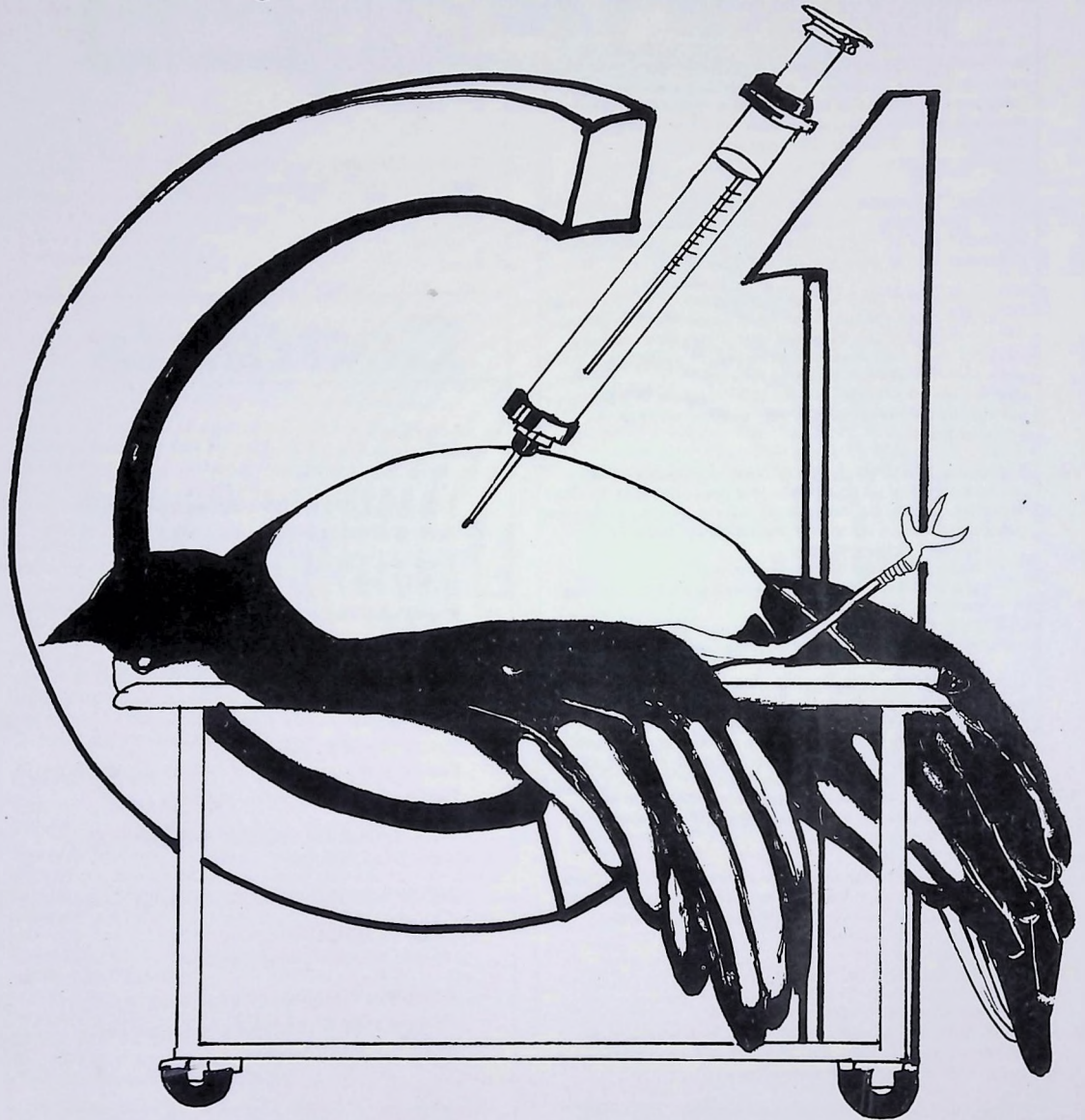


MSS.110/4/18

THE ABOLITIONIST £1

The Magazine of Radical Alternatives to Prison



C1 FOR SORROW

incorporating Inquest • PROP • Women In Prison

TEN DAYS IN PRISON

by Karen Robinson

1. RAP is a pressure group working towards the abolition of imprisonment. We do not believe that imprisonment is a rational, humane or effective way of dealing with harmful behaviour or human conflict. We believe that it functions in a repressive and discriminatory manner which serves the interests of the dominant class in an unequal society — whether capitalist or 'socialist'.

Most people in prison are there for crimes which are a response to the frustrations of their social and economic position. Capitalism creates its own 'crime problem', and no amount of tinkering with the penal system will solve it.

We recognise that there will be no possibility of abolition without fundamental changes in the social order. We also recognise, while working towards abolition, that it may never be fully attained. There may always be some people whose behaviour poses such a threat to others that their confinement is justified; we cannot tell. There are some such people in prison now but they are, without doubt, a very small minority of the prison population.

2. A capitalist state cannot do without imprisonment, but it can make do with very much less of it than ours does, as other countries, notably the Netherlands, have shown. RAP supports measures to reduce the prison population by means of:

- an end to prison building;
- legislation to cut maximum sentences;
- decriminalisation of certain offences, such as soliciting and possession of cannabis;
- an end to the imprisonment of minor property offenders, and of fine and maintenance defaulters.

3. The introduction of 'alternatives' like community service orders and intermediate treatment has not stopped the prison population from rising, but has increased the scope for interference by the State in people's lives. We do not deny that some good things have been done in the name of alternatives within the penal system, but we hold no brief for them. What we do support are 'radical alternatives' which are, as far as possible, non-coercive, non-stigmatising and independent of the State.

4. Many prison reforms amount to a sugar coating on a toxic pill. But while prisons remain, some features of our present system can and should be done away with, in particular:

- secrecy and censorship;
- compulsory work;
- the use of drugs to control prisoners;
- solitary confinement (by whatever name);
- the system of security classification.

These demands are largely satisfied by the Special Unit at Brixton Prison, which has shown what can be achieved by a less authoritarian and restrictive approach.

5. Many of RAP's medium-term goals are shared by other groups who do not share our political outlook. But RAP's fundamental purpose is, through research and propaganda, to educate the public about the true nature, as we see it, of imprisonment and the criminal law; to challenge the prevailing attitudes to crime and delinquency; and to counter the ideology of law-and-order which helps to legitimate an increasingly powerful State machine.

RAP

Radical Alternatives to Prison,
BCM Box 4842, London WC1N 3XX.

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At 10.00am on Tuesday 3rd July I had an appointment with the warrant officer at Old Street Magistrates' Court. This concerned two committal warrants issued for my arrest and a third unpaid fine. I turned up with a carefully-packed bag as I knew I was going to be sent to prison. The two warrants were for unpaid fines of £50.00 and £10.00 following non-violent sit-down protests, outside the Houses of Parliament, about Cruise missiles last November and December. They carried a sentence of 7 days each, which were made concurrent. A sentence is ordered in the event of the fine not being paid. If someone still refuses to pay the fine when a committal warrant has been issued s/he goes straight to prison; no further hearing is necessary.

I had been ordered to pay the third fine and costs (£45) following a nonviolent blockade of USAF Daws Hill last December. Since a prison sentence had not been ordered at the original court case, a means enquiry was held at Old Street Magistrates' Court that morning. On refusing to pay, I was ordered to serve 7 days in prison — to run consecutively with the 7 days from the two warrants. So I received a 14 day prison sentence altogether for refusing to pay a total of £105 in fines and costs. Since prisoners receive one third remission for good behaviour I worked out that I would serve 10 days and be released on Thursday 12th July.

Although prisoners are not allowed to keep records of their stay in prison, I kept a diary on a paper bag and on the backs and insides of cards and letters I received and managed to bring most of this out of prison. The following was written from the notes I made in prison.

TUESDAY 3rd JULY

Went with Heather and Jim to court. Given good luck message from my gran — a life-long pacifist. Wonderful!

10.15am Reported to warrant officer. Forms filled in. Said good-bye to Heather and Jim. Taken into custody. Searched. Belongings listed and sealed in plastic bag. Locked in cell. Two messages and sandwiches sent in by Heather and Jim. Lovely! Into courtroom 2 for means enquiry. Felt down afterwards — didn't feel I'd tried hard enough to explain why I was not paying — not assertive enough. All over very quickly. My friends sang 'All we are saying is give peace a chance' when I was sentenced. Down to cell again. Tearful. One of the officials who'd been in court came down and visited me in the cell — very supportive. In fact he popped by twice! Lunch. Another message sent in by Heather and Jim.

4.00pm Taken to Lambeth police station for processing. Had photo taken holding card with no. on it. Should I have cooperated? Asked whether I wanted to see a doctor. More forms. Back into crowded smoky waiting area. No window. Big thick door. Some women prisoners behaving in an extrovert fashion — others sitting perfectly still and silent. Women there for carrying/dealing with drugs, shoplifting, fraud with cheque cards, prostitution, alleged assault on child, assault on male attacker etc. As I was leaving Lambeth, police officers jeered at me, 'If only you'd paid your fine, you wouldn't have to be with that lot'. I insisted that the prisoners were human beings too and many were friendly.

