and asked his sister to get in touch with her local M.P., Dingle Foot, Q.C. Miller stopped the letter and all the subsequent letters Jack tried to send to his family and to Dingle Foot telling them what had been done to him. Coming out from his fifty-six days solitary Jack was a very bitter man. He swore that if and when they tried to fit him up next,

he would seriously hurt one of the screws. Then they would have something to nick him for.

Other men who had given evidence against Jackson also started to get reprisals. Davy Walford's sister arrived there to visit him one Saturday. She had only travelled a mere 200 miles to see her brother. On previous occasions when she had visited him she always brought her miniature poodle with her. This time, her first visit since Davy gave evidence against Jackson, his sister was told "You cannot see your brother because you are not allowed to bring dogs in here." If screws are allowed into Parkhurst, a four-legged dog should have no trouble. I mean to say, dogs are licensed. Anyhow, Miss Walford was turned away, so all she got for her 400 mile round trip was a parting remark from a screw: "Your brother should have remembered what could be done to him before he gave evidence against Harry Jackson."

The next part of the let's-pick-on Walford plan was that Dave got nicked for losing his dinner knife. Going in front of Miller, Dave said "Yes, I did lose my knife, but it was returned to me again." "Fair enough," said Miller, "where is it then?" "It is in my cell," said Dave. Miller despatched two of the Filthy Five to Dave's cell to see if the knife was there. Filthy One and Two returned and said, "We have searched Walford's cell, sir, and he has no dinner knife." Dave was fined a week's wages for the loss of the knife. Going back to his cell afterwards, what did he find lying on his table? His dinner knife. Perhaps the two members of the Filthy Five had neglected to look on his table when they searched his cell for the knife.

Another who gave evidence against Jackson was Roy Fontaine, formerly Charles Clore's butler,

who was serving a sentence of fifteen years. Fontaine, after the Jackson case, completely disappeared. Everyone else concerned went back to Parkhurst but not Roy. Rumour had it that he had been sent to the Special Security Wing at Durham. If this is the case it is quite clear that Fontaine is being victimised, because at Durham he would get none of the usual privileges to which he was entitled by virtue of the time he had served. Durham has a reputation nearly as bad as Parkhurst for brutality and sadism. Men in the Security Wing there have suffered heavily. To name a couple, Colin Baldwin had all the fingers on both hands smashed by screws with riot sticks. Micky Keogh used to lie in bed every night and have to listen to a screw standing outside his window making choice remarks like "How many spades will be fucking your wife tonight, Keogh?" Eventually Mick managed to see the face of this wit-ridden cunt and next day he smuggled a parcel into the workshop. None of the other cons knew what was in the parcel. Mick hid it away for a few days until one day into the workshop came the screw who had made the remarks outside his window every night. Mick walked over to where he had hidden his little parcel. He carefully opened it, walked up to the screw and calmly rammed a parcel of shit into the screw's mouth. The screw stood there paralysed with the shit protruding from his mouth. "Perhaps you will stop talking about my wife now," said Mick, as he was smashed to the ground by shit-faced pals who drew their sticks to protect themselves.

So then, if Roy Fontaine is there, why is he there? He was in no escape attempt or any kind of trouble at Parkhurst. Others including Johnny Gordon, Kenny Rook and Ronnie Piper were all victimised unmercifully for giving evidence against Jackson. All this victimisation, of course, was intended to

serve as a warning, so that no matter what the transgressions of the screws, the cons would be under no illusion as to what could and would happen to them once the case was over. Police assurances to witnesses that there would be no recriminations were utterly meaningless. Maybe the Isle of Wight Old Bill meant well, but they know little of Parkhurst, its screws, or their methods of victimising poor defenceless souls like myself.

The next incident to occur at this serene establishment was in the Maximum Security Block, which holds a dozen or so men, i.e. train robbers, members of the Richardson gang, and others serving extremely long sentences. Some of my pals have been in this Security Block. The conditions in all of them are diabolical. These Security Wings, according to Lord Mountbatten's report, were only a stop-gap until the new Security Wing at Albany Prison was completed. Albany Prison has been open for three years but the Security Wing is still not ready, so around fifty-odd men at Leicester, Durham, Chelmsford, and Parkhurst are still existing in medieval conditions, far worse off than the ordinary cons are.

One of the cons in the Security Block had a frying pan so he could cook the eggs he brought from the canteen. Miller was on one of his numerous golfing holidays but he had made a standing order that anyone who wanted could have a frying pan and saucepans sent in to them. The Deputy Governor, who was in charge during Miller's absence, refused to let the bloke have his frying pan and said, "You will get fuck all while I am in charge." This led to a demonstration that evening in the Security Block.

Yet again, the heroic Parkhurst warders

displayed their prowess. Eighty of them charged into the Security Wing with their riot sticks. You should bear in mind that all twelve prisoners in the Security Wing were locked in their cells at this time and could do no harm to anyone. The cells were opened one at a time by the screws. They went in and battered each con to the floor, wrecking the cells, smashing radios and all other personal possessions that the cons had. Billy Gentry, for one, had to have twenty stitches put into his head which had been well split open by a riot stick. It seems the screws had foiled a mass escape from the Parkhurst Security Wing, during which said escape screws were in great danger from prisoners who were securely locked in their cells anyway. One screw even managed to get his little finger broken in this ferocious battle of good against evil. Suffice to say, the finger was broken by another screw in his excitement when battering some unfortunate prisoner's head.

Even I will admit that if Miller had been there, this incident would never have happened. The con would have been given his frying pan and there would have been no trouble. Of course, it would have meant the screws would have spent a boring evening in their kennels instead of getting in even more overtime, foiling an escape that never was. The public expense of this venture wasn't fully realised until a couple of weeks later when there was yet another electrical fault in the laundry one evening. Needless to say, the screw on fire patrol was otherwise engaged and the laundry got well ablaze. The crackling of the flames woke up the cons who made such a row that they woke up all the screws on night duty, and the fire brigade was called thirty minutes after the fire was first spotted by the cons in B wing, which lies

adjacent to the laundry. In between B wing and the laundry was the fuel tank for the nick boiler house which holds 50,000 gallons of fuel oil. The tank, unlike any tank outside prisons, is not below ground according to fire regulations. This tank is just dumped on the exercise yard. It was a beautiful situation, quite explosive in normal Parkhurst tradition, the laundry blazing merrily just twenty feet away from 50,000 gallons of fuel and twenty yards away in B wing there were 180 cons locked in their cells.

You may have thought that the bleeding cons should have been taken somewhere a little safer. For instance, when an electrical fault caused a fire at Lewes prison the cons were moved to Wandsworth prison immediately. If the fuel tank had gone up then B wing would have been obliterated. The screws all remained at a safe distance while the local fire brigade played hoses on to the fuel tank to keep it cool. The laundry they could do nothing about except wait for it to burn itself out and pray that the tank didn't go up taking one and all with it. Eventually the fire died down and went out. The heroic Parkhurst warders appeared once more upon the scene from the holes they had been cowering in and once again they were in firm control of the situation. There it was - from the frying pan into the fire in two short weeks. Not to worry, though, taxpayers: there was only £25,000 worth of machinery in the laundry that you had paid for. At least Parkhurst got a new laundry out of it, and don't forget, of course, the screws got another nice lot of overtime as well. On reflection, perhaps these screws aren't so thick as I thought, because if the screw on fire patrol had done his job the fire would never have caught hold and all the screws would not have been on overtime again. So maybe he did know what he was doing by not

seeing the fire at first. I do not propose to dwell on Security Wings. That is another story. But an incident that occurred at Parkhurst Security Wing recently needs to be told inasmuch as it shows Parkhurst screws are still on top form in the provocation game.

The Kray twins, Ronald and Reginald, were sent to separate Security Wings. Reggie went to Parkhurst and Ronnie to Durham. The two men are identical twins and according to people I have spoken to, identical twins are very much attached to one another. Since they were jailed the twins had repeatedly asked to see each other, not an unreasonable request, for if the Krugers were allowed to meet, why not the Krays? In spite of pleas from their mother, Mrs Violet Kray, to allow them to see each other for a short while, this was refused. Last April, Ronnie was suddenly told he was going to Parkhurst to see his brother. He duly arrived at Parkhurst and was taken straight to the Security Wing. Looking around, he asked "Where is my brother?" The answer he got (and I quote) was "Your brother's gone ten minutes ago, you cunt," and "you are never going to see him again. You are at Parkhurst now and here you will stay until you die," the screw said.

It is not unreasonable that Ronnie Kray was annoyed over this. All the way down from Durham he had been elated over the fact that he was going to see Reggie, only to be greeted by the above remark. Ronnie had long been on tranquillisers and all the time he had been at Durham he had been getting the drugs from the prison doctor. It is a standard procedure when a man is transferred to another nick that the doctors there are informed before the man's arrival so that his drugs are available on arrival. Ronnie asked for his drugs, only to be told by a screw "Drugs,

you'll get fuck all here except aggravation. We don't care who you are."

It is a standard prison rule that a con can ask to see the doctor at any time. Ronnie asked to see one. Now this is conjecture on my part. I think the screws in the Security Block did not inform the hospital that Ronnie Kray wanted his drugs and had they done so the doctor would have seen to it that he got them. Ronnie grew more and more depressed. Even at Durham he hadn't received this kind of treatment. He minded his own business and kept out of trouble. Now, as soon as he arrived at Parkhurst, the cunts were winding him up again. Yet again he asked the screws for his drugs, to be told "Big Shot, I'll give you a tranquilliser with this" and the screw patted his truncheon. So Ronnie gave him a backhander. It says much for Ronnie Kray's self-control that he only slapped the screw. He could quite easily break a man's jaw with one punch but he just slapped him and made his point. They took him down to the chokey block and ten minutes later a hospital screw arrived with his tranquilliser.

The screws had deliberately provoked him from the minute he arrived. Not one screw in the prison had ever met him before so they had no known reason to have a go at him. Yet they did so purely to try to prove to themselves that they were now more powerful than Ronnie Kray, which is diabolical. The man has a life sentence with a minimum of thirty years before the Home Secretary can even consider releasing him. He had been in no trouble before arriving at Parkhurst, so how come as soon as he arrives there he is in trouble?

I have been accused by one publisher of being too bloody-minded in the way that I have

written most of this book. I won't dispute that it is very one-sided; it could be nothing else under the circumstances. I'm not going to give credit to the prison system when none is due, and if it means this book never gets published, my hard luck. I am not going to invent good things to say about screws just to give this book a more balanced outlook.

There are isolated instances where a screw has shown initiative, but this is frowned on by the prison service. Men capable of using their initiative could and would have averted the Parkhurst Riot. A friend of mine who works for the Sunday Times on the Insight Team spent a week at the Prison Officers' Training School at Wakefield in Yorkshire. At Wakefield, after a few weeks' training, would-be prison officers are sent to various prisons, and (to quote the Principal of the Training School) "kicked off the deep end." My friend asked "What happens to them then?" The Principal replied "Obviously they sink or swim."

To get into the prison service one has to pass a written Civil Service exam, and again I quote the Sunday Times man: "An eleven year old could pass this examination with little trouble." The total number of marks that can be obtained in this exam is 140; the average marks obtained are 60; anyone getting below the 60 mark should automatically fail. But this is not the case, unfortunately, because nearly every man who has failed the exam is still taken on as a warder. Again I quote the Principal: "Even though they have failed the test we still take them on - we need every man we can get." So the exam is ludicrous to say the least. This is not the would-be warder's fault, he is only after a job, so the fault obviously lies with the people responsible for recruiting for the

prison service. If they are accepting men who cannot pass a written exam that a normal eleven year old could sail through, then the wrong type of man is getting into the prison service, and it is extremely doubtful, if an awkward situation did arise, whether some of them would prove capable of handling it. Again, this is not the warder's fault - the fault lies with the persons who gave them the job knowing full well they would be incapable of meeting some situations and dealing successfully with them. A classic from Wakefield which fully illustrates just how ridiculous the training system is: a man who held various degrees in sociology, university educated, decided he wanted to become a prison warder as he felt it was a worthwhile job where he could help people. This man arrived at Wakefield with the rest of the candidates. They all took the exam and none of the others scored above 60. Befitting a person of good education, our friend got the maximum of 140 in the exam and this caused consternation as no-one had ever achieved this before. The outcome is hard to believe, but nevertheless it is true. The man was called to the Principal's office and told, sorry, we don't want you. Puzzled, the man asked why? As far as he was aware he had come through the test with flying colours. It's simple, explained the Principal. You're too good for this job and we cannot, therefore, take you on. So there you have it. In spite of all the vast sums which are spent on advertising and recruiting, as soon as someone with brains and education applies for the job he is turned down. I imagine there must be some kind of standing order from the Home Office Prison Department to the Principals of prison warders' training schools to the effect that "if they are brainless but can take orders we want them. Any applicants with brains we don't need." Now and then

the system gets beaten. One such man who for my money beat the moron selection committee is prison officer Bill Trigg. Note please that I refer to Bill as prison officer. At the moment this bloke is the only one I shall refer to as such. I shall till the day I die be wondering how Bill Trigg got into the prison service. He has initiative and knows how to handle and talk to men, and up to the time Bill left Parkhurst to go to Ashford Remand Home as a cook he had only nicked two men in his capacity as a warder. Just a couple of days ago I was having a drink with a bloke I'd never met before and it turned out that this bloke had been in Ashford on remand. I never got the chance to ask him if he had known Bill there. He asked me whether I had known a screw called Bill Trigg who used to be at the Island. "Yes, I know him," I answered. "What do you think of him?" he asked me. Without hesitating, I replied "He's a gentleman. You're right. Everyone at Ashford likes him," said this man.

One leading publisher has described me as having a psychopathic hatred of screws. In his letter to my agent this publisher also hints that I'm not safe to walk the streets. I think this geezer must fancy himself as an amateur psychiatrist; if so, it's a pity he didn't join the prison service. Anyone who can give a diagnosis without seeing the patient can always find a niche at the warders' training school. In a subsequent telephone call to my agent this publisher expressed an interest in my book. Could it be, I wonder, that in spite of the fact that he considers me a lunatic, like many others he sensed that this book would sell very well. Most publishers I have spoken to at this stage feel the book is not balanced. I am too biased. Well, I never set out to write a well balanced book on this particular subject. It would be

impossible for me to do so. Unfortunately, for every Bill Trigg there are ten Frank Hursts.

February 1969: Timmy Noonan was down the chokey again. I was out on the exercise yard one afternoon when the Roman Catholic priest came up to me. Now I have no time for religion in any form; let those that believe in it get on with it, as long as they don't try to foist it on me. The Roman Catholic priest at Parkhurst was known to one and all as the ton-up kid, because he always had a crash helmet on. Some said he wore the crash helmet because he rode a motorbike to and from the prison, but my personal theory is the good father felt he had less chance of getting his head split open from a riot stick by some out-of-control warder who wanted to find out just how much resistance a Roman Catholic head might offer. On reflection the good father was shrewder than I gave him credit for. Anyhow he asked me if I was Brian Stratton and I said I was. The conversation with the man of God went thus:-

GOOD FATHER: I've just been down to the chokey block and I saw Timothy Noonan.

ME: How is he?

GOOD FATHER: Not too good, I'm afraid.

ME: Why not?

GOOD FATHER: He has been beaten up.

ME: Badly?

GOOD FATHER: Yes, he was stark naked, lying on the floor in a pool of blood, unable to move. But he asked me to tell you what was being

done to him. He is being beaten every couple of hours, usually by Smith, Hudson, Arnell, Watson and Fowler, and sometimes Hurst and Franklyn are there as well.

ME: Well, now you've seen it, you go out of the gate and get on to the papers and television people. They'll take notice of you. Tell them what you've seen. Also, get on to my M.P. Tell him I told you to get in touch with him and he'll get on to the Home Office.

GOOD FATHER: I'm sorry, Mr Stratton, I can't do it.

ME: Why not?

GOOD FATHER: It's more than my job is worth. They would throw me out if I told what I saw in here.

ME: You're supposed to be a man of God. You get up every Sunday and preach about man's inhumanity to man and all that shit. Now you've got a chance to really do some good, and you won't do it because it may affect your livelihood.

GOOD FATHER: (his head lowered) I'm sorry, Mr Stratton, I can't get involved. I'd be in trouble if they knew I'd told you this much.

And he walked away, leaving me feeling glad that I'm an atheist.

Thinking now about the conversation, I feel

rather sorry for the good father. It must be terrible to be in such a position as he found himself. I don't doubt he believed in his Church and his God to a certain extent, but when placed in a situation where it meant HE had to make a decision instead of THEY, he couldn't do it, even though he would have been doing the right thing if he had gone to the Press about Timmy Noonan.

I discussed the matter with certain other prisoners. It was suggested that we give the Filthy Five a taste of their own medicine. This idea was discarded, as in the long run we would be the ultimate losers. We then decided to draw up a round robin, get it signed by as many men as possible and smuggle it out to a newspaper.

For those of you who are unaware of what a round robin is, I shall explain. It is a document, usually a form of complaint, rarely used in England. The signatures are in a circle so that no-one can look at it and say "Well, obviously as the first signature was Stratton's then he must be the ringleader. We shall nick him." As it is impossible to decide whose is the first signature then no ringleader can be singled out. We obtained 120 signatures to this document which was far more than we had hoped for. We had to be extremely careful who we approached and asked to sign. No-one was threatened or pressurised into signing, as was later suggested by the screws. Everyone who signed the document read it first so that they knew exactly what they were doing. We had to be extremely careful that not one word of what we were up to filtered back to the screws or it would have been over before it started. The document read:-

"we, the undersigned, all prisoners at

Parkhurst Prison, wish to bring to the public's notice the brutality that is occurring at this prison, and to protest about the inhuman treatment and beatings-up that Timothy Noonan is suffering."

The document went on to name the screws responsible: Arnell, Hudson, Watson, Smith, Hurst, Franklyn and Fowler, and we warned that if nothing was done to curb these screws there would be serious trouble which could result in a screw or screws getting killed.

The document was smuggled out and taken by a person sympathetic to our cause to every newspaper in Fleet Street, home of the British Press, guardians of justice, and all that shit. Not one of the papers would touch it. They all said it was too hot to handle until finally The People decided to print it, but only if our man agreed to sign a document that would absolve the "frank and fearless" People from any Government repercussions if there was no truth in our complaint. In effect this meant that if there were any comebacks from the powers that be, i.e. criminal libel action, the "frank and fearless" People would be in the clear and our man in Fleet Street would have to take the can back. That's what I like about The People - with all the money they've got to enable them to hire the best legal minds in the country they wouldn't print our round robin until they were absolutely certain they were in the clear. Still, at least they had a bit more guts than the rest of Fleet Street.

One Sunday in February 1969, I was lying on my bed having just devoured my inch square piece of bacon that constitutes Parkhurst's Sunday breakfast, listening to my radio at 8.45 a.m. The programme was radio 4 - "What the papers say." One of the first

items to be announced on the programme was on the front page of The People; the leader stating that a round robin signed by 120 Parkhurst prisoners and complaining of brutality at the prison had been received by The People. The People considered it a matter of public interest to publish the document. They had also sent a photostat copy of the round robin to the Home Office. It hit Parkhurst like a bombshell. They couldn't believe that we had achieved getting this document out to a newspaper without one of the multitude of prison informers grassing on us. But we had.

The Home Secretary, James Callaghan, immediately ordered an enquiry into our allegations and appointed an Assistant Prison Director to head the enquiry. This man was Michael Gale, a former governor of Wandsworth prison, and of Camphill prison, Isle of Wight. I had run up against Mr Gale on previous sentences in 1962 when he was governor of Wandsworth. At that time a man was kicked to death in the strong box there. Brutality had been rampant at Camphill as well under his governorship. I know - I suffered some of it. I was absolutely gutted over his appointment. We all knew it would be a whitewash job. One reasonable thing was that the Filthy Five, plus Hurst, Franklyn, Carrot and a few others immediately discarded their "bovver boots" and came on duty wearing shoes, so we knew that kickings had been suspended for a while anyway.

The first move from the Home Office was to place all those whose signatures could be recognised into solitary confinement. Needless to say, mine was one of the first signatures to be recognised. So it started. First off, we got our food an hour after everyone else. The food is never very hot

at any time, but by the time we got ours it was stone cold. All right of course for people fancying cold cockroach soup and such like. Our incoming mail wasn't given to us until two or three days after it had arrived. Every time the screws opened the door it was "you won't be going out shortly, Stratton, if you sign a complaint about brutality to the Board." I knew what the screws meant. They'd plant something like a home-made key in my cell and I'd lose six months remission over it. Every time I left the cell I went over it with a fine-tooth comb on my return, but all the pathetic bastards did was to break the battery leads on my wireless and tear up my photographs. Other cons came back from exercise to find some nice person had tipped Harpic into the tank containing their tropical fish. Apparently the fish didn't appreciate this addition to their normal diet by the nice warders because they all floated upside down looking a whiter shade of pale. Other cons were offered transfers to better nicks or promised parole if they'd withdraw their allegations. A lot of them complied and got their transfers immediately.

Then a report appeared in the Daily Express (the Daily Express hates cons, but more about that later) stating that most of those who had signed the round robin had signed because they thought it was a plea from the good prisoners of Parkhurst to restore capital punishment for the murder of policemen or PRISON WARDERS - which isn't even funny. Also leaked by the screws was another story in the Daily Express that other prisoners had signed the round robin believing it to be a petition in regard to the "Save the Argylls" campaign. If there was a con in Parkhurst who was worried about the Argylls being disbanded he certainly kept it to himself. As I've already stated, each man who signed

the round robin was told to read it first so they knew what they were getting into. Personally, I don't blame those who backed out when the crunch came. When screws really start to put the pressure on, you're not in much of a position to resist. However, 100 cons stood fast and 100 men do not lie. You could get maybe ten or a dozen who hate the screws so much (and I would include myself in this number) they'd go to almost any lengths to cause the screws aggravation, but there again, I doubt there'd ever be a dozen who would be willing to make a perjured written complaint against the prison authorities.