6.30 — 7.00pm Moved by van to Highbury Corner court which is a holding station where prisoners are kept until there is room in the prison. Modern cells. Seemed like a haven after feeling down at Lambeth. Tea served straight away. Another woman moved into my cell — she was a heroin addict — very ill — suffering from withdrawal symptoms. Poor woman. Shivering, very pale. Said she was dehydrated. Asked to keep an eye on her and report to the officers if she got worse. Later in evening cells unlocked — able to wander up and down the corridor. Shower and toilets at the end of corridor (Big gate at end of corridor firmly locked). Wonderful to have shower and wash my clothes. Felt much more cheerful. Gave message to be phoned to Heather to say where I was. Message came back that she would visit tomorrow. To sleep. Lights out at 11.00pm. Police officers came round in middle of night to check how the other woman in my cell was.

WEDNESDAY 4th JULY

7.00am Lights on. Doors unlocked soon after. Dashed out for shower. Needn't have rushed because in fact doors were left open most of the day except for when the shifts changed and when the new women prisoners arrived in the evening. Very stuffy. No windows anywhere. Couldn't tell whether it was day or night.

8.00 am Breakfast. Vegan at home. Only managed to be vegetarian here — didn't have courage/energy to ask for a vegan diet. Tension in myself because of that. Resolved to ask for it at Holloway though. Tried asking for my books etc — said it was not possible to unseal bag.

10.00 — 11.00am Decision made as to who's going to Holloway. My cell-mate went — presumably because she was ill. Cleaned out my cell. Folded my blankets etc with great precision. Tidiness, cleanliness of immediate environment becomes very important.

Slight altercation with one of the women prisoners. She was sitting on a chair in the corridor with her legs stretched out on another chair across the corridor. I wanted to go past so not wanting to disturb her, stepped over her legs. She took offence at this feeling it was rude. She said this to another woman who was there when I had gone past. When I came back she did not move her legs as the other woman who were sitting there did. I said I was sorry if I'd offended her. Eventually she moved her legs. Laughed at me as I went past. Reminded me of school. Last time I was in a regimented all-women environment. Same feelings of inadequacy — not feeling as trendy as the other women — although knowing deep down that that was not important. Feelings that I was different — didn't fit in. Asked for pen and paper and wrote to my parents.

2.15pm Visit from Heather and Jim. Strange talking to them, holding their hands, kissing them through bars with prisoners watching behind you. Wasn't very relaxed. Lovely to see them but felt as though there was a big gap between us — we were in different worlds — they were not as psyched up as me — not going through the same experience. Surprised I felt that.

They brought food and books with them. Wonderful! Then message passed to me that my mum had phoned and sent her love. Read a lot. Peaceful. Felt much happier – occupied in my clean cell! Later in the evening I moved in with a young woman – I think she was there for cheque card fraud.

THURSDAY 5th JULY

Cell-mate left for Holloway. Managed to negotiate opening sealed bag for books, paper, magazines and pens. Wonderful! Took great pleasure in piling all my belongings neatly in the cell. Lot of reading.

2.15pm Visit from Heather. More relaxed this time. Later in afternoon – visit from Jim – two visits in one day! At a holding station prisoners have remand conditions – so I was allowed a visit each day (and on this occasion two!) Once in Holloway, since I was a convicted prisoner, I was entitled to a reception visit and then one very two weeks.

Discussion in corridor with police officers and prisoners. Police officer said 'aren't you going to convert me to CND then?' Discussion on CND followed. Then discussed drugs, drink, prostitution – in fact the different reasons why women were there. On my own this evening – very relaxed. Warm police officer asking if anyone spoke Spanish – for a new woman prisoner who could only speak Spanish.

The days of waiting/reading were punctuated by many really positive incidents, often from unexpected quarters (eg an official quietly expressing support when we were on our own together.) and a few negative incidents which seemed designed to intimidate, mock or exert power needlessly. The positive and negative incidents both made big impressions on me; my senses seemed to be heightened.

FRIDAY 6th JULY

Moved to Holloway this morning. Police officer agreed to phone Heather to say I'd been moved. Taken in van together. Amazing to see sunshine. All the colours were so vibrant after seeing no daylight for 2½ days. All the normal street scenes seemed so interesting!

Went through gate in huge corrugated iron fence. Into reception wing. Small room. Prison officer checked what each of us was there for. Property we'd had in our cells was taken from us. Then into waiting room. Waited from about 10.30am until about 5.00pm in that room. Although many women were smoking there was air and daylight visible through the open windows! One by one went out to see the nurse. Told to take everything off and change into dressing gowns. Talking more to two women I'd met at Highbury Corner – both of whom were very friendly. One was waiting for a surety to arrive – as days went on it seemed less and less likely that her friends and relatives would be able to arrange a surety – if the surety didn't arrive she would have to remain in prison until her court date. It struck me that if she was a middle or upper class woman it would have been much more likely that the surety would have been raised – surely if money is involved it can not be a fair system. The other woman was an alcoholic and was serving 9 months for stealing several bottles of alcohol. She was a lovely gentle woman. It made me very, very sad and angry.

From the waiting room we could see the exercise area. When the prisoners came out for exercise nearly everyone sat straight down on the benches. A very few women walked slowly round in circles. Eventually called into room where property is all checked through. Strip-searched. Told to stand between three screens, and put my sanitary towel in a bin. Told to take off my dressing gown. Prison officer held it wide open to shield me from other people in the room. Told to put my hands on the back of my neck and turn round. Dressing gown back on again. Property listed. Told to stand on crumpled towel on the floor while this was being done. Allowed 6 books. They were paperback books. I was not allowed to

take in library books or books with any underlining or comments written in the margins. I was allowed pens but no paper and some clothes. Put in two large brown paper bags. Rest sealed away. Given soap, toothbrush, toothpowder, shampoo and towel. Offered shower or bath. Then saw male doctor. Female nurse was there too. Brief medical history and very brief physical examination; lung spleen and liver. In and out like being on a conveyor belt. Then to eating area at the end of the reception wing corridor. Served tea by other prisoners – that was their prison job. More waiting. Met up with woman I recognised from Greenham. Good to talk to her. There's another peace woman here too! It makes a lot of difference. Given sheets and pillow case rolled up. Taken to dormitory in wing B3 where prisoners passing in and out of prison are kept. Eight women in dorm. 4 bunks in the dorm. Radio on all evening. Wrote reception letter. Whole reception process hadn't been nearly as frightening as when I'd spent 12 hours in Holloway last November. Had arrived in Holloway at 10.00pm on my own from Banbury police station on the last occasion. Arriving in the sunlight with a group of women I already knew a little made a lot of difference. I was let out in the morning last time because I'd already served most of my sentence at Banbury and with one third remission I was due to be released that morning. Headache. Thought it was the radio but decided later that I had caught a virus. Night not so good. Developed a bad sore throat during the night. Hot.

SATURDAY 7th JULY

Reception process continues. Breakfast quite early – collected in hatch in dining room. Cleaned out dorm. Locked up again. Moved along wing to a locked waiting room. Waiting to see Assistant Governor.

While we were waiting saw Anglican chaplain. He was very friendly. I asked if I could see a Quaker prison minister (this was the phrase I'd been told was the correct one) and asked about the possibility of a Meeting for Worship tomorrow. I'd just met the third peace woman and she is a Quaker and so she asked for these things too. Saw Assistant Governor (one of them). Filled form in. Asked about diet. Said I was a vegan. Told me about regulations prohibiting prisoners from having firearms. Asked if I could see a Quaker prison minister (thought I might have to get A.G.'s permission) but she said it was a matter for the chaplain. Also get visiting order. I asked how many peace women there were in Holloway at the moment. She said 'Well you're the third I've seen this morning'. Suggested that I should think about the fact that by peace women coming into prison, we're causing other prisoners to wait longer in police stations or holding stations before they are admitted . . .

Back to dormitory. Radio on continuously. Whenever I hear certain songs again they're sure to remind me of prison. After lunch taken to another wing, D3. Got there just before exercise (prisoners get ½hr exercise in the morning and in the afternoon if the weather is fine.) Left belongings in office. Taken to exercise yard – searched on the way out of the wing and on the way back. Walked round and round the exercise yard with Katrina – one of the Greenham women. I felt angry at the humiliation of being made to line up in twos before walking back to the wing – keeping on the left. So like school. Was told that if I made a protest with regard to the exercise procedure there was a risk that privileges would be withdrawn from all the other prisoners. What should one do in that situation? I have been thinking that maybe I should reserve my protests to examples of injustice that are meted out individually so that hopefully it is only me who takes the consequences. It needs more thought. At the moment I'm not daring to challenge very much at all – whether it is a prisoner or an officer I disagree with.

Back onto wing. By now I've got a full-blown cold. On previous wing had asked for and received tissues. However I was using them at a very fast rate – needed more by the time

I reached D3. Ration is 5 tissues/week. Rations are only given out on a certain day. So the officers refused to give me any tissues. They gave me paper towels instead. At one level its an unimportant incident but at another level it shows how much control is taken away from you. On checking through my belongings officer said words to the effect that she wasn't surprised that I had a cold *living in a field*. She was assuming that all women who came into prison because of their peace activities lived at Greenham Common. One prisoner I talked to said there was a lot of resentment towards Greenham women by some prison officers and by a few prisoners. I replied that I lived in a house in London. In fact I was convinced that the virus I had caught was resident in the air in the Reception wing. There is poor ventilation there. Three other women admitted at the same time as me got it as soon as they arrived. I also heard of three other women who'd been admitted several weeks earlier and had gone down with exactly the same thing on arrival. I mentioned this to two doctors I saw and a member of the Board of Visitors as a complaint, but I don't think very much will be done about it.

In a dorm, with three other women. Got to know them very well. I think they had all been convicted of various forms of theft including one woman who said she was serving several months for something that she didn't do, but the magistrate had not believed her. Dorm much more plush than B3. Pink bedspreads and curtains. Separate beds. Curtains around bed. Sink and (private) toilet in dorm. Cross between luxurious youth hostel and hospital. The times I found most difficult during the week were the periods following a change of environment eg the first day being moved from court in Highbury and then the first day in Holloway in B3. Then the surroundings – within a day or two I was carving out some routine for myself depending on the circumstances. These periods immediately after a move were when you were thrown together with women you had never met before and we were all busy forming an opinion of each other – good, bad or indifferent. I was very lucky – I was put in a dorm with women who were very friendly.

However another peace woman who has been imprisoned in Holloway received a very negative reaction from one of the women in her cell. The woman came out of the cell saying, 'They've put a f . . . Greenham woman in my cell.' I asked a woman prisoner I got talking to why she felt some prisoners were resentful of Greenham women. One reason she gave was that peace women were seen by some prisoners as taking places in the open prisons causing other prisoners to wait longer in the closed prisons. Needs thinking about.

SUNDAY 8th JULY

7.30am Up. Strip wash at sink (sink had curtain around it). Washed underwear.

8.30am Breakfast. Talked with Katrina. Cleaned room out. Exercise. After 10.00am Anglican chaplain arrived to take me to Quaker Meeting for Worship with one other prisoner – the Quaker woman from Greenham, Bat. Wonderful. On our own in small room. Sat together in silence looking out at the sunshine through the bars . . . Very moving, calming and inspiring. Lunch – first vegan meal. Because of bureaucracy and moving wings the vegan diet took a while to catch up with me. Locked up. Afternoon exercise. Association time; had bath.

3.30pm Tea. Then locked up until morning. One discussion I had while I was in Holloway was how I should spend my 'spends' on Wednesday. (Apparently I would get 'paid' in goods at the canteen for a couple of days work). There seems to be an established practice that women being released spend their last wages on things for women staying in (even though there were rules forbidding the lending or giving of any item by one prisoner to another). Women wanted me to buy them tobacco. Said I didn't mind buying them other things but I couldn't

buy tobacco because I regarded it as a poison. This was not received well and I was sent to Coventry for several minutes (seemed longer than it was). This was a bit alarming. I wondered how I would cope if it went on very long. However communication was soon resumed and I got on fine with them after that – in fact there was a lot of generosity and humour.

MONDAY 9th JULY

Work today. I had been worrying about this for some time as I knew that I would have to refuse to do some kinds of work (work that I regarded as harmful or useless) and I was not looking forward to the confrontation that would probably ensue. I relaxed when I learnt that women serving very short sentences were given wing cleaning to do. I had no objections to cleaning my environment – in fact I regarded it as a positive thing. However I would have felt uneasy if I had been asked to clean out the officers room which had a carpet unlike the other rooms on the wing. This is because I believe in principle that everyone should be responsible for cleaning up their own mess if they are able to do so. In fact I was given a mat to shake from the officers' room which I did before really thinking the matter through. I knew that to refuse to obey an instruction was breaking the rules and there were punishments that would follow accordingly. I was surprised at my cowardice: my reluctance to challenge things I believed to be wrong. I learnt a lot about my weakness and lack of guts by going to Holloway. Hopefully I will be able to challenge more next time – in a firm and loving way. I have decided that I would refuse to assemble or pack items in the workroom unless they were socially useful. I would not be able to work in the kitchen – another long-term job because I would not want to prepare food with animal products.

In the event I was asked to clean out the sluice room which I thoroughly enjoyed doing as it was in quite a state. I did it thoroughly and was surprised to be commended for it later while waiting in the meal queue. One of the women in our dorm works in the kitchen all day. She has to get up at about 6.00am and leaves about 7.00am.

Made a birthday card for one prisoner by copying a design she found me. After that I got several requests for further cards, and drawing from a photo of a relative etc. Although I was different in so many ways and not trendy etc I was relieved to discover that I had one skill that was highly prized! (Buying cards at the canteen made a big dent in a week's wages). Saw Assistant Governor (different one this time). He gave me my earliest release date (ERD) – if I get one third remission – and my latest release date (LRD) – without remission. Although I had worked these out long before, it was good to have them confirmed. Also release form; whether you're being met, where you're going to on release, how much it will cost etc. Prisoners who are travelling a long way receive subsistence money in addition to transport costs. I said I didn't know whether I was being met but that either way I would be walking and that I wouldn't require any money.

TUESDAY 10th JULY

Morning exercise. Walked round and talked with a woman from our wing serving a life sentence. D3 is meant to be a wing for women serving fairly long sentences. It must have been quite distressing for the women who had long sentences (at least two women on the wing had life sentences and most women there were serving several months or years) to see women like me coming in and out so rapidly. What can one say to a woman who faces an indefinite period in prison when I was going to be out within a few days? What can one say that is sensitive/meaningful?

Part of the process I experienced today was being sent to the Special Clinic for a VD test. Said to the officer that I was refusing a VD test but she said that I would have to go down to the clinic and refuse there. So we were taken down as a group to the Special Clinic. When I saw the doctor she was very friendly. I refused the VD test and other tests (one was a cancer smear - I can't remember what the other one was).

Back to the wing. Finished sluice room - now my established job! Letters are handed out when we are locked in after lunch - I received 9 cards! Very heartwarming. Also difficult. Other prisoners got one or none. I tried to be discreet with the cards and letters. Many cards arrived from people in the Quaker network. Lovely. Heard from my parents' letter that there had been a vigil organised outside the prison on Sunday afternoon. People are so wonderful! Quaker prison minister visited me on the wing in the afternoon. Good to be able to talk to her about some of the dilemmas I'd come across.

In the evening there was a big event in Holloway - a fire engine came to rescue a bird caught in a tree! Suddenly there were whoops from women in the blocks all round the tree. After all the silence, containment and regimentation (it is against the rules to call to someone out of the window) it was amazing to hear all this noise erupting. Women sang 'For he's a jolly good fellow' when the fireman descended from the tree with the bird in a net. No-one was stopping the women making a noise. At one level it is reassuring that there's room for spontaneity - even in prison. On the other hand it was pathetic - because women were so bored they gave an exaggerated response to a tiny incident.

WEDNESDAY 11th JULY

I was down in the yard for morning exercise when I was whisked away to the doctors to be 'fitted' - doctor has to pass you fit to be released. It seems that no sooner have you finished the reception process then the whole system goes into reverse and the release process begins. Did my sluice room job. Also went down with 3 other prisoners and an officer to empty the bins. Worth it just for the extra walk in the fresh air. Called into office by officers just for a chat as to why I was in prison. One of the prisoners and I tried to arrange to go to the gym to play badminton/table tennis during the exercise time. The officer phoned up and it was OK with the gym but we were prevented from going because there wasn't an officer available to take us there. This happens with education in the evening. There are several classes run each evening with teachers from outside the prison which prisoners are entitled to attend. However because of a prison officers' dispute, involving a ban on 'extra' work such as escorting prisoners to the education block, it has been fairly rare for the prisoners to reach their classes. The teachers are waiting for them, and the prisoners are waiting in their wings to go but the two can't meet. This has been going on for several weeks.

After exercise - called for a visit. The visiting order had eventually reached Heather! (I hadn't received the visiting order until Saturday and so it didn't get sent until Monday. Heather received it 2nd post on Wednesday). Taken down to a room near the Reception wing. About 15 women having visits at once. Heather had to wait 1½ hours before she saw me. I was searched before and after visit. Sit either side of long tables. Prison officer watching space between visitors and prisoners. Visit lasted about ½ hour. Ash-trays on each table - were emptied after each visit. There was something very sordid about this - as if the visitors and prisoners had been given their fortnightly tension-ridden ½ hour entitlement and when they retired, lungs suitably tarred, the ashtrays were emptied ready for the next lot. Lovely to see Heather! Back to wing.

Later in the afternoon taken to canteen - 3 days wages (Mon, Tues, Wed?) - earned 69p - interesting system! No money exchanged hands. 'Bought' toothpaste, soap and tissues. For change I was given three sweets.

Difficult saying good-bye to women - strange feeling when you're going out tomorrow and they're staying in for months or years. I think I cut off from trying to understand their pain, from empathising with them because it was too awful. It's not so much the physical conditions which were much more luxurious than I'd expected - it's the mental control/anguish. So I switch off and think about me. Didn't sleep at all well compared with the other nights - too much anticipation and excitement - pleased when it was time to get up.