The screws were far from happy at the number of cons they couldn't frighten or bribe. As I was being taken over to see the Inquiry Board a screw said to me "I'm surprised you're involved in this, Stratton, you're nearly out. Why don't you use your nut and back out before it's too late?" I didn't answer him. The man who interviewed me was the governor of Albany prison, who was assisting Gale on the Inquiry. He showed me a photostat copy of the round robin, pointed out my signature on it, and asked me if I had signed it of my own free will. I replied that I had. He then asked me to sign a form on which it was stated that no threats or pressure had been put on me by other prisoners to get me to sign the round robin. I signed it. He then asked me why I'd been party to such a document. I said that it seemed the only way, short of outright violence, to bring to the public's notice the way we were being treated in Parkhurst. The way it was going, sooner or later there would be a riot, which would do no-one any good. He then remarked "Well, you're due out soon. Why should you worry what happens once you've gone?" I replied, "It's friends of mine who are going to be involved in the riot when

it comes and I don't want to see them get any more bird because of circumstances forced on them by some screws." "Do you really think there will be a riot here, Stratton?" "Without a doubt, unless this Inquiry results in the brutality being stopped," I replied. "Personally," I went on, "I don't think the Inquiry will do anything but whitewash the matter." "Why do you say that?" he asked. "With Gale in charge it can hardly be an impartial inquiry, can it?" I reasoned. "He's a former governor. It stands to reason he'll cover everything up. I'd do the same if I were in his shoes. You look after your own." "Stratton, the Secretary for State himself appointed Mr Gale to hold the Inquiry," he retorted. "Sheer coincidence, I suppose, that Gale was picked out of all the people available," I sneered. "I still say it will be a whitewash." He didn't answer me. "Are you prepared to make a written complaint about your treatment here?" he asked. "Yes, I am." He handed me the customary sheet of foolscap complaint paper. "One isn't enough for what I've got to say," I said. He handed me another sheet. "I'll send for you again tomorrow. That's all." I was taken back to my peter. I sat down and started to write out my statement. In it I named Hurst, Franklyn and the Filthy Five as the main ones concerned in the brutality. All in all, I filled up four pages, all of which was the truth. A screw named Hill came to my door and asked me if I'd finished my statement. I said I had. "Righto, Stratton, you can give it to me and I'll see the Board gets it." He must have thought I'd just got off a banana boat if he figured I'd let him take my statement away so that he and the other screws could read it and get an idea of just what was being said to the Inquiry Board about them. I declined his kind offer. Next day I was taken over to see the bloke

I'd seen before. I gave him my statement and said "What about this solitary confinement I'm on? According to reports in the papers, the Home Secretary said there would be no reprisals against prisoners concerned in the round robin, yet I've been in solitary a week now and I haven't even been charged with anything yet." "It was necessary to place you all on Rule 43 until we had seen you," he answered. "However, now you have made a statement you are back to normal routine again. That's all. You can go."

I went back to work in the shoe shop, which had been at a standstill since the round robin had been published owing to the fact that five out of the six who worked in there had signed the statement. The first thing I noticed in the shop was that we'd got a new discipline screw. A civilian, Harry Thomas, is actually in charge of the shop but there also has to be a discipline screw present. We'd never had any trouble from the screws in our shop. Being small and only employing half-a-dozen cons it was considered by the screws to be a cushy number. We were left alone to do our work and the screw sat on his seat and read a book or whatever else he might have that was readable. They didn't bother us and we didn't bother them. After years of peace and quiet in the shop, Dangerman was about to remedy that situation. His first target was me. I'd never spoken to him or even noticed him about the nick, but someone had marked his card about me and he did his utmost to prove he was in charge. Owing to a mishap, the prison laundry, which adjoined our workshop, got burnt to the ground. The radio loudspeakers in our shop had been piped through from a radio set in the laundry. Consequently, when the electrical fault occurred, burning down the laundry, we had no radio. I saw the Old Man and explained the

situation and asked him if I could take my personal radio into the workshop until such time as a new one was installed by the prison. The Old Man agreed to this on the understanding that I, and not the prison, paid for the batteries my radio used. Ever the philanthropist, I said I would agree to this. Dangerman did alternate shifts with us. His opposite number was as good as gold and quite pleased that we had a radio back in the shop. However, Dangerman, when he saw me carrying the radio, demanded "What have you brought that wireless in for? You know your radio is not allowed in the shop." I told him the Governor had given me permission to do so and Harry Thomas, the civilian in charge of the shop, confirmed this, telling Dangerman that the Chief Warder had phoned to say I could bring my radio into the shop. However, this wasn't good enough for Dangerman. He immediately rang up the Chief Warder and stated that HE didn't want me bringing my radio into the shop. The Chief Warder must have put him smoothly in his place for he just said "Yes, sir," and put the phone down. But Dangerman wasn't beaten yet. When the 2.30 news summary came on he leapt over to the radio and switched it off. I immediately switched it back on again and told him not to touch my radio, to which he replied "The Governor has said you can have your radio in here for the purpose of listening to music and for nothing else." I was getting rather pissed off with Dangerman. He couldn't wind me up in any other way. Now he was reduced to trivialities like misinterpreting the Old Man's instructions, i.e. "music only" meant you couldn't listen to a sixty-second news broadcast. It was pathetic. However, I couldn't argue with HIM so I turned the radio off for another thirty seconds. This performance was carried out again at 3.30 and 4.30. The next morning I went to see

the Governor. I shuffled into his office in my normal shuffling way. There he sat at the far end of his twenty foot long table surrounded by his bodyguard. "Good morning, Stratton," he beamed. "What is it today?" Right deadpan, I said "I would like your permission to be able to listen to the news on MY radio, for which I bought the batteries and for which I buy a radio licence every year." "What on earth are you talking about now?" he exclaimed. "Simply this," I replied, "you said I could take my radio into the shop because the previous one we had was lost when the electrical fault occurred. Yesterday afternoon Mr Dangerman told me that your instructions were that the radio was to be used for music only and he switched MY radio off every time the news came on. As you know, we are all very interested in the world outside and what is going on. In every other workshop in the prison the radio is not turned off, so can I please have your permission to listen to the news on my radio?" "Yes, Stratton," sighed the Old Man, "you may do so." "Could you put it in writing, please, Governor," I said, "as Mr Dangerman won't take my word for it." "Yes, Stratton, I will put it in writing." Next day in the shop Dangerman told me I could have the news on. I grinned at him. "Thank you, sir." There are two ways of using the word 'sir' to anyone. No prizes for guessing the way I used it, but Dangerman wasn't done with me. "Think you're clever, don't you, Stratton? Well, I'll have you, don't worry. I know you're one of the cunts behind the round robin. You won't be discharged in June, I promise you that. Now get back to work."

Somehow or other I'd got his back up without really trying; only having a few weeks left to do I didn't really need any aggravation with Dangerman. There could only be one

winner ultimately - him - and I'm not a good loser, that's for sure. Dangerman's sole interest in life now seemed to be centred in me. He pulled me about every mortal thing he could think of. I'd look up from the work bench time and time again to see him staring at me. If I went to the khazi he'd follow me and watch me having a piss. I didn't mind if he was that kinky. When he searched me as I left the shop he also touched my balls. This is contrary to prison regulations. If a warder has reason to believe that a prisoner may be carrying an unauthorised article underneath his private parts, the warder should inform the Chief Warder, who will then order that the con be stripped and searched properly. No screw has the right to touch any con's private parts. All screws know this, of course, but there are always cunts like Dangerman who know some prisoners are incensed if a screw touches their balls during a rub down. Therefore, it is an easy way for a screw to wind someone up. As soon as the cons say something to the screw about "watch where your hands go" that con will find himself doing three days' chokey for alleged threatening behaviour or some such charge. These tactics didn't wash with me, however. But to give him his due, he was a trier, the Dangerman. On Friday we went for our weekly bath. We were supposed to get to the bathhouse at 3.30 p.m. but Dangerman deliberately wouldn't take us until 4 p.m., when he knew there would be no hot water left for us. I suppose as he referred to us as animals he thought we would be able to lick ourselves clean every week. I did discover how to stop him feeling my balls though. One day as his hands roved where they shouldn't I remarked "That feels nice. Do it again, would you?" Dangerman sort of leaped backwards and went bright red. "What do you mean, Stratton?" "Exactly what I say. I'm getting quite fond

of you touching me up twice a day." He was livid. "I shall search you every time you leave this workshop, Stratton," he grated. "Fine by me, governor. Like I said, I'm beginning to like it," I answered. It had the desired effect. From that day on, his hands only went where prison regulations stated they should. But then, of course, he transferred his attentions to Taffy Moses, as described elsewhere in this book. Dangerman's sole object in life was to nick me now. I knew just how kindly the Filthy Five would look after me once I landed down the chokey. Screws like Dangerman naturally gravitate to the Filthy Five's circle in a nick. Even most of the other screws abhorred this firm and more than one screw privately warned me to watch myself as Dangerman had told them all he was going to have me regardless. When you get someone who has never before in his life had any kind of power or authority over others, unless the person is of strong moral character, this power tends to make him feel that he has at last arrived. But not being very confident in himself he has to keep demonstrating his authority, not so much to others, as to himself. He cannot really believe that at last he now has a stick and a whistle and a gestapo hat of his own. All of his boyhood dreams are realised, simply because he answered an advertisement in the News of the World saying "Could YOU do a MAN'S job?" The old saying never send a boy to do a man's job is certainly applicable in Dangerman's case. It is the sort of thing you'd expect from an ignorant illiterate con to glory in such a nickname.

I had been issued by the prison optician and eye specialist with a pair of polaroid clip-on sun glasses that were to be worn over my ordinary glasses. The clip-ons had been paid for out of prison funds and I was instructed by the eye geezer never to go out in strong

sunshine without the clip-ons, as my left eye always came up like a balloon once strong sunlight attacked it. I'm not quite sure if it was the injuries caused on the sit-down strike or the sudden shock of thirty minutes solid sunshine a day once summer arrived that caused all the aggravation with my eye.

It was not until Easter Saturday 1969 that the sun shone on Parkhurst strongly enough for me to decide my clip-ons were needed. Out to the exercise yard I went that Saturday morning looking a true Parkhurst playboy in my faded overalls, seven-day dirty shirt, seven-day stinking socks and my clip-on sun glasses. Whilst on the yard I noticed Dangerman glaring at me all the time. With about three hundred other cons out there serving anything from five years to life, he might better have watched some of them, seeing this was what he was paid for, but it was me that he wanted. After exercise I went back to my peter. I heard the pitter-pat of hairy boots down the landing behind me - yes, it was him. My cell door was still open (a momentary lapse of security on someone's part - Mountbatten, please note) when Dangerman appeared in the doorway. His face was alive with joy. "Give me those sun glasses, Stratton," he said. "Why?" I asked. "Because you're not supposed to have them and I'm nicking you for being in possession of an unauthorised article," he said gleefully. "I suggest, Mr Dangerman, you go and check my property sheet and you'll find these glasses are my property." "I've checked," he sneered. I knew he'd made a rick. If he'd checked he wouldn't be here now making a bigger cunt of himself than he normally did, if that was possible. "Give me those glasses, Stratton," he demanded. "No," I replied. "If you want them step in here and see if you can take them. I've had enough of you." I really had the hump now. I kept looking at him and wanting

to smash his face in. It would be sheer joy to hear him scream as he suddenly realised that his poxy uniform and stick were no protection to him at all. If I wanted to hurt him, and at the moment I did want to, he was at risk. Luckily for him and me, my landing screw arrived. This screw was very quiet; just did his job and never bothered anyone and nobody took any liberties with him. "What's going on here, Mr Dangerman?" he asked. "I want those sun glasses that Stratton's got," said the dangerous one. "And I'm not giving them to you," I replied. "I'm sick of you trying to wind me up." "Stratton, I'm ordering you, give me those sun glasses," he demanded. My landing screw was standing behind him, silently mouthing to me "Give them to him." I tumbled what Dangerman wanted. He'd given me a direct order. If I refused to comply, even though the glasses did belong to me, I would still go down the chokey for refusing to obey an order. The fact that morally I was in the right would have no effect on the outcome when I went before the Governor charged with that offence. So either I gave in and parted with my own property or Dangerman achieved what he'd been after for weeks, getting me down the chokey. Reluctantly, I handed him the clip-ons. He grabbed them and walked away. "Just a minute, you." "What?" he asked. "I want your full name." "What for?" he asked. "Because you just stole my property and I'm going to call the police in about it as is my legal right." This shook him a bit. "You know my name," he said. "No, I don't." He gave me his name and then walked away. "Don't worry about it, Stratton," said my landing screw. "We all know you're entitled to have those glasses. There's a notice in the Wing office about it." "It's a pity someone doesn't tell that cunt about it," I said, nodding after Dangerman. "We've all

tried telling him to ease up but he thinks he's been sent here to give you lot a hard time. He'll learn the hard way." He carried on: "I hope I'm not around when someone does him because I'm fucked if I'm going to get hurt trying to help him when he goes around begging for it all the time." It was quite enlightening to hear this screw speak like this. Here was a man who just wanted to do his job quietly and competently, yet he knew sooner or later Dangerman would cause serious trouble with his attitude and treatment of cons, and when the trouble came it would probably (as is nearly always the case) be one of the good screws who would get hurt trying to save someone who thoroughly deserved to get hurt anyway. "Go down and tell the P.O. what has happened, Stratton," he told me. "Maybe he can sort it out." I went down to the P.O.'s office and explained what Dangerman had done. "He can't do that," exclaimed the P.O. "We've got a note from the hospital telling us you've got to have sunglasses. I'll see about this, Stratton."