THURSDAY 12th JULY

Up at approx. 6.00am. Washed and dressed. Stripped bed. Had packed my things into the large brown paper bag and cleaned out the wardrobe the night before. Encouraged to put on a certain pair of slacks. Had the feeling something had been planned to say 'goodbye'(!) Put on the other pair as planned. Laughed said I'd think of Holloway when I examined the slacks at home! (And sure enough when I got home found that one leg had been stitched together!) The humour's something I'll remember or a long time.

Seemed ages before officer came to collect me. Kept getting up thinking they'd come for me. Eventually went. Along many corridors back to the Reception wing. Told to leave

belongings on table. They were sorted through and put in two plastic carrier bags. Lost one of the paper bags with Saturday's diary on it, but rest of diary on back of letters etc came through intact.

Told to go to cubicle. Officer followed me in; told me to take my clothes off and 'drop my pants'. Didn't have to put dressing gown on - could get re-dressed straight away. Had to wait in wooden cubicle (like swimming baths). There I found Bat, the Quaker peace woman I'd been to Meeting for Worship with, on Sunday. Lovely that we were being released together. Given breakfast while we waited. Back into room where I'd been strip-searched on the way in and where your belongings are sorted. Had to sign for goods in sealed bag. Given £1.65 although I repeated that I was walking home and did not need any money. Officer said that she would give it to me anyway - to be on the safe side. Another question on the form; 'Did I have any comments/complaints?' I wasn't prepared for this so I said 'No, not that I haven't made already'. Taken down to gate. Before we arrived there officer told each of us our number. Gate person asked each of us our name and number - because that's the rule - even though we couldn't remember our numbers and had to refer to the officer again. Eventually released at 8.20am.

Wonderful to see Catherine, John and Michael waiting for me. Went to cafe for a drink and Michael sang us a song. Lovely ending. Walked slowly home relishing the bustle and the colour. Spent my £1.65 on bread and veg from the market and arrived home happy and in time for a late breakfast.

REFLECTIONS

I found my stay in Holloway depressing, disturbing, challenging and inspiring. I was depressed by the whole notion of 'punishment'. I felt that no human being should be degraded in the way that prisoners are - whatever they have done. Moreover I felt that a large number of women there should not have been in prison at all; ie women who had committed 'crimes' that had not harmed other people directly, eg women in prison for shoplifting, prostitution, drugs using (as opposed to drugs dealing), alcoholism, joy-riding etc. I think these women should be offered help and support if they want it, but certainly not sent to prison. I felt angry at the injustice being done to these women and the waste of human resources caused by locking them up in cells. I felt angry that it was no coincidence that nearly all the prisoners were working-class and that a significant number were black, ie the most powerless women in our society. I felt angry at the hypocrisy of our society

which regards the dishonesty of the working class as 'crime but the dishonesty of the middle and upper classes as fairly benign fiddling or perks. I felt angry at the adverts which encourage people to yearn for a lifestyle they cannot possibly afford, so making shoplifting more likely.

For the women who had harmed other people, eg drugs dealers and women who had committed violent assaults or killed people, I could not see how prison was going to change them. I felt that prison with its narrowness and mental cruelty was likely to make women more resentful and alienated from society, not enable them to reflect on their actions and move towards a constructive role in society. I don't know how this latter aim could be achieved but it seems to me that prisons do not and cannot aim to achieve it. At the moment I can see no other option but to 'contain' some women who are really dangerous to society, in some sort of institution. However this could be done in a firm, loving way not a cruel, punitive way. Staying in Holloway has raised a whole series of questions in my mind about our legal system including prisons. I know that much of what I saw of the system was wrong and did not uphold the dignity of the human beings who were part of it (I felt both the prisoners and officers were degraded by the system). There is clearly much I have to learn and think about re different ways society can discipline itself and alternatives to prison.

I was disturbed at my unwillingness to challenge things I believed to be wrong. I tried to comfort myself with the thought that this was my first time and I would spend it learning the routine and so be able to challenge things better next time. But this was an excuse. I was dissatisfied with my response to a variety of situations which may be grouped as follows:

A. Interaction with other prisoners

- When talking with women about why they had come to prison, I asked lots of clarifying questions, trying to understand why they'd done what they'd done. However I stopped there. Some women had done things which while I could understand how they'd got involved, I thought were wrong. I did not say what I thought. This was because I was afraid. I was a coward. I was scared of the possible repercussions on me if I said what I thought.
- Similarly I did not often challenge views that came up in discussion which I disagreed with, eg advocacy of physical violence, dishonesty, stereotypes of women, racism, wish to get back at a certain prisoner or officer etc.
- On the whole I concentrated on myself rather than thinking of other people (I do this outside prison too). Because it was a worrying situation I tended to be quite insular when I should have been giving to other prisoners who were often quite upset/agitated and who had certainly not chosen to go into prison as I had.

B. Interaction with prison officers/officials

Prison Officers' treatment of me

I was disappointed with my lack of courage in challenging officers/officials who did not treat me with a basic human dignity. These incidents fell into three groups.

1. *Verbal comments*

I think I should have refused to comply with orders, eg 'Age', 'Stand there', 'Name', 'Keep on the left' etc. I should only have complied if I was asked to do something and if I felt that what I was being asked to do

was right. As a peace woman I probably have an extra responsibility to challenge unjust, degrading treatment. Other prisoners are in a much less fortunate position as they could risk losing months of remission if they rock the boat. Even so I was amazed at the bravery of some prisoners in not being cowed by the system.

2. *Unnecessary use of power by officers*

An example of this was on a particular occasion at Highbury Corner it was at the police officer's discretion whether the prisoners ate their tea locked in their cells or outside. He decided for no apparent reason that we should be locked up. Some of the rules seemed open to officers' discretion as to how rigidly they were applied - some officers chose to interpret rules very strictly.

3. *Dehumanising structures / rules*

These were not the responsibility of the prison officers (although individual officers could have refused to implement them) but were injustices inherent in the day-to-day running of the prison system, eg being made to stand in twos and walk on the left on leaving the exercise yard, talking to you/feeding you through the hatch in door, constant locking/unlocking of doors, limiting the amount of property you're allowed, not being able to write a diary, censoring incoming and outgoing mail, short and infrequent visits for convicted prisoners (½ hr. in 2 weeks), having to make a Governor's application for permission to do the simplest things etc.

Prison Officers' treatment of other prisoners

I did not dare speak up on any occasion when I thought a prisoner was being unjustly treated by a prison officer. Should I have done in the interests of truth? I didn't because of fear of the repercussions on me. But if I had the courage, should I have done so if there was a chance that such an action would have negative repercussions on the prisoner being unjustly treated? The prisoner may want to be as unobtrusive as possible during her sentence and may not appreciate having attention drawn to her in that way. Needs more thought about how/whether such protests should be made.

In summary, next time I would like to have the courage to oppose things I believe to be wrong and do it in a calm and loving way. I would like to be more giving to other prisoners and more self-sufficient (I think my friends and relatives had quite a taxing time supporting me from outside prison - I don't want my being in prison to be an extra burden on them). I would like to be more positive towards people and less judging.

I found the experience challenging and inspiring. I was thrown into a new situation and managed to relate in a real way to some prisoners and a few officers. There were some very positive moments. I was confronted with many dilemmas and did not cope with most of them in the way I would have liked. However I hope that next time I will be able to be stronger and more loving in my responses. It was a continual test. I learnt a great deal about myself and other people. Support from people outside prison was amazing and a great source of strength. Thank-you to everyone.

Karen Robinson

NOTES ON

by Tony Ward

Readers in South-East England and the Midlands will have recognised the magpies on the cover as the motif of the Home Office's slick and expensive 'Don't Let Them Get Away With It - Prevent Crime' campaign, which uses them much as Nazi propagandists used rats. In view of the topicality of 'crime prevention', it seemed to some of us to be a good idea to put together a group of articles around this theme. Jill Radford of the Wandsworth Policing Campaign, and Vicki Carter and Tommy Shephard of CAPA, consider what might be done to prevent sexual and racial attacks respectively; Julian Scola takes a critical look at one of the products advertised on TV, neighbourhood watch; and Carol Gaca describes perhaps the most successful of established crime prevention schemes, NACRO's Safe Neighbourhood Unit. None of these articles - including this one - should be taken as expressing RAP policy.

MAGPIES



There has already been some criticism of our choice of subject-matter, on the basis that we are casting our net too wide, and straying into the fishing-grounds of the relatively numerous campaigns concerned with policing. 'Crime Prevention' schemes are not quite so directly related to imprisonment as the 'alternatives to prison' - radical or otherwise - which have always been one of RAP's main interests. That in itself may be significant. Thomas Mathiesen (whose book *The Politics of Abolition* is a seminal work for RAP) has argued that alongside the spread of more or less prison-like forms of control such as community service a different strategy is emerging, which involves the surveillance and control of 'whole groups and categories' and so represents not 'a further development of the individualising prison form, but rather a certain break with it.'¹ Crime prevention schemes, or some of them, may form part of such a strategy.

There is certainly a close connection (which has been analysed in detail by the GLC Police Committee²) between the Government's crime prevention initiatives and the strategy of multi-agency policing. Multi-agency policing raises matters of very immediate concern to RAP, as it involves strengthening links between the police and the agencies running 'community alternatives' - the Probation, Social, and Youth Services - thus integrating them still more closely into the coercive apparatus of the state and undermining their already ambiguous 'caring' role.

Most importantly, in turning our attention to this topic we are following what has been the policy of this magazine for some years now, by confronting head-on the problems posed by 'serious' crime, including violence against women and racial violence. Office 'crime prevention' strategies have conspicuously little to offer in this respect. Although some 'situational' measures, such as street lighting, are important, it is also necessary to consider the short-term roles of policing of prisons and - although this is barely touched on here - of self-defence.

It is not RAP's intention to engage directly in debates about policing, but at a general level the issues of policing and imprisonment raise the same question: are there some kinds of crime against which socialists or libertarians should accept, and even encourage, the use of the repressive machinery of the state?

One approach to this problem is to recognise that some kinds of crime are acts of oppression 'on behalf of' a powerful group against a less powerful. Racial and sexual attacks, corporate crime, and crimes by police and prison officers are obvious examples. These are all areas where the effort put into law-enforcement is relatively low; often, indeed, so low as to seem to condone the crimes concerned. In some such cases, action

by the state could have concrete and desirable effects: the arrest and imprisonment of some rapists and racists would be of real benefit to their victims. Just as one may ultimately hope for the abolition of wage-labour and yet accept that in the present state of society it is better (for many people) to be in employment than out of it, so one may ultimately hope for the abolition of penal 'justice' and yet accept that in the present state of society it is better for a few people to be in prison than out of it.

I am not suggesting that RAP ought to campaign for the imprisonment of rapists, bent coppers or anybody else: only that the long-term ideal of abolition has to be tempered by an acknowledgement of the legitimate short-term interests of the oppressed.

One of the fatal mistakes of certain 'left idealists' is to fail to distinguish clearly between the 'crimes of the powerful' and ordinary working-class street crime which is essentially an inter-group activity and against which existing law enforcement policies are oppressive, divisive and ideologically motivated. The principles of 'socialist public justice' which support such a distinction are expounded (alongside some more questionable notions) in Tony Jefferson and Roger Grimshaw's new book *Controlling the Constable* (Cobden Trust, 1984). These principles dictate that victimisation rates for the latter type of offences ought not to be achieved (even if it were a practical possibility) by raising arrest and conviction rates: 'Only preventative work which would simultaneously lower offender and victim rates would be acceptable'.

In the field of preventative work I believe much can be learnt from the NACRO projects described by Carol Gaca, and particularly from the way they have evolved away from being specifically about crime prevention and towards seeking generally to improve the quality of life in a neighbourhood. It is important (and not always simple - who knows what a close examination of some of those NACRO schemes might reveal?) to distinguish between 'crime prevention' schemes which are modestly useful and those which, like neighbourhood watch, are fraught with danger and calculated to divide the communities they purport to serve. What is pernicious - apart from its imagery - about the 'magpie' campaign is its linking of the two.

Footnotes

1. 'The Future of Control Systems - the case of Norway' in David Garland and Peter Young (eds), *The Power to Punish*, Heinemann, 1983, p.139.
2. *Home Office Draft Circular on Crime Prevention - A Response* (PC 158) available from Room 602, County Hall, London SE1 7PB.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SPEAK OUT

'Violence Against Women - Women Speak Out' is a survey currently being carried out by women working with the Wandsworth Policing Campaign. Its aim is to explore the nature and extent of violence against women in the borough and the police response to it. It is jointly funded by the GLC's Police and Women's Committees and it is based on interviews with local women.

The survey has two histories: one in feminist concern about violence against women which first was publicised with the establishment of Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Centres in the 1970s. In the 1980s feminist awareness, that the massive amounts of supportive work undertaken by these organisations represented only a very small tip of the iceberg of male violence, led to the formation of Women Against Violence Against Women groups throughout the country. These groups were committed to exposing and challenging all forms of male violence against women. WAVAW groups, consistent with feminist principles, based their campaigning around women's own experience. But increasingly in doing talks with mixed audiences, some of us found that women's knowledge was challenged by men who attempted to argue: that male violence was only a marginal problem, that women often invited or provoked male violence, that women were effectively responsible for men's violent behaviour. It was in an attempt to challenge this misogyny that the idea of the survey was born. When the Home Office British Crime Survey reported in 1983:

Something should be said about offences against women - 'wife battering', indecent assault, attempted rape and rape. A small minority (10%) of assault victims were women who had been assaulted by their present or previous husbands and boyfriends. The survey showed a very low rate for rape and other sexual offences. In fact only one rape was uncovered and that was an attempt. This reflected the rarity of attacks by complete strangers. These findings suggest that fear of crime is irrational and excessive.¹

It became clear that such work was even more urgent. It had been 'proved' by a 'scientific' social survey based on interviews with 11,000 households that women's fears of male violence were irrational and excessive. Without going into a lot of boring detail it is clear that the men at the Home Office had asked the wrong questions, of the wrong people by the wrong people, in the wrong way. Their concern was crime, ours is violence against women. It has become very clear, in recent years, that the state through the police, the courts, and social welfare agencies go to considerable lengths to deny that violence against women - whether we are talking about rape or violence to women by men they know, so-called 'domestic' violence - is not deemed, (except in very unusual circumstances) to be criminal. We have seen the painful interrogation of raped women by the police and in the court room, we know of the consequences of the police refusal to take domestic violence seriously. In the recent report 'Contacts between Police and Public'² which states:

The first point raised by the minimalist police role is who, if anyone would take on the 'rubbish' work currently handled by the police - lost dogs, domestic disputes, rowdy youth and troublesome drunks etc - on the same 24 hr basis?

the point is made.

It was this focus on the police response to violence against women which provides the second history to this survey. As part of its campaign for democratic accountability the GLC agreed to fund police monitoring groups in various London boroughs. Wandsworth Policing Campaign was one of these. In its constitution the Wandsworth Campaign expressed a commitment to work for the interests of those traditionally excluded from white mainstream institutions - the black communities and women. In pursuing their commitment to women, the Wandsworth Campaign accepted the idea of the survey and I was appointed as survey worker³, initially for one month which was later extended to a year.

EXPERIENCES

So, the survey became a reality.

In the light of our awareness of the ways in which women's experiences are discredited, trivialised or ignored, particularly if they are perceived by men as threatening like any discussions of male violence, we were careful to adopt a method of working which could not be dismissed as 'atypical' or 'nonrepresentative'. So we decided to do a door to door survey rather than ask for volunteers to speak of their experiences or interview women from the network of groups affiliated to the campaign, as any self defining group could be dismissed as 'atypical'.

We based the pilot survey in Balham, which is fairly typical in terms of conventional indices - unemployment, figures, housing types, population structure of London's inner cities, and we hoped that the 5 streets we selected were representative of Balham as a whole. In the pilot study we interviewed 60 women who ranged in age from 16 to over 88 years. 17 of the women were black, 5 Asian and 38 were white. This last group included several Irish women and women whose first language was not English. 33 of the women were in full or part-time employment, 2 were students and 5 defined as unemployed. We are confident that this group of women reflected a wide variety of living situations and life experiences, and although it is never possible to establish that any group of women interviewed in a survey are fully representative of any wider population. More important to us is that we interviewed a very real group of women whose experiences are their own. We are committed to demanding that their own experiences are seriously heard and not dismissed on spurious grounds.

The interviews were carried out between August and September 1983⁴. Our findings demonstrate clearly the ways in which male violence and the threat of male violence severely limit women's freedom, most basically women's freedom of movement. Without freedom of movement women's lives are fundamentally controlled. Other freedoms and rights - equal

pay, equal opportunity, legal, political and economic equality loose impact if women are denied freedom to move around.

In the daytime 33% of women interviewed did not experience their neighbourhood as safe for women. As night a massive 92% did not feel safe going out. The effect of the threat of male violence was such that many women we talked to 'hardly ever', 'only when necessary' or 'never after dark' went out. Women were effectively imprisoned in their homes by the threat/reality of male violence. This reduced their working, social and educational opportunities. Other women stated when they did go out they were in a permanent state of fear of anxiety. Many found themselves forced into a dependency on men they knew - husbands sons, boyfriends or fathers to protect them from other men. Their freedom of movement was dependant on the goodwill of others who were prepared to accompany or drive them to wherever they want to go. The problems with this are clear. Goodwill remains contingent, it can be withdrawn at any time, for any reason. Goodwill, like the threat of violence, serves as a form of social control on women, forthcoming, maybe, when the object of the outing wins male approval, maybe not, when it doesn't. Ironically too, women are forced into dependency for protection on the very men from whom according to Home Office figures are most likely to attack them - husbands, lovers, brothers, fathers and sons. Not, in this view, a satisfactory state of affairs!!

Other women told us that when they did go out they were very conscious of the ever present threat of male violence. 77% said that they were careful to take precautions for their own protection. Some talked of becoming 'streetwise', being conscious of who was also in the street, walking near women, avoiding men, keeping to well lit streets even if this meant walking longer routes, checking if they were being followed and taking detours when they were, being psychologically aware and ready to respond to threats, wearing shoes and clothes they could both run and fight back in. Others, like a crafts teacher, carried sharp and heavy objects with them, which were sufficiently related to their work to be justified if challenged by the police. Others, identified their own survival as being more important than the law, carried sprays, empty milk bottles, pepper, things they knew could be classified as offensive weapons if stopped by the police.