Next morning - Sunday - I still hadn't got my glasses back. I'd had to miss going out in the compound the previous afternoon because my eye would come up again. I went to see the P.O. again. He was very guarded now. "The matter is being dealt with, Stratton," was all he would say. No exercise again that morning; the sun was still shining. At lunch-time I spotted one of the Chief Warders on his rounds so I approached him and explained my case. I had to miss my regulation sixty minutes a day fresh air and exercise because my glasses had been stolen from me by a warder, and I wanted to bring the police in to investigate. "Leave it to me, Stratton," said the all-powerful Chief Warden. I left it to him. Next morning I heard the tramp of hairy gestapo boots along

the corridor. Instinctively, I knew it was the Filthy Five coming to take me away to the punishment factory. My cell door flew open and there they stood, resplendent in their army boots (which they had discarded for shoes while the round robin inquiry team had been at the nick). "Pack your kit, Stratton," grated Rockhead. "You're going down below." I silently slung my toilet kit into my yellow canvas-like pillow case and rolled up my ten-years-unwashed two blankets and canvas-like sheets, and with a feeling of trepidation more commonly known as shitting myself, was escorted by the Filthy Five to the chokey.

I wasn't chucked down the stairs in the customary way. This I put down to the fact that they knew how friendly I was with Stan Newens, M.P., and getting chucked down the stairs leaves marks on delicate olive oil treated complexions like mine. With the possibility that Newens could show up to see me, black eyes etc. were not the order of the day. I was shown into a cell luxuriously appointed with a lump of wood to sit on and a piss pot covered in shit and piss that stank to high heaven. Nothing else. I sat down in the wooden armchair and rolled a fag. You are allowed by statutory rule to keep your tobacco with you until the Governor has dealt with your case. Bloodshot eyes kept looking through the spy-hole as the Filthy Five, obviously guessing I would do something to stir their interest, kept an eye on me. Obviously they guessed that one day I would be a famous writer and their interest was worthwhile. Feeling I should do something about it, I got up and took the lid off the piss pot, holding my breath as I did so. I stood in clear view of the bloodshot eye and had a piss. I shook the drops off the old chap towards the eye, which disappeared. I could hear a snuffled conversation going on

outside. Then the door opened and Punchy and Soapy came in while the rest stood by the door. "That's done it, you cunt. You've gone too far now," I thought. They were obviously vexed because I had not had the good manners to turn away from them while I passed water. Punchy, the born leader, walked up close to where I stood and started poking me in the chest with his forefinger. This is an old hobby of screws, the idea being that if they poke you long enough and hard enough, you'll retaliate and throw a punch at one of them. Then they'll all come in and restrain you. I think the word 'restrain' must have been coined by screws. No-one else uses it half as much as chokey screws do in mitigation. Fortunately the treatment had been tried on me in a number of nicks before and it doesn't have the required effect on me. "You were behind the round robin, you cunt," said Punchy, doing his best to poke a hole right through me. "We've been waiting to get you down here. You're going to enjoy yourself. We'll teach you to write to the newspapers about us. You bastard, you'll wish you'd never been born by the time we've finished with you." He's all bitter and twisted, I thought, as the kid-goved finger poked away. "I've just got one thing to say to you lot," I replied. "There are eight men having visits today and each one has been asked, if I'm not up from this chokey in one piece this morning, to get their visitors to phone Newens as soon as they leave here and tell him that you've beaten me up and would he please come down and see me, which I'm sure he'll do." Punchy and Soapy looked at each other as their tiny moronic minds tried to decipher what I'd just said. Without another word they turned and walked out of the pater, slamming the door. I sat down, greatly relieved that I was still able to sit down as I'd fully expected to be in a reclining position when they'd left.

An hour or so later the door opened again and, escorted by the Filthy Five, I was taken into the adjudications room. There, in all his wisdom, waiting to dispense justice (Parkhurst brand), sat the Deputy Governor, Long John, flanked by the all-powerful Chief Warder and a P.O. Apart from the seven screws to protect him from vicious old me, there was nothing but a row of half inch-thick steel bars between us. With the Filthy Five sort of standing on top of me, I got a kind of impression I wasn't top dog in that room.

"Stratton," said Long John, "a report has been made against you by Officer Dangerman that at 11 a.m. on C Wing exercise yard last Saturday morning you were in possession of an unauthorised article, to wit, a pair of clip-on sun glasses, contrary to Prison Rule 14, Section 4. Are you guilty or not guilty of this charge?" Governors and Deputy Governors will never look at you on these momentous occasions. They always stare at the table in front of them. "Not guilty," I said. "Not guilty?" said Long John. Officer Dangerman was conspicuous by his absence from these proceedings. Quite obviously he had been ordered not to be present so I couldn't question him. I said "I was wearing them, Governor, but seeing the sunglasses were paid for by the prison authorities and issued to me by the prison optician, I can hardly have committed an offence by wearing them or being in possession of them. Also, I feel that if Mr Dangerman had done his job properly and checked my property at Reception he would have discovered I was legally in possession of my own sunglasses. Officer Dangerman has let his overwhelming hatred for me blind him in this matter. I would like to suggest, Governor, that the property book be obtained from Reception. Then it will be officially established that I am not guilty of this offence." Long John was lost for

words. Nobody, but nobody had ever done this to him. Normal routine when someone was charged with something was that the con knew it was a waste of time trying to argue or put any kind of defence. He just said nothing and got his bread and water, or whatever. Long John was now faced with this position: he knew me well enough to know I would scream my head off to Newens over this matter if I got found guilty, but on the other hand he didn't want me to be found not guilty as that would cause Warder Dangerman to lose face (if that was possible). "Fetch the property book," Long John ordered one of the Filthy Five. We waited in utter silence. One of the Filthy Five was doing his best to put the bulk of his sixteen stone on the toes of my left foot; perhaps it helped him to pass the time. It certainly wasn't hurting me as, in common with most nick wear, the shoes are either too big or too small and Filthy Two was standing on leather. He must have thought I was a right masochist not to try and move my foot. If I had tried to move it I would have immediately been accused of kicking him and had to be restrained. Not wishing at that particular moment to be restrained, I didn't move a muscle. The worst part of this was the B.O. that emanated from the Filthy Four left surrounding me. Obviously their best friends hadn't told them about their problem. Come to think of it, that is understandable because they've got no best friends. Also, they'd never buy Lifebuoy as long as they could nick prison soap to take home. Most cons buy a decent soap from their meagre wages rather than try and use the White Windsor supplied by the nick. Yet the screws would sooner use White Windsor than buy soap. They also take home cons' razor blades, soap powder from the laundry, shoe polish and toilet paper (the like of which no-one but screws or cons with rhino-thick skins dare

use for fear of tearing their arses to pieces on the prison issue glass paper).

Meanwhile, back in the adjudication room we waited for the return of Filthy One. A great clump of boots heralded his return. He entered bearing the Reception property book - a huge leather-bound tome in which was listed every article either in a con's possession or being held for him in his private property. Trying to hold the book and salute proved too much. He dropped the book on the floor but I did not deign to laugh just because he made a bigger cunt of himself than usual. Muttering apologies to the Dep he picked the book up and placed it on the table. The Dep riffled through the pages until he came to the page bearing my name. He and the Chief Warden (they obviously made a great team) scanned the list of my worldly possessions. Needless to say, one of the articles listed as being issued to me was a pair of sunglasses. Now the Dep was legally and morally in the shit. There I was, down in the dungeons, wrongly charged with being in possession of an unauthorised article. Now this could not have happened to a worse person than yours truly because I wouldn't let it drop. As far as I was concerned, all I wanted at that moment was to get up from the chokey in one piece. All Long John had to say was: "I'm sorry, Stratton, a mistake has been made in this case. The charge is dismissed." But unfortunately, like a lot of people, me included, the Parkhurst authorities won't admit they are in the wrong. Long John was not about to make a name for himself as a fair administrator of justice. "Stratton," he said to me, "it does seem a mistake has been made in this case. However, I shall caution you against doing this again. That's all. You can go now." I was dumbfounded, and it is not often that I'm left without

words. "You can't do that," I stuttered. "Can't do what, Stratton?" asked Long John. "Caution me. That's finding me guilty," I replied. "Certainly it is," he agreed. "You were wearing the glasses." "But I was entitled to be wearing them. What this boils down to is that Dangerman wrongly picked me up in the first place and now you're trying to cover up for him." "Oh no, I'm not, because Mr Dangerman is perfectly entitled to place you on report if he sees you committing an offence," said the Dep. "Certainly, but I wasn't committing an offence, was I, Governor?" I replied. "If Mr Dangerman had checked his facts and the Chief Warder had checked everything as he is supposed to before a man is brought down here, then I wouldn't be here now, would I?" I went on to say "You've let Mr Dangerman put you in an embarrassing position, and sooner than admit that I am in the right for once, you want it on record that I committed an offence." "Stratton, I'm not going to argue with you. It is a trivial matter. Why should you worry if there's a caution against you on your record? There are plenty of other offences against prison discipline recorded against you." "Certainly, but those I did commit so I'm not bothered," I answered. "But it is the principle of the thing now. If I made an unjustified complaint against Warder Dangerman I'd be in plenty of trouble. Come to that, one con, Taffy Moses, made a written complaint against this warder and we've never seen Moses since." "So what's good for you, should be good for me," grated Long John. "You are cautioned against committing this offence again." He then said "Take him out" to the Filthy Five. "Just a minute," I yelled, as they gently led me to the door. "I want my glasses back." "You'll get them later today, Stratton. Now get out." I was taken back to my cell in the wing by two of the Filthy Five. They were

absolutely gutted that I wasn't staying down below with them all, but I had better things to do than stay and play football with the Filthy Five - besides, I don't bounce, either. I had the needle over Dangerman nicking me for nothing, but only having a few weeks left to do I thought fuck it, it wasn't worth the trouble of complaining he was victimising me. Also, if I did make such a complaint, they'd probably whitewash it and I'd be back down the dungeons again like Taffy Moses.

I did want my sunglasses back, though. I asked the Wing P.O. for them and he said I would have to see the Governor. It was then Monday lunchtime so I couldn't see the Governor until Tuesday morning as all applications had to be made a day in advance. So I couldn't go out to the compound again that day. I'd had no exercise the whole of that Bank Holiday because it had been brilliant sunshine and all my left eye needs as an excuse to swell up like a balloon is about fifteen minutes in the sun.

I went back to work next morning. Dangerman was off duty until that afternoon. The screw on duty asked me what had occurred and I explained it all to him. "The man's stone raving mad to have just nicked you without checking your property sheet," he said. "I know he's in front of the Chief over you this afternoon." "Is he?" I asked. "I suppose the Chief will tell him not to make such a mistake again." "No, he'll get a half-sheet for sure," said the screw. Now screws dread getting a half-sheet from the Governor or the Chief. In effect this means that when a screw commits a transgression against the prison system, he is put on report. Now I ask you, who the hell would want a job where he could be hauled in front of his superiors and given a bollocking and the dreaded half-sheet, which

means a piece of paper is put into the SCREW'S PRISON RECORD stating that the said screw had been spotted smoking whilst on night duty on the east wall of Parkhurst prison. This said offence meant that he had not been keeping observation properly whilst he had his sly drag. This could then affect the said screw's chance of promotion eighteen years hence when a board of pin-striped warders would study the said screw's RECORD as to whether he was Principal Warder material. Lo and behold, they would find eighteen years ago at 3.30 in the morning this screw had actually lit a cigarette and started to smoke it when he was caught by the P.O. on night duty who creeps around the prison all night trying to catch screws doing something wrong. Quite obviously, the said screw is not the right kind of material for promotion to the highest Parkhurst corridors of power and he will remain a screw until he retires or dies, because he once got a dreaded half-sheet. Dangerman's world must have been shattered. His mortal enemy had wriggled out of the charge and now Dangerman himself was on report.

I went to see the Governor, stated my case, and asked if I could have my sunglasses back as it was affecting my health, not having had any exercise for four days. "Stratton," the Old Man said, "if what you have told me is true, then you shall have your sunglasses back. Do you wish to make a written complaint against Warder Dangerman?" I grinned at him and said "I don't think I'll bother about that, Governor. Just as long as I get my glasses back the matter can be forgotten." "Leave it to me, Stratton old son," he said. You know, I actually came out of his office convinced I'd get my glasses back.

A couple more days went by. Dangerman now only stared at me when he thought I wasn't

looking. I didn't really think I'd get a chance to do anything to him, short of physical violence. I went to see Miller again about the sunglasses. As soon as I walked in the door Miller never waited to ask me what I'd come about. "I know what you're after, son," he said. "Your glasses. You'll have them in the next couple of days. You have my word." "O.K. Governor," I replied. That afternoon in the shop I copped for Dangerman. In all the Parkhurst workshops you have screws who are instructors. These types are considered experts in their field - teaching someone how to sew eight stitches to an inch, etc. All these instructors make themselves a cup of tea, although they're not supposed to do this as they are allowed an official cup of tea during a ten minute interval when they are relieved by another screw. They should go to the screws' mess for a cup of tea or a smoke. But like a lot of Government institutions, the rules are bent a little. Give and take. It was no skin off my nose if they had a cup of tea, even us cons had an official tea break.

Warder Dangerman, however, never indulged in the screws' unofficial tea school in our shop - mainly because the other screws couldn't stand him any more than I could. This afternoon, however, he must have been thirsty or had a sore throat or something, because I suddenly spied him about to raise a cup to his lips. "Oi, you," I shouted. Dangerman's cup-bearing hand stopped about an inch from his rat-trap mouth. "You speaking to me, Stratton?" he asked. "Yes, I am. According to the prison rules and regulations that you're so fond of quoting to me, screws are not allowed to drink tea in the workshops." His face went white with anger. I had dared to tell him that he couldn't do something, and this was beyond his comprehension. "What did you say?" he said. "Screws are not allowed to drink tea in the

shop," I repeated, "because if you're drinking tea you are not doing your job properly. Your job is to sit on that stool and keep observation on us desperate escape-crazy prisoners all the time. And if you drink that tea I am going to tell the Governor." He was gutted. He must have been kicking himself for trying it in front of me. He stared at me for a couple of minutes and I think he really wanted to attack me. His eyes went all glassy and then, without saying another word, he got up, walked to the wash basins and tipped the tea away. I felt great at finally capturing the cunt doing something wrong. He'd given me a hard time for weeks and now twice within a few days I had backfired things on him and shattered his iron-barred world for him. At the right time and in the right place he'd happily kick me to death.

But still no glasses. It seemed once again that Miller's word was not his bond, so to speak. I went to see the Board of Visiting Magistrates and explained my problem to the learned gentlemen, who in their wisdom declared that I should have my glasses back. However, as the Board of Magistrates only sits once a week I had to wait that period of time before I could see them again and tell them that their orders had been ignored. I still hadn't had my glasses returned. The Chairman of the Board, whose greatest claim to fame is that he is a pal of the Tory M.P. for the Isle of Wight, had been most sympathetic when I'd seen him on the previous occasion but the Old Man and Company had certainly given him his orders this time. I got very short shrift from them. The chairman flatly denied that they had said I could have my glasses back and, what is more, I most certainly could not have them back. "Why not?" I asked. "Because the Medical Officer says they are a security risk and could be used in an escape attempt." This was

a classic. I've had some small experience in escape attempts in my life, but short of some spade con disguising himself as Ray Charles and going over the wall singing 'Take these Chains from my Heart' I can't see how my clip-ons could have really aided an escape.

So there it was - they were determined to fuck me somehow. They had won the battle of the clip-ons and they weren't finished yet. I was eligible for the hostel scheme. This scheme was implemented ten or twelve years ago, and the idea is very good. A long-term prisoner spends the last six months of his sentence in a hostel. He goes out to work every day and apart from £3.50 deducted for his keep and £1.50 a week pocket money the nick keeps the balance of his wages until his discharge, thus ensuring that he is not released upon an unsuspecting world without enough dough to put him on his feet for the first few weeks. The situation with me at that time was the same as with the majority of cons who have served long sentences. I was flat broke and had no home to go back to, so the hostel scheme would maybe enable me to keep to the straight and narrow when I got out because at least I would have no financial worries. Besides me, there were ten other cons up for the hostel. I'd been in the nick over twice as long as the rest of them, but I knew before I went in I wasn't going to get it. The other ten were all interviewed on an average for fifteen minutes. I was in there for ninety seconds. None of the Hostel Board asked me any questions except for a preacher who wanted to verify that I was of no religion. I wholeheartedly concurred. Just what bearing this had on whether I got the hostel scheme or not I don't know, but obviously I gave the wrong answer because the other ten got it and I didn't. I'll say no more about the hostel scheme.

In May the results of the Gale Inquiry into the round robin were published. The Daily Express produced banner headlines "PARKHURST OFFICERS CLEARED OF BRUTALITY CHARGES. ACTION TO BE TAKEN AGAINST PRISONERS FOR FALSE ALLEGATIONS" and a load of similar shit. I notice the Daily Express had fuck all to say on the subject when eighteen months later Lord Stonham admitted to the Sunday Times that Gale had recommended there were grounds for bringing charges against four of the screws we had named for brutality. But the then Home Secretary, James Callaghan, had suppressed this little tit-bit. There wasn't really much point in Callaghan ever ordering an inquiry in the first place if he was going to suppress and ignore Gale's recommendations. However, it was announced that certain changes were to be made within the chokey block. The Filthy Five were to be replaced. Not for any misbehaviour on their part, but because it was felt they had been on that particular job too long. The facts of this are simple. No screw is supposed to be on any one job longer than three months, so every three months you get what is called the change-over, and all the screws move on to a different workshop or whatever. It seems that an oversight had occurred as far as the Filthy Five's employment down the dungeons was concerned. Two of them had been on that job for three years and the other three for over two years. But perhaps it was felt that they were doing such a great job keeping the Parkhurst crime rate in check they should stay where they were.

The only immediate change I noticed after Gale's report was published was that the bovver boots came straight back into fashion and, just to make sure in the future, one screw was given a white collar to wear and told "You are now in charge of the punishment block." So if there were any comebacks from people

outside in regard to brutality, the white-collared one, by virtue of being in charge, would have to accept responsibility. In effect, he would make sure that no-one was beaten up too badly in case he had to take the come-back for someone getting seriously hurt.

The screw who was placed in charge of this motley crew was not as you may expect. A new face down the dungeons, but none other than the original founder member of the Filthy Five - Foxy Fowler. I don't think this was what the Home Office quite had in mind when they said certain changes were to be instituted in the punishment block, but Parkhurst, of course, does things to suit itself, not the Home Office. I think the main reason for this flouting of Home Office intentions is simply explained because Parkhurst, being on an island, is, at the most, visited by an Assistant Prison Director only every three months. Somewhat like the army, the visit is always known before the Director's arrival. Again, like the army, a decent dinner is provided on the day so that the Director can sample it and say just how well fed and looked after we are. I suppose it would be too much to ask for a sort of spot check system to be instituted, not only for Parkhurst but for all prisons. This would ensure that the system was kept running properly all of the time, the governor and screws never knowing when someone might pop in. I realise the Isle of Wight presents some problems, as it seems it is impossible for a Home Office visitor to actually make his way right to Parkhurst under his own steam. A car has to be provided to meet him at the ferry and take him right to the nick. But if cons' wives can make the journey down with no car to pick them up, I see no reason why a person of such obviously superior intellect as an Assistant Director

couldn't suddenly arrive at the gates and announce he was having a look round.

As far as the cons were concerned, we thought the round robin inquiry was a whitewash. As I said earlier, I wasn't too happy when Gale was appointed to head it. I was pleasantly surprised when recently I heard that Gale had found grounds enough for the prosecution of four screws. More power to his elbow for saying it. The one who emerges as responsible ultimately for the riot must be former Home Secretary Callaghan, because he suppressed Gale's findings. If, as Gale recommended, the four screws had been prosecuted, the cons would have thought something had at last been achieved and the brutality would have stopped, thus easing the atmosphere in the prison tremendously as early as May 1969. There would have been no riot - of this I am sure. I only hope if at any time in the future a similar situation arises, an independent Inquiry Board will be appointed. While I do not favour Gale's findings, it must be remembered that Gale is an employee of the Prison Department and is subject to the Official Secrets Act. Therefore he could not leak his findings if he was dissatisfied with the action taken by his superiors. An independent inquiry would be in no such position. I remember years ago there was a riot at my approved school and the inquiry into that was headed by a Queen's Counsel. It was a fair inquiry and all the facts were made known. What the hell is the good of anyone ordering one of his subordinates to inquire into a departmental matter? Someone from another field must be brought in to handle it in fairness to all parties involved in the dispute. Here endeth my bit on the inquiry subject.

The screws wanted some of us whom they thought

responsible for getting together the round robin nicked and taken to an outside court. But one screw told me the Home Office had immediately vetoed this idea because such a court case would cause much to be uncovered at Parkhurst. Obviously the cons would fight the case, on legal aid. The bloody screws hadn't got brains enough to see they had had a right result in the brutality complaint being virtually whitewashed. They still wanted us nicked for daring to complain about the fact that we'd been beaten up in the first place.