It was not just the streets that were identified as occupied and controlled by men. Public transport was also a problem. 42% of women felt the underground was unsafe for women during the day and 30% the buses. At night the picture revealed even stronger male control - 82% of women felt unsafe on the underground and 68% on the buses.

Many women suggested forms of safe transport for women along the lines of Stockwell Late night lift service for women, a women only taxi service or women only minibuses as were being tried out in Lewisham. It was suggested that the GLC should fund more pilot schemes in SW London. Others felt that these measures, and others like bringing back women-only carriages in tubes or trains were problematic, both at the level of enforcement or retrograde in terms of equality, but at the same time would personally find them reassuring. A different argument put by a few women was that women's interests find them reassuring. A different argument put by a few women was that women's interests would be better served if men could be kept off the streets whether by means of youth clubs of other centres or by curfew.

Women were also asked about their experiences of men's violence within the previous year. The 60 women reported 124 incidents, which they classified as violent or threatening, which had happened to them, or to a woman they knew personally or which they had personally witnessed. These incidents included one report of attempted rape; 39 reports of sexual harassment occurring in a public place - the street/public transport, 8 reports of theft including personal violence, 15 reports of men breaking into their homes, 3 reports of being attacked by men sharing their homes (husbands and brother), 10 women reported receiving obscene telephone calls from men, 4 women reported being harassed by strangers coming into their homes (carpet fitter, a paper seller and a repair man) and 11 women reported being harassed at work by clients/customers, colleagues or men in superior positions to them. 28 women reported seeing another woman being attacked or harassed and 20 women reported hearing about attacks on women they knew personally - sisters, mothers, neighbours and friends.

We were astounded by these findings, which clearly cast doubt on the findings of the British Crime survey. One of our conclusions here is that the legal system's rigid classification of events into crime and no-crime is inappropriate with regard to the experience of women. For example, while rape is formally acknowledged by the legal system as serious crime, although in reality women reporting such attacks are routinely humiliated and disbelieved by the police and by the courts, instances of verbal harassment, or visual violence like being followed or flashed at are so routinely no crime that few women consider them criminal or go to the bother of reporting them at all. Yet what is very clear from this survey is that such incidents are as much a form of terrorism carried out by men against women as the attacks which the patriarchy acknowledge as crime. To quote one woman from the survey:

A man got very threatening. It was the usual sort of thing - he was accosting me with remarks - racist abuse and sexual threats - I ignored him. He became very angry and came running after me, shouting I was a filthy snobbish black bitch. It made me very angry and scared. Men must know how their abuse terrorises women. They may know they are harmless, but we never know, not until afterwards. Now I get out of the tube at Clapham South and walk the long way round to avoid Chestnut Grove. It's a lot longer and fairly dark. I don't like having to do it, I didn't report it to the police they are not interested in things like that.

Similarly attacks which the legal system defines as 'property' can be experienced by women as attacks on themselves and violations of their own space - be it men coming into their homes and bedrooms while they are asleep for theft or men coming up to women from behind, putting their arms around their necks to snatch a necklace. Several women recounted both types of incidents, and necklace snatching especially was reported as common by two of the Asian women we talked to. For women reporting incidents of this type, the patriarchal category 'property crime' did not correspond with their experience which was one of violation of themselves and their private space and as such represented personal violation.

POLICING

Another issue of concern was that of the police response to violence against women as experienced by the women of our survey. We did not discuss this issue with the police themselves as this was contrary to our principles which was to base our research in women's experience.

As reported to us, the policing of male violence was unimpressive. 75% of women reporting incidents of male violence did not make a report to the police. Their comments indicated this was because they recognised that experiences like kerb-crawling, propositioning of women, routine sexual experiences were not taken seriously by the police, despite the terrorising effect they can have on women.

I drove my car in and stopped to open the garage door and then got back into the car and drove it into the garage and then got out to go into the house. When I got out of the car, there was a man standing there with his flies open. I shouted at him. He said he was just having a pee. I was absolutely terrified. I sat in the car for an hour, wondering if it was safe to go in. His story didn't make sense as he must have seen me park the car. He must have been watching me and waited till I'd opened the garage door. Perhaps I'd turned round too quickly for him to jump me. I don't know. I still even now can't really make sense of what he was doing. I didn't call the police. I thought they'd think it was trivial and that I was silly. He did sort of have an explanation though it didn't make sense to me, the police would probably have accepted it. Now I don't use my car after dark if I can help it.

Other women were aware of the way the police treat women who are attacked and didn't feel that it was worth making a report to them

I was returning from my sister's flat in Clapham. I got the tube to Balham and when I came out of the station, a man said 'hello'. I just ignored him as I didn't want to be accused of encouraging him. He followed me home and refused to let me in the house. When I tried to, he pushed me up against a garden wall and said he wanted to be my friend. I told him I had all the friends I needed and he turned nasty. Eventually it was solved when two guys came along who I knew slightly. . . I was very frightened by the 'front' some men have. Now I don't go out at night. I didn't want to involve the police because I was frightened. I didn't want any hassle.

Other women referred to the patronising paternalism of the police and the advice they offer to women - not to go out alone, not to go out at night, not to put themselves 'at risk', to avoid 'dangerous' areas.

Of the 25% of women who did make a report, half had received loss or damage to property in addition to the male violence. It was clear that it was the material loss that made them think it would be a matter of police concern, rather than male violence. The majority of those who did make a report to the police were dissatisfied with the police handling of the situation.

A youth leader reported that a 14 year old girl had been stabbed on the stairs of the youth club on girls night, by a boy, who had forced his way into the club. This had happened in front of 16 witnesses. The girl was taken to hospital where she was treated for a stab wound which was within centimeters of her brain. The police picked up the boy concerned but let him go as they said they couldn't find the girl, who they had been told was in X hospital. They came round to visit the girls parents and persuaded them not to press charges as i) the case couldn't get to court for about a year by which time all the witnesses would be married or have left the country, and ii) it was probably six of one and half a dozen of the other, and iii) it cost of lot to have a court case. The girl was pressed to sign a paper saying she did not want to press charges. The girl has since been threatened twice by this boy, who lives on the same estate and one of her friends, another girl from the club, has been threatened. She now wants to press charges as she realises she could have been killed. Both the youth worker and one of the Police Campaign workers contacted the police to express the view that this was a very serious assault - and to ask for an explanation of the police behaviour.

I informed the police. They came very quickly, within minutes - the first time I'd had to wait four hours. They made racist remarks about 'coons'. This made me very dissatisfied with the police.

Yes the police were told about it (she had been badly beaten up by her brother and required hospital treatment). They came about a week later to arrest him. In the end they did not charge him as they said he would only be bound over and it would cost a lot. I was very dissatisfied with their action.

Overall it was clear that women's experience of the police handling of male violence was negative in the extreme. This negativity is repeated in the response to a more general question put to all the women interviewed concerning whether they thought there was anything the police could do about the problem of men's violence to women. 20% of the women said there was nothing; 18% made very specific criticisms of current policing of male violence:

The police should treat violence against women very much more seriously especially rape. . . Their attitude to women who've been attacked and raped should be brought up to date, now it's very conservative and old fashioned. They should protect all women, not just white, well dressed, middle class women. This includes the women who work on Bedford Hill (prostitute women)

Only 2 women thought that more policing might be some sort of solution to the problem, 34 or 56% of the sample looked towards the possibility of 'community' policing might have something to offer. This, as the quotations below indicate represents a call for a change in style and attitude of policing:

They could patrol more, but not the way they do now. My daughter and her friend were harassed by the police, because they're black. But we do need some sort of policing. . . .

Police don't have to be looking for aggravation. It would be better if they patrolled on foot. Police in vans are provocative, it may not be deliberate - I don't know, but if they're seen as provocative then the trouble starts. On foot they're more split up but still around.

The police should patrol more. I did not see one when I was attacked.

Clearly unless carefully argued, this presentation of our findings could be distorted by either the right of the left. The law'n'order lobby of the right could incorporate these findings as support for more oppressive racist and sexist policing. The left could write it off as evidence of women's 'natural' conservatism or else use it to support the claim that feminism is one of the forces of the new right. Neither knee jerk response is based on any considered reading of women's experience, or allows for the fact that the social reality of men and women is fundamentally different. As the findings of this survey indicate male violence serves to control women's lives in very basic ways. Male control of public space gives them the power to abuse women who do or women who don't meet their standards of approval. Without a male escort, women using public streets, public transport, public parks and so on, can be and are targeted for abuse, harassment and attack.

What is being called for is not more of the same sexist, racist policing, clearly that does not serve women's interests, but there is sufficient evidence to suggest that women like other groups targeted for abuse and violence - gay men and racial minorities - have the right to demand protection from the misogynous, the racists and homophobics.

Ultimately, what is needed in this context is a fundamental shift in male attitudes to women, to create a situation in which men stop defining women with reference to their own male sexuality. However until the dawn of a non-sexist society, some curtailment of men's power to abuse women is necessary. What is necessary, is for the debate on policing to be broadened, to create some space for the problem of men's violence to women to be recognised as a serious issue requiring urgent attention.