The cons were in an angry mood. Some of the more violently inclined ones wanted to stage a riot on the compound the following Saturday. They were convinced now that the only way to stop the brutality was for a few screws to get hurt and see how they liked it. I personally was against this, mainly for selfish reasons. I was going out soon and I didn't particularly want to get involved in a stand-up battle with the screws.

However, it was finally decided by the cooler headed cons to try once more to get the brutality drawn to the public's attention. Through ME. I was due to be discharged from Parkhurst on 20th June 1969. The way things were, I wasn't too certain of getting out on that date. The screws tried every way to wind me up so I would lose my temper with one of them, but having just survived the Dangerman situation I kept cool. They started to fuck my mail about. Letters are just about the most important thing in a con's life - more important even than visits. You don't get a letter and you start imagining all the things that could have gone wrong on the outside. Some blokes know their wives always write on a Sunday night, post the letter on Monday with a 3p stamp, and the letter arrives

at the nick on Tuesday. The con then gets his letter tea-time Tuesday. But if some screw has the needle with the con he can forget to give the con his letter Tuesday night. By Wednesday night, again no letter. The con is then going up the wall with worry. He's probably had his letter every Tuesday night for the last two years, but now nothing. He writes to his wife rucking her for not having written and asking if there's something wrong at home and saying he wants to know what it is. He posts his letter to her on Thursday morning. Thursday evening, lo and behold there's the letter from his wife. He looks at the date stamped on the envelope and sees the letter was posted on the Monday as usual. He then pulls the screw and asks why his letter is so late in arriving. In all likelihood the screw who handed him the letter is not the screw who originally held the letter up. This screw has just picked up the mail for the landing and the con gets no joy as the screw knows nothing. He is now in a terrible position - he has rucked the life out of his wife for something that isn't her fault, and it may take them weeks to patch everything up again. He can check with the censor and find out his letter did arrive in the nick on the Tuesday. The censor will say he sent the letter over to the wing with the other mail but that it isn't his responsibility, and the con is at a dead end.

All this kind of thing had happened to me. A few weeks before my discharge I wrote to a bird named Mary. She was the sister of Patsy, one of the men I'd originally got nicked with. There was nothing ulterior in the letter at all but I was called up by the Assistant Governor and told I was not allowed to write to Mary. "Why not?" I asked. "Because her brothers are well-known criminals," he answered. "That is irrelevant," I answered.

"Miss Smith has never been in any kind of trouble in her life so there is no reason why I shouldn't write to her. Besides, I've been writing to her on and off for the last seven years. How come with four weeks to do, it's stopped?" "Because, Stratton, you are not allowed to write to criminals or relations of criminals." This stupid answer was too much. Even to a moron it must be pretty obvious that a criminal's relations are usually honest, hard-working people, and can't help the fact that a brother or uncle may be crooked. If this is the case, some jumped-up office boy masquerading as an Assistant Governor can decide whether or not you can write to them. What are you supposed to do? You're not supposed to write if there's anyone crooked in the family. If, for instance, you know some dead straight people and you decide you would like to drop them a line, the performance is unbelievable. You'll get called up by the A.G. and asked if you know these people. Your answer - well, I wouldn't be writing them a letter if I didn't know them. Why haven't you written before? Because I didn't bloody well feel like it, you answer. You are then told they are not satisfied with your answers and that there's something funny going on here for you to suddenly decide to write a letter to someone you've not written to before. This matter will be investigated, and investigated it is. Your letter-awaiting friends will have uniformed policemen knocking on the door causing much embarrassment. The police will then ask if they know you and your friends will say "yes". When asked why, the police will say you are in Parkhurst prison serving a sentence of nine years for armed robbery and you want to be allowed to write to them. Any objections? Your friends will have no objections, but later on one of the neighbours will remark in a snide way that they saw the police at the door that morning.

or some such thing, and bang goes a beautiful friendship. So who is a con supposed to write to? The aggro with my mail got really serious. First off, every letter I wrote to Stan Newens, M.P. went adrift en route, according to the Parkhurst authorities. Stratton, you have our assurance the letters to your M.P. were posted and if they went adrift en route then it's not our responsibility. I solved this problem by sending Newens' letters by recorded delivery. Once it was recorded they just had to post it. I then set my evil mind to work on the Mary Smith situation.

That night I got into bed, made myself comfortable amid the fortnightly dirty sheets and the years-old filthy blankets and wrote a letter (I do my best writing in bed) to a Mrs Rose Fitt. In it I asked how her sons were getting on, especially the youngest son, Steve, who was at university. I'd heard Steve was rapidly making a name for himself. Also her two other sons. I was very pleased to hear that the eldest one was earning plenty of money. Also, of course, the middle son, who was away for the moment but who was due back in circulation soon. I was sure everyone was looking forward to seeing him again after his long sojourn away. The letter finished with a crack about "I hope you're not shoplifting any more, Rose." I addressed the letter to Mrs R.L. Fitt, Garratt Lane, Tooting, London S.W.17 and posted it next morning. I went to work knowing I would get called up at lunchtime over the letter. Sure enough, at lunchtime I was sent for by none other than the Old Man himself. Into his office I slouched. "Good morning, Stratton," he beamed at me. "I've called you up over this letter you have written to a Mrs Fitt. I'm stopping it." I felt elated. They'd swallowed the bait. "Might I ask why you're stopping this letter, Governor?" "Yes, son, you are

writing to people who have criminal records and this is against prison rules." "How do you know Mrs Fitt has a criminal record?" I asked. "We've checked it with the Criminal Records Office," he answered. "I'm sorry, Governor, but I don't believe you," I replied. "I know for a fact that Mrs Fitt is not known to the police." "Come, come, Stratton," said the Old Man, "one has only to read the letter to know the whole family are criminals. I'll just read a piece." He read out the part about young Stephen being away at university. "Quite obviously, he's in Borstal," sneered the Old Man, "and there's the other son who is shortly due back in circulation. He's at Dartmoor, I suppose?" "No, Governor, he's not at Dartmoor. He's at Parkhurst," I said. "Is he really? I don't know anyone here named Fitt, do you, Chief?" "No, sir," said the Chief. "Has he been here long, Stratton?" asked the Old Man. "Getting on for seven years," I answered. The Old Man looked at me quizzically. "What do you mean? I'd know him if he'd been here that long." "You know me very well, Governor. I'm the middle son. Mrs Fitt is my mother. Stephen Fitt is my stepbrother and all this information is in my record. Now will you explain to me why you have stopped a letter to my mother, to whom I'm supposed to be able to write at any time?" The Old Man was shattered. He knew I'd done him nicely this time. He looked into my record in front of him and checked that what I had said was correct. "All right, Stratton, the letter can go," he said. "Don't bother posting it, Governor. There's no point really." "Oh, why not?" he asked. "She died ten years ago, that's why," I said. The Old Man nearly went through the roof. "What the hell have you written a letter to her for, then?" he roared. "She was my mother. There's nothing in rules and regulations to say I can't write to my dead mother," I said.

He was staring at me as if I had gone stone raving mad, but I went on "I wrote the letter knowing you people would stop it, just as you are stopping every letter I try to send." I then said "Well, this time you've come right unstuck." "All right, Stratton," said the Old Man resignedly, "I suppose you wish to be allowed to write to Mary Smith?" "Yes, Governor, I do." "O.K., you can." "And will the letter be posted?" "Yes, Stratton, sooner than go through all this performance again, the letter will be posted," he assured me. "Thanks, Governor, it's very kind of you," I said and walked out. My letter to Mary went off O.K.

For anyone who has never been in the nick, heed my advice. Beware of nick barbers! They couldn't cut a hedge, most of them, never mind hair. The Parkhurst ones were definitely to be avoided. Geronimo used to do a better job than that lot. For about three months before my release I didn't have my hair cut. I figured if it was long when I got out a hairdresser would be able to do something with it, and I was not going to let some amateur sheep shearer hack it around. Suddenly from nowhere an order came. Tell Stratton to get a hair-cut. This order apparently originated from the Old Man himself, but by going special sick each time there was an alleged barber in the vicinity I avoided this until it was time for the Visiting Magistrates to sit again. Down I went to see them. "Yes, Stratton, said the chairman. "Are you here about the sunglasses again?" "No, I've given that up," I replied. "It's something else." "Well, what is it?" he asked. "It's like this, all my life I have been a man of no religion and I feel that this may be the reason I turned to crime. I understand that if I wish to adopt a religion I have to see you people." The members of the Board all

seemed to come to life for the first time in living memory - the arch-fiend, Stratton, was going religious. Only Miller, sitting there gaping sceptically, allowed a grin to appear on his face. He knew I was about to drop something on their toes. The chairman beamed at me. "Stratton, I never thought the day would come when you'd come in here and make this request. As a life-long Christian I welcome you heartily to God's ranks. Which religion do you wish to adopt?" Deadpan, I looked at him and said simply: "I wish to become a Sikh." The Old Man collapsed into laughter but the members of the Board were not similarly amused. "Have I said something funny, Governor?" I asked the Old Man. "Stratton, I never even try to anticipate what you might come out with." The members of the Board of Visitors remained completely silent. The Old Man took over the proceedings. "I wish to adopt the Sikh religion, Governor, and the Board cannot refuse my request, as you know," I said. "All right, let's have it. Why do you want to become a Sikh?" he asked. "Because there is a conspiracy going on to make me get my hair cut. It is part of the Sikh religion that Sikhs do not have their hair cut or shorn, so I'll become a Sikh for my last three weeks in this establishment." "Point taken, Stratton," said the Old Man. "You don't need to go to these elaborate lengths to avoid having your hair cut. You could have come and seen me and explained why you didn't want it cut." "Governor, I was told on good authority that it was you who issued the order in the first place." "I didn't issue an order. I just remarked to the Chief that your hair was long. I should have known you'd come up with something like this. Anyhow, you needn't have your hair cut and we'll forget about you becoming a Sikh." "O.K.," I agreed, "thank you very much,

gentlemen, for your invaluable help."

Every day on the exercise yard I was in deep discussion with half-a-dozen cons. Finally it was agreed that I would see Newens as soon as I got out of Parkhurst and give him a message from the prisoners there. I was also to go to the newspaper 'The People' and give them the same message, which in a nutshell was this: "We, the prisoners of Parkhurst, have asked Brian Stratton to convey to you that unless something is done very quickly to curb the brutality of a certain group of prison warders and an independent inquiry appointed to look into the conditions and complaints at Parkhurst, there will be a bloody riot, the like of which has never been seen in British jails before." The cons asked me to ask Newens if he would come to Parkhurst and listen to their complaints. They were at the end of their tether, but were prepared to wait and see if I could achieve anything with Newens. I agreed to do this and wrote a recorded delivery letter to Stan Newens saying I would like to see him at the House of Commons at midday on the 20th June. Newens answered my letter stating he was looking forward to meeting me at that time.

DISCHARGE

I suppose I'd better write a bit about how a long-term prisoner gets let out into the strange world outside. Very little is done to help a con. If he has been unlucky enough not to get the hostel scheme, he could be bang in trouble as soon as he gets out of the gate. The Prison Welfare Officer sent for me. "Stratton, I hear you are due to be discharged in a couple of weeks. Now, what are you going to do?" I said "How the fuck do I know what I'm going to do? Apart from a few months on the run I've been in here since 1962. Things change out there every day." He said "Where are you going to live when you leave this place?" "I don't know," I said. "Is it any business of yours?" He insisted "Stratton, I want to know where you are going to live." I retorted "You only want to know that so you can tell the police where they may be able to find me, so I'll tell you nothing. You're just a Home Office parasite." I left his office and the next one to see me was a geezer from the Labour Exchange. Our conversation went like this:-

HIM: Oh yes, Mr Stratton, er um, I see you are going out soon. Have you got a job to go to?

ME: No, I haven't.

HIM: Well, go along to your local Employment

Exchange. I'm sure they'll find you something. Where did you say you'll be living?

ME: I didn't say.

HIM: Well, you'll have to tell me so that I can give you a letter to your local Employment Office.

ME: I don't need you people to send letters to anyone about me. If I want a job, I'll get one myself.

HIM: All right, Mr Stratton. You'll be given a set of current cards when you go out. No future employer will have to know you've been in prison.

ME: No? Then how will I explain the fact that there are no stamps on my cards?

HIM: Well, you could just have come out of the army or something.

ME: Oh, you give me a set of cards, that's fine. Thank you very much.

HIM: We also give you £4 and a letter to the National Assistance, who will give you some more money when you get there. But you must bear in mind, Mr Stratton, that it is only because you go out on a Friday that you get £4. By the time you get to London it will be too late for you to go to the National Assistance office until the following Monday, so the £4 is to enable you to find a room for yourself and have something to eat that first weekend.

ME: (Looking at him in amazement) Are you serious, pal? Do you honestly think

I can find a room in London, pay at least one week's rent in advance, and still have something left to feed myself on out of the £4 you've given me? You must be joking.

HIM: I'm perfectly serious, Mr Stratton. This is the sum laid down for someone in your position.

ME: Well, I can just see why so many geezers get nicked as soon as they go out of here. They haven't got a chance. The system gives them little hope of going straight if they want to. They've got to thieve to live as soon as they get out.

HIM: I'm only doing my job, Mr Stratton. Don't blame me.

ME: I don't blame you. Like you're saying, it's only your job. It wouldn't matter to you if I got nicked as soon as I got off the train at Waterloo. You've given me the £4 and a railway warrant. That's all you're required to do. Thank you very much indeed.

Next day I was called up by the A.G. who demanded to know where I was going to live. I refused to tell him either. The Deputy Governor called me up with the same question and added that I was required to inform him where I would be residing. "Governor," I said, "when I walk out of Waterloo station I don't know whether I'll turn right, left or go straight on. What's more, if I did know I still wouldn't tell you. It's none of your business. When my nine years is up, that's it. I owe you people nothing but aggravation." Long John glared at me. "Get out," he said.

Nothing else of much importance happened until the 20th of June. The atmosphere in the nick was still very bad. I think everyone on both sides knew it was just a matter of time before the lid blew off. The cons were holding back to see if I could get Newens to do something, and that was all. Come the 19th of June, the doctor examined me and pronounced me fit enough to go out. I was 11½ stone in weight when I went in and had two good eyes. I left weighing 9½ stone and half-blind in one eye. Yes, I was fit to go out after seven years at Parkhurst.

I said my goodbyes on the Thursday evening. It's a bit choking to experience these goodbyes, particularly with Timmy Noonan, who is a close friend of mine. He shook my hand and told me to look after myself and be lucky. I was thinking: You poor fucker. You've got to look after yourself and take more of this yet. Either they'll kill you or you'll kill one of them. Mickey Andrews and Martin Frape both came up to wish me goodbye and good luck. There was no envy in their goodbyes: they were genuinely glad if one of their mates went out. They'd miss me and I'd miss them. Some of the things that have happened since I got out make me wish I could have had their help, but that's another story. I went to my peter and banged the door up. The geezers kept coming and shouting good luck through the door and cracks like "you won't get to sleep tonight" and "think of me when you're cased up tomorrow night". Even after spending such a long time in the nether world of Parkhurst, I was far from being institutionalised, but it was still a wrench to leave that lot, this I do say.

On Friday the 20th June 1969 - the day I used to think would never come - I must have woken up about 5 a.m. The nick was deathly quiet

inside, but outside those fucking seagulls were at it. No-one with half a brain would go to the Island more than once unless they were kinky for the sound of thousands of hungry-gutted screaming seagulls outside the window every morning. There's a legend at Parkhurst that those seagulls are dead screws come back to annoy us cons. If this is so, I can believe it, for they succeeded in winding me up every morning for years, and their accuracy when you're out on exercise is devastating. Once one shit on me and actually managed so that it hit the inside of my glasses and splattered straight in my eye. It was uncanny really. The other thing birdwise that I'll never forget at Parkhurst occurred very late one evening as I was lying in bed. I could hear the rats scuttling around in the yard. Parkhurst rats are king-size. A Doberman would think twice before attacking one. Anyhow, I got out of bed and peeped through the bars of my window. There were four rats playing together out there. Suddenly something dropped past my window with a screech. I nearly shit myself. The flying object was an owl. It landed on the back of one of the rats, claws dug in. Up it went with the rat squeaking away. The owl rose about 60 feet and released the rat, and as the rat plunged earthwards, the owl was right above him. The rat hit the ground at no mean speed but was still squeaking. It never got a chance to run. The owl grabbed it again and repeated the process twice more. After the third parachute drop the rat seemed to lose all further interest in the proceedings and the owl picked it up and flew off towards Parkhurst forest. Next night, the owl was back again and captured another rat. In all, the owl grabbed three of the rats in three nights. I think the rest of the rat family must have got the message, as they did not appear again. Maybe they just changed haunts,

like us people.

As I was saying, I woke up early. I smoked a roll-up and lay thinking: well, this is it. I'm out of this piss-hole today and the troubles are about to start. I heard the night watchman coming around making his morning check of the cells, so I knew it was around 6 a.m. I'd be unlocked at 7 a.m., so there was no point in getting up. A beady eye looked through my spyhole and then disappeared with dragging footsteps to the next cell.

I'd had my card marked the night before that the burglars were going to search me. They thought I'd got another round robin and was taking it with me. Their tiny minds couldn't fathom that I'd figure they would give me a dry bath, so quite obviously I wouldn't have anything they could nick me for and stop me going out.

7 a.m. The door was unlocked by the reception screw, bearing my meagre prison possessions and a cardboard box containing over three hundred letters which people had written me over the years. When I arrived at reception the burglars were waiting with smiles on their faces. They took my box of letters. "Are you taking those out with you?" one of them asked. "Yes, I am," I said. Three of them set to going through all my letters, reading them to see if any messages were being smuggled out. The fourth told me to strip in front of him. When I'd undressed he asked me to bend over so he could see if I'd got anything hidden up my arse. I assume that's what he wanted to look up my arse for. I could be wrong, of course. Satisfying himself, he told me to get dressed and pointed to a locker where my civvy clothes were hanging. One of the greatest pleasures of getting out of the nick is putting

your own clothes on again after years of wearing the same shirt for a week. It is sort of desirable when you put on a good shirt, an expensive suit and shoes that you can't even feel on your feet after wearing clog-like articles that weigh a pound each. Best of all is to watch the screws' faces when you emerge from that locker dressed and looking like they never can. I have only once seen a screw who dressed well. The majority of them are as scruffy in civvies as they are in uniform. It absolutely guts them to see you well dressed. If a con is unlucky enough not to have any good clothes the screws will take the piss out of him with pathetic remarks like "your tailor must have gone bankrupt" or some such witticism. I felt a new man in my own gear. The three mugs were still going through my letters, and the reception screw handed me my watch and lighter etc. "Where's my sunglasses?" I asked. "Er, aren't they in your jacket pocket?" I checked my pockets but no glasses. "They must be in the office," he said, and one of the screws disappeared, returning with my clip-ons. He handed them to me and said "There you are, you've got them back now." I then crushed the glasses into pieces and threw them into the rubbish bin. "I never did need them. They were just something to ruck about," I said. I crushed the glasses into smaller pieces. The burglars had just finished going through my letters. "They're O.K., Stratton," said one of them. "I've changed my mind," I said, I'm not taking the letters out with me after all. You can throw them away." Another strike to me. I'd done them up again. I'd got nothing they could nick me over and I'd got them at it searching all the letters when I had no intention of taking them out anyway. "You won't last five minutes outside, Stratton, with your attitude," said one of them. "Wishful thinking on your part, mate. It guts

you to see me going out of here, but you'll be hearing from me, all of you. I promise you that. I've got a long memory." The reception screw and one burglar took me over to the Chief's office.

The Number Two Chief was on duty. He looked at me and then asked the burglar "Did he have anything?" "No, sir," said the burglar reluctantly. "All right, Stratton," said the Chief Officer Number Two, "sign this form. You know what it is. You are barred under the Fire Arms Act from owning or carrying a firearm of any kind." I signed the form. He then handed me £4, a railway warrant to Waterloo plus 1/9d for my food on the journey, and a set of employment cards. "That's all, Stratton," he said. I was glad he didn't give me a little talk about going straight, but then he probably felt I was beyond redemption anyway.

The two screws and I walked down to the gate. The screws were all just coming back on duty after their breakfast of nick porridge. Not one of them would look at me as we went through the gate lodge. "One discharge, sir," said the reception screw to the gate screw. "Name and number?" asked the gate screw, who knew my name and number as well as I did. "9974 Stratton," I sneered at him. "O.K.," he said and unlocked a small wicket gate. I stepped through to the land of the living. Right behind me came the burglar and the reception screw. "What do you want?" I asked them. "We've got to walk down to the bus with you," said the burglar. "You're walking nowhere with me, you cunt. I'm out now," I said. "You're still in our charge until you get on the bus," said the burglar. "Go and fuck yourself you horrible cunt." The reception screw could see it was getting out of hand. "All right, Stratton, we'll stay

on the other side of the road from you," he said. "O.K., but it's Mr Stratton now," I said as I swung off down the driveway. The two screws followed me on the other side of the driveway. There was a queue at the bus stop. All screws' wives etc. Nobody else lives near the nick. They all stared at me and then looked away when I stared back at each of them in turn. They knew where I'd come from, just as I knew what they were. The two screws stood on the other side of the road trying to look inconspicuous, quite unsuccessfully.

The rickety island bus arrived and I got on. The journey to Ryde took about half an hour. I felt very strange on that bus, as though I was different to everyone else on it. I got off at Ryde and went into a shop and asked for twenty Benson and Hedges. I didn't have a clue as to how much fags cost now so I just handed the bird behind the counter a pound. At the pierhead I changed the railway warrant and received a ticket to Waterloo and an enquiring look from the ticket clerk.

Being summer, the ferry to the mainland was packed, but I managed to get to the bar O.K. and order a gin and bitter lemon. Who the hell but someone who just got out of the nick, or an alcoholic, wants to drink gin at nine in the morning? I swallowed the gin in one gulp and ordered another; drank that and felt pissed. My head was spinning a bit. That's enough, I thought, and ordered another. By the time I got off the boat I was pissed and starving hungry. My train was due to leave almost immediately so I couldn't get anything to eat first. On the train I went to the dining room and ordered eggs, bacon and fried tomatoes - a double portion of each. That British Railways breakfast went down as well

as any meal I'd ever eaten. By the time I reached Waterloo I'd got a pound left. My mouth was dry from too many fags and I felt quite good. I took a cab to the House of Commons and went in to meet Stan Newens, M.P.