This perspective requires a shift in the contemporary discussions of policing. It is less a debate around which group of men has the power to abuse another group of men in the street or on the picket line and more about the right of women to be free from male terrorism both inside and outside the home. Whether any reformulated non racist, non sexist police force can have a role to play, at whatever level in the control of men's violence is an important question for debate, not one to be squeezed out of discussions around democratic accountability in policing. In the mean time it is necessary to recognise that women's needs are different from those of men. Of necessity, when attacked by men, many women take recourse to the police and those women have a right to respect and sensitive treatment.

REFORMS

As well as discussing policing, this survey also asked what can be done about violence against women. Many suggestions were made regarding practical ways in which women's lives could be made easier, if the problem of men's violence to women was seriously addressed. These suggestions, it is recognised all point to reforms which might mitigate the problem slightly, although they don't directly address the cause – men and their behaviour.

CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT POLICY AND LAW

1. It was suggested that harsher penalties be introduced for rapists, abusers of women and children.
2. That women should have the right if they chose to carry objects for self defence.
3. That a law be introduced against kerberawling and offenders names be publicised.
4. That the sale of pornography and objects for sexual abuse – whips, chains, bondage gear be outlawed.
5. That the government's policy on unemployment be reversed, thus making it easier for women to gain economic independence – thus being able to afford more private transport – cars, bikes and taxis and that the numbers of men hanging around in public space be reduced – reducing the threat they pose to women.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. Transport

- i) A general improvement in the timetabling and frequency of all forms of public transport so that it will be easier for women to plan journeys with minimum waiting periods.
- ii) Bringing back of women only carriages in tubes and buses.
- iii) Improvements in lighting, siting of bus stops, train and tube stations – with more seating at bus stops.
- iv) Reversing the policy of one person operated buses, as many women prefer to travel in buses with conductors.
- v) More staffing of tube and rail stations.
- vi) An investment in more forms of women's transport – women only taxis, mini-buses etc.

2. Housing

- i) Rehousing for women who live in violent situations or who have been attacked at home to be prioritised.
- ii) Estate design and layout to be improved – stairs, walkways.
- iii) Greater provision of entry phones and security in council flats.

3. Street Safety

- i) Better lighting.
- ii) Action to be taken on particularly 'unsafe' areas – archways of bridges, station entries/exits, public open space – commons and parks and adjoining streets to ensure there are no 'no go' areas for women.

4. Self Defence Classes

Self defence classes to be provided at a cost, time, place that is accessible to women. Creche provision for day time classes and the special needs of the elderly and disabled be prioritised in self defence teaching.

5. Women's Action

- i) More meeting and social places be provided in each neighbourhood, so that women have access to meet other local women in informal base, to talk, share and support each other. From these could grow support groups, anti-violence drop in centres and campaigns against male violence locally.

These are some of the ideas which came from the women we talked to in the survey. Some are older ideas, some very new, some have difficulties and require more development. They are all important and require research, discussion and action as a matter of priority. They are not a formal programme of action, that is not the brief here. It should be emphasised again that the suggestions are not solutions – that lies with men and their behaviour, but short-term reforms. Women know well for example that they are not attacked by the dark, but that the dark provides cover for men of ill intent; it is not the Common that is itself dangerous, but men who (mis)use it.

INNOCENT MEN? A GUIDE FOR HARMLESSNESS

One thing that has struck us in giving talks about this violence against women survey, is the numbers of men who, while accepting that violence against women is a problem generally, are outraged by the suggestion that they themselves may be a problem. It is to those claiming total innocence or that they are totally innocent of the ways in which their own behaviour can be a problem that this footnote is addressed.

Innocent Men? Who are they? Where are they?

In this view innocent men are those who not only do not engage in violent or threatening behaviour, but those who refuse to collude in male violence in any way, even by silence. Innocent men are those who personally, politically and socially act to challenge and confront their own violence and that of their fellow men. They are the ones we see campaigning outside the law courts, demonstrating against male stream judicial statements that women are responsible for men's violence against them. They are the ones acting politically to challenge the police view that 'domestic' violence is 'rubbish' work.² They are the ones who are vocal in their condemnation of the police and the courts treatment of raped women. They are the ones campaigning for rape within marriage to be recognised as a criminal offence and for kerb crawling to be outlawed. They are the ones who boycott and picket sex shops selling gear for violence – whips, chains. They are active in the campaign against pornography and the objectification of women in the selling of commodities from cars to newspapers. They are demanding that incitement to sexual hatred be criminalised. They are those who have recognised their political duty and are acting on it without seeking approval or thanks from women. They are aware of their own personal practice and are acting to minimise the threat they pose to women. They are the ones exempted from criticism. They seem to be few and far between, we've not yet spoken to a woman who's heard of one, even from her sister's sister – a rare breed.

The above description outlines some of the political requirements of an innocent man. Below is outlined just some of his essential personal practices. It is just a beginning. Hopefully women will add to it so it can be developed into a more complete code of practice for the non sexist man.

Code – Draft 1

1. Do not go out unaccompanied by a woman, unless it is absolutely essential, particularly after dark.
2. Avoid grouping into gangs. Three or four men together are more than sufficient to be a threat.
3. Do not colonise the whole pavement, whether out alone or with other men. Ensure that there is space for others to pass by without stepping off the kerb or being squashed against a wall or hedge.
4. Do not greet, accost or approach a woman, even if you're sure you know her. If she wants your attention she can always greet you.
5. Do not stop a woman for directions, the time or a light etc., – pick on your own sex. We can't be sure of your intentions.

6. Do not walk behind a woman, rather cross the street than follow a woman, especially if she is alone.
7. Wear bright clothing so you can be easily seen – do not creep around in silent footwear.
8. Do not hang around by yourself or with others particularly in ill lit places.
9. Don't hoot or shout at women from cars – even women you are sure you know – as it's hard for those in the street to recognise men in cars and we can't be sure of your intentions.
10. Don't queue too close behind women in bus queues etc.
11. Don't get too close to women in crowds or on public transport. Space invaders are prime suspects. In these situations keep your hands to yourself.
12. Likewise on public transport keep to your own seat and keep your hands to yourself.
13. Rather change a carriage than let a woman be alone with you in the tube or train. Those who don't will be prime suspects.
14. Don't open conversations with women in public places. If a woman wants your attention she can address you.
15. Don't comment on women, their looks, race, facial expression, figure unless you want to be considered guilty of racist/sexual harassment.
16. Carry a paper or magazine on public transport so you have somewhere to put your eyes. Staring at women is sexual harassment.
17. If you offer assistance to the disabled, mothers with prams etc., let her determine how you may help – don't just grab hold of a woman or a child.

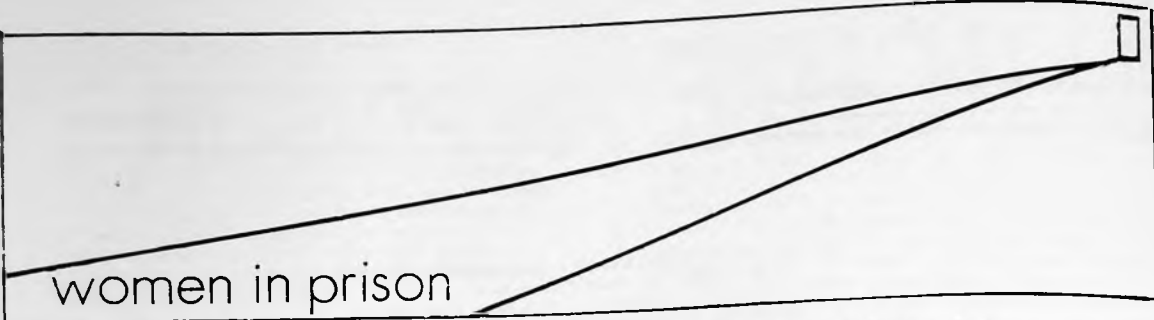
Notes

1. 'The British Crime Survey' Home Office Research Study No. 76, 1983. HMSO.
2. 'Contacts between Police and Public' Southgate and E'kian. Home Office Research Study No. 70, 1984. HMSO.
3. For the first month, Cobby Laffly, a temporary worker at the campaign worked with me on the survey. For the next eleven months a women's support group was set up around the survey. I would like to acknowledge the help and support of all the women involved, but accept that responsibility for this paper is mine.
4. We attempted to find an interview practice consistent with our feminism. All women interviewing were feminists and part of the survey support group. The interviewing was very informal and interviewers took on a supportive role, in respect to women's experiences. We based the interviews around women's own experiences and understanding of concepts like violence, harassment and threat rather than impose 'expert' mainstream definitions.

USEFUL READING

Well Founded Fear by Hamner and Saunders, Explorations in Feminism Series – Hutchinson with WRC publication, 1984.
Wandsworth Policing Campaign can be contacted at 248-250 Lavender Hill, London SW11. Tel: 223 8655.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SPEAK OUT



women in prison

It can be no co-incidence that the magpie was selected to play the starring role in the latest offerings from the Home Office Crime Prevention Campaign; it has traditionally been regarded as a bird of ill-omen, an outcast, a pariah - a fact which has disturbing implications for those human beings implicitly likened to them. The short films which have been shown on TV during peak evening viewing time show a gang of magpie intruders burgling a house temptingly strewn with jewels and other valuables. Alfred Hitchcock's influence from 'The Birds' is clearly evident in the techniques used - the same kind of ominous background music and so on - yet the Home Office-inspired version stretches the bounds of horror still further: these creatures of evil inflict material rather than physical damage on their human (innocent?) victims.