If you're easily awed I suppose the House of Commons is the place to awe you. I was not awed as I sat waiting in the central lobby. All the geezers in funny uniforms scuttling around the place, people talking in hushed tones all the time and, of course, the inevitable gawping tourists, oohing and aahing as they were shown around. About 84 policemen descended on me when I lit a fag. "There's no smoking in here, sir," said a great burly sergeant, politely. I put the fag out thinking "It's typical. This is the place where Englishmen speak their piece, a sort of headquarters of democracy, and I can't have a fag. It's against the rules." A short stocky man in his mid-thirties came up to me. "Brian Stratton?" he asked. I nodded. He said "I'm Stan Newens" and we shook hands. "How does it feel to be out?" he asked. "Very strange, but good," I answered. He led me to the Members' Dining Room. "The food's good here," said Stan. "Would you like lunch?" "Certainly," I said. The steak and kidney pudding was delicious, whatever other shortcomings the House of Commons may have. I can thoroughly recommend the food. I gave Newens the message from the cons. "Are you serious?" he asked me incredulously. "They asked you to tell me this?" "I'm perfectly serious, Stan, and so are the people in there," I replied. "Christ, I gathered things were pretty bad in there by your letters to me. Do you think there could possibly be a riot?" "Stan, I don't think, I know there will be a riot unless you can get something done to stop the brutality." "I'll go down there and see

these men you've mentioned. I'm very worried about what you have told me, Brian. Do you think you could come and see me here next Tuesday evening? I'll have more time to discuss this with you then. I'm due to vote in a few minutes." "O.K.," I agreed. "I'll be here on Tuesday." He walked with me to the entrance. Coming in at the door was an extremely attractive auburn-haired woman who smiled at Stan and said "Hello". "Just a minute, Joan," Stan said, "I'd like you to meet a friend of mine, Brian Stratton. Brian, this is Joan Lester, Member for Eton and Slough." Joan Lester and I shook hands. Looking at the beautiful Miss Lester wiped out the faces of Lord Gnome, Bobbling Brooke, Edith Summerskill and other M.P.s that lurked in the back of my mind, to coin a phrase. She's a bit tasty. Stan told her I'd just come out of Parkhurst. "Have you? I'd like to talk to you about that place but I haven't got time at the moment." "I'm meeting Stan here on Tuesday evening," I told her. "That's fine. I'll see you then. Goodbye." She walked a few paces, then stopped and called back "Brian, did you know Jimmy Hanratty?" "Yes, I did," I answered. She walked back to me. "Did you know him well?" "Yes, I did," I said. "Do you think he was guilty of the A.6 murder?" she asked me. "No, I'm sure he was innocent." "That's what I think, and I'm trying to do something about it," she said. "I'll talk to you more on Tuesday." She trotted off. I shook hands with Stan and took a cab to the People's office in Long Acre. I introduced myself and was shown into a waiting room. After a few minutes a short stocky energetic geezer entered. "Mr Stratton?" he asked. "Yes." "I'm Trevor Aspinall." He then said "I handled our publishing of the round robin. I have here a photostat copy of the original round robin. Can you show me your signature on it?"

I found my signature. "Right," he said, "now what's happening in there?" I gave him the story and the warning I'd given to Newens. "It's incredible," he said. "We thought that after the inquiry things would have eased at Parkhurst. Funnily enough, we've just received another round robin from Walton jail in Liverpool complaining of brutality." "Can you do anything?" I asked him. "I don't know," he said, "I'll have to talk to the people upstairs. Let me take you out for a meal." (Everyone must have noticed how skinny I was to keep buying me meals.) Over dinner, I explained the situation thoroughly to him and we parted with another meeting planned for the next week.

I spent my first weekend out cased up with a bird (we'd been good friends for a long time). Thanks, Pat, you're a darling. She probably hates me now, with good reason, as I walked out on the Monday and haven't seen her since. Sorry, Pat, it's me, not you. Tuesday evening I met Joan Lester and Stan Newens over dinner. I repeated to her what I'd told Stan and Aspinall the previous Friday. She was very shocked at my story, and turning to Newens, she said "Are you going down there, Stan?" "Yes, I am," he said. "Then I'm coming with you. I'll see Stonham and get permission for us to go. I'll tell him we are extremely worried about the situation." Stan nodded. "I think you should both go as soon as possible," I said. "We will," replied Joan Lester.

In October I'd been out three months or so. I'd badgered The People endlessly, but Aspinall said they couldn't do anything. They'd be accused of raking over old scores, but he asked me to keep in touch. One Friday morning Stan Newens phoned me very early. Joan Lester had finally got permission for the two of them

to visit Parkhurst officially. I'd been in touch with my pals in the nick, telling them to hang on as the M.P.s were going down there to investigate their complaints. Newens had communicated my warning to Lord Stonham, the then Labour government's Undersecretary for State at the Home Office, who was responsible for prisons. Newens told Stonham he was very seriously concerned about conditions at Parkhurst and he believed that a riot was inevitable unless something was done. Stonham, with typical Whitehall complacency, laughed at Newens and said "There will be no riot at Parkhurst."

I gave Newens half-a-dozen names of cons who wanted to see him. Among the names were Timmy Noonan, Jack Marsh, John Gordon and Micky Andrews. "Fine, Brian, I'll call you tonight when I get home," he said. That night he phoned me again. "How did it go, Stan?" "Not too good," he said. "When we arrived Miller was waiting for us." Newens showed him the list of names I'd given him and asked Miller if they could interview these cons. Miller looked at the list. "Where did you get these names?" he asked. "From Brian Stratton," said Newens. "Did you indeed?" said Miller. "Well, you're not to speak to any of these men. I'm the Governor here and I'm not having M.P.s coming down here interfering." It was pointed out to Miller that if he had nothing to hide there was no reason for the two M.P.s not to interview the cons. Miller flatly refused and the two M.P.s were given a specially conducted tour of the nick. In one workshop Newens grabbed the opportunity to ask a con if he had any complaints. The con, Martin Read, complained he had been beaten up down the chokey recently. Newens insisted that he be shown the chokey block. Down there he asked the screws on duty how long they'd been on that particular job. It turned out that

the Filthy Five were still there, contrary to Callaghan's instructions five months earlier that they should be taken off that job. Asking Miller why these screws were still working in the punishment block, Newens got the standard Parkhurst answer, "We are too short staffed, so these officers volunteered to stay on this job." I've no doubt the Filthy Five did volunteer to stay on, but to say they were too short-staffed to change the screws is all bollocks. It would be simple enough to take five screws from other jobs and replace the Filthy Five. All in all, Joan Lester and Stan Newens were treated extremely shabbily by the Parkhurst mob. Newens was very annoyed and told me he was going to get a group of M.P.s together from all parties to go back down and tear the place apart. He did immediately complain to the Home Office that the Filthy Five were still on duty in the chokey block. At long last this firm were taken off the job, so the M.P.s' visit wasn't entirely in vain.

The following Friday evening I received a phone call from Trevor Aspinall of The People. "Heard the news, Brian?" he asked. With a sickening feeling in my guts I asked him what the news was. "There's a full-scale riot going on at Parkhurst. The cons have taken over the stage rooms and are holding some screws as hostages." "That's good, that's fucking good. For nearly four months I've been badgering you to do something and I told you there would be a riot. I told you where it would take place and why." "Our hands were tied, Brian, but we are going to do a piece this weekend." "Have you heard what's happening down there?" I asked. "Only what I've told you and that a warder has had his throat cut." "All right, I'll see you in the morning, Trevor." I put the phone down, shaking with rage. Those complacent bastards

at the Home Office. There will be no riot. Stratton, he's just a trouble-maker. Everything I'd warned them about had now taken place. One screw had got his throat cut. I phoned Stan Newens right away and told him what was going on down there, including the screw getting his throat cut. Stan abhors violence of any kind and I knew this would sicken him immensely. "I don't know what to say to you, Brian," he said. "you warned me. I warned the Home Office and they ignored it. Yet they knew things were far from good down there. I'm going to raise hell over this, Brian, I promise you." "You know what's going to happen to the cons, Stan? The screws will batter them senseless. The sit-down strike was a picnic compared to what's going to happen there tonight." He promised he would see what he could do. "O.K., Stan, I'll call you tomorrow," I said. I sat up the whole night thinking and thinking about the cunts who run the prisons in this country. The riot had been boiling up for ages, everyone knew. They just let the situation get worse and worse.



EPILOGUE

Over three years have gone since I wrote this book, which has been submitted to virtually every major publisher. Most of them wished to publish it, then they read it and that was that. "You will be sued for libel!" It is not allowed to publish true stories, containing names, about British prisons.

All of what I anticipated is coming true: riots, sit-down strikes etc. at virtually every long-term prison in the country, especially at Albany (the new progressive prison) and Gartree. They are progressive all right, it's just that the system, the screws, the riot sticks, are still of the same make.

As for the alleged ringleaders in Parkhurst, Martin Frape was sane enough to be given six years extra for his part in the riot, yet a week later he was certified insane and sent to Broadmoor. Timothy Noonan was given three years extra, but the Prison Department weren't satisfied, they kept Noonan in solitary confinement for over a thousand days. When at last I managed to persuade the Sunday Times to do an article on him, within a few days of the article's appearance Timmy was off solitary and restored to normal routine. During the thousand days he suffered a heart attack, for which the

prison doctor at Leicester prison prescribed aspirin water. For three days he lay in his cell, and only after a demonstration by the other prisoners was a real doctor fetched. In five minutes flat, Timmy was in Leicester Royal Infirmary, connected to a heart machine. When I saw him in hospital he told me the screws had said they were going to let him die.

Franky Fraser (who got five years) spent over two years in solitary. He has lost his sense of balance, and his eyesight is ruined as a result of violence inflicted upon him after the alleged riot. Fraser's sister Eve for over 12 months kept receiving obscene letters and telephone calls, saying what else would be done to her brother. Fraser at that time was in Wakefield prison. Eventually a senior prison warder at Wakefield was arrested and charged with stealing documents from Fraser's record, and making the obscene calls. The screw was given a conditional discharge by the court for his activities, but for some strange reason the screw was sacked from the prison service. I feel that the Prison Officers Association and the prison service could ill afford losing a screw so dedicated to his job.

The rest of the alleged ringleaders - Mickey Andrews, Tony Blythe, Stan Thomas - were all victimised by the screws after the case.

The events of the last three years in England were to be expected. The horrors of Attica and other prisons in the U.S.A., plus riots in jails in most of the so-called civilised countries, spanning continents, were also because of the same things: brutality and bad conditions. This is what has been and still is the trouble with British prisons. Nothing has changed and there will be more trouble. How long before the Grenadier

Guards are called in, because a bunch of incompetent morons do not see the wood for the trees?

I have been persecuted by the police because of appearances I made on television, talking about prisons and police corruption. I have been told by a screw at Croydon Crown Court that if they get me back in jail, I'll never come out again. And yet they wonder that I don't like them: they're only doing a job.

THE AUTHOR, Brian Stratton, served a nine-year sentence for robbery, most of it in Parkhurst prison. Rioting broke out in Parkhurst shortly after his release in 1969. He wrote "Who Guards the Guards?" to let the public know how the riot was caused.

PROP - Preservation of the Rights Of Prisoners - is the prisoners' union. Prisoners are deprived of elementary human rights, and prison abuses are easy to conceal because of systematic secrecy and censorship. This is why PROP calls for reforms (summarised in its prisoners' charter) which would sweep away secrecy and secure essential rights for all prisoners.