The campaign is designed to provoke an outraged sense of invasion and repulsion, which is swiftly, and ostensibly naturally, converted into a desire for revenge, a need to punish. This is demonstrated clearly in the anti-car theft leaflets being distributed to motorists at petrol stations - in a smooth, slick transition from the robbed car owner feeling 'sick', to 'nick' and 'click', with inescapable connotations of prison. Similarly, the exhortation to 'block his knock-off', a tortuous phrase by any standards which must have been devised for some other purpose than mere word-play, contains an implicit invitation to a violent response, reminiscent of the formalised 'Hate Week' in Orwell's "1984". The very theme of the campaign, "Don't let them get away with it", is creating an almost tangible, specific group identity for the public to vent its collective anger and frustrations upon.

Another poster shows only a pair of giant eyes, which are described as the best equipment for crime prevention, but in fact the hysteria and general suspicion produced by the campaign as a whole makes it difficult to focus at all. Despite the patent absurdities of individual items in the Crime Prevention schemes ("take the radio out when you leave the car and lock it in the boot"), besieged by reminders of the omnipresent 'them' in leaflets, street posters, TV shorts, we should not be deceived into underestimating this sinister manipulation and exploitation of public fears. The underlying concept behind the magpie campaign and the associated publicity is 'divide and rule'; its effect is to alienate individuals from the sphere of the 'decent' and 'law-abiding', and to divert attention from the causes behind the rising rates of crime and unemployment. Creating not merely a desire but a need in the public consciousness to attain satisfaction by means of punishment is the perfect justification for an even more rigid, controlling and punitive system of law enforcement than already exists.

by Judi Wilson

REPORTS FROM THE PRISONS

HOLLOWAY. REPORTED BY A REMAND PRISONER RELEASED ON BAIL 1.11.84

There is no education, no workrooms, no association (this is during the three weeks she was on remand. She described the regime as 'twenty-three hour lock-up'; they would be unlocked for the midday meal and for tea usually, but not for long, and if they hadn't finished eating would just be hassled into hurrying up, and locked back up again, anyway. They weren't always unlocked for breakfast even.

The gym has not been used as far as this woman knows, or at least not by prisoners. She said that on the way to the visiting room you could see that the badminton net was up, and there were screws playing.

Being on straight remand she could have food brought in every day but her visitors had a lot of trouble at the gate - something that was accepted one day would be refused the next, for apparently arbitrary reasons. No cartons were allowed any more (because of smuggling alcohol etc. inside) - bottles and cans have to be opened and poured into the prisoner's plastic mug when convenient for the screws: i.e. any fizzy drinks would go flat straight away. At first this prisoner had a meal brought up by her mother every day, usually at about ten o'clock in the morning. She wouldn't be issued the meal until the time when the afternoon meal was served to all the others (about 4pm or later) - by this time it wasn't worth eating. The end result was that the prisoner told her mother not to bring up items that she was allowed (food and drink) because it wasn't worth the aggravation and the waste.

Any prisoner inside on a drug-related charge is given a strip search straight after the visit, in the visiting room area, and then taken to the hospital for an internal examination.

LIBRARY FACILITIES IN HOLLOWAY

When I was admitted to Holloway I was totally unprepared for it and had nothing with me to distract me from my situation or to occupy my time. The first books I saw were in a room on the reception wing which was kept locked except during association, which was a rare occurrence. Some cells had books in them that other women either owned or had borrowed from that room, but the dormitories, where women are confined for the first few days or so, had none. Most of these books were romances or detective stories, for which I would probably have been grateful at the time.

It was some days before I heard by chance that Holloway had a library, and I immediately put in a Governor's Application for permission to go and borrow some books from it. I had no response to this application and when I enquired I was informed that I would have to keep re-applying in anticipation of two events coinciding:

1. that the Library Officer was available and in the prison.
2. that an officer was available to escort me and other interested women (but only if there were enough of us) to the library.

I was on the reception wing for almost a month and never did gain access to the library; I was given to understand that the officers had much more urgent matters demanding their attention.

I was then moved to a wing for unconvicted remand prisoners, once my case had been committed to Crown Court. There was a greater range of books on this unit than on the reception wing, and they were much more readily accessible as they were not kept in a locked room; it was possible to exchange books from the open shelves every time we were unlocked for meals, and the books were moved from one unit to another

I again applied to go to the library, and it was then that I discovered that there was no chance of this, as in fact all the library books were stacked up in cardboard boxes in a terrapin, a waiting transfer to a permanent building. It was possible to make requests for specific books, which I did, and they were collected for me the same day by the officer on the wing.

Shortly after this I was taken into education classes instead of going to the workrooms; I was able to select and borrow books from the department, which was a great improvement on requesting titles which might or might not be available.

I was given a lot of support and assistance by the Education department, and met the representative from the Public Library next to Holloway who was very keen to provide any books that were needed for studying. I gave her a list of titles and subjects and about twenty-thirty books were brought into the prison specially.

From this time I found the days and months in Holloway not only more endurable, but also much more constructive. Occasionally I would be put under some pressure from officers who claimed that I had more than the regulation number of books in my cell, and would try to remove them, but as they had been lent to me personally I had to be allowed to retain them, until I had finished with them.

I don't know whether the library books stacked in boxes have now been moved from their temporary lodgings to the library reputed to have been constructed for them, but the women I have spoken to were ignorant that a library existed.

Now that there are not enough officers to escort women to Education, workrooms, and provide association, I wonder whether the women in Holloway at the moment have any access to the service that the Public Library is so anxious and willing to offer, and how they are surviving the present regime mentally.

'TWENTY-THREE HOUR LOCK-UP'

Since August there have been no education classes in Holloway: the only contact possible between the teachers and the forty or so women who were on the education programme has been the passing of books through the hatches in the cell doors. As these women leave Holloway, there are no other prisoners taking their places in education, and the teachers' contact with the prisoners decreases all the time.

There has been no work for the prisoners either; Holloway is said to be short of 57 staff, despite officers being drafted in from other prisons across the country.

The women may be unlocked for breakfast at 8am, though sometimes they have it handed to them through the hatch and are only allowed out for as long as it takes to collect a mop to clean their cells.

Weather permitting, they are unlocked for exercise at 9am, for half an hour.

They are unlocked for lunch at 11.30am, but locked back in their cells by midday.

If it isn't raining, they are unlocked for exercise from 1.30-2pm.

Unless they have a visit, they are then locked up again until tea-time, around 3.30-4pm. During weekends, especially Sunday, it is more usual for this meal to be passed through the hatch.

Prisoners on remand who haven't been committed to Crown Court and who go up to court every week have a bath each time they pass through reception. Other inmates are unlocked one at a time for a bath, over the weekend, as association is otherwise their only opportunity to have one, and there is no association, or rarely, when there are not enough officers to escort women to work and education.

The situation in Holloway now is described by a woman just released as 'twenty-three hour lock-up'; women on remand, many of them unconvicted of any crime, are at present undergoing this degrading and restrictive regime.

GETTING OUT AGAIN

So here I am, eight a.m., freezing cold morning, head reeling from the noise of traffic not heard for so long – I am too scared to move.

The gate clangs shut behind me, it's over. Or is it? Clutching all my possessions in one carrier bag I wonder where all the excitement has gone. Why this emptiness I feel, why this numbing void? I know I should be feeling happy; how many friends left behind have said, 'Wish I were you going out, you've got your freedom at last.' My freedom . . . or am I returning to another kind of prison with even more punishment? Prison is easy for some – it's out here the hell starts.

The magistrate on sentencing me told me I desperately needed his help, and he would send me to prison for the treatment I so badly required. I would be rehabilitated, given a chance to lead a new, drug-free life. Did he really believe that, or was he just one more liar?

I count my money, forty pounds, official discharge grant. This is to cover accommodation, food, clothing for the coming week, until I am processed by the DHSS: just another statistic. Still, I am luckier than some of the others, who will be coming out with only their bus fare because their crime was non-payment of fines, and that means they don't get a discharge grant at all.

I am still standing there frozen with cold and indecision: what now? There is no-one to meet me – probably nobody even noticed I'd been gone for the last eight months. I spent so much time in those months lying awake, planning for this great day over and over in my mind. How strongly I intended never to use drugs again, how strongly I felt it not just said it. But I need drugs now, something . . . anything to fill this lonely pain and take away this fear. Maybe just the one ch? . . . It won't hurt if only today. Just for today, I promise myself, and then no more. Just the one to get me together and get me through today, make me not care, not need anyone.

I have convinced myself and find safety from the streets in a taxi, but the inner fight starts. One part of me knows that using even once will start the vicious circle moving again, and drugs will take me right back to that previous life where crime was necessary for my survival. 'Crime' against who? I've never robbed anyone, or hurt anyone – other than myself, that is. Who is the victim here: me, or a society that must be protected from 'evil' such as me at all costs? They talk of costs, but it has cost me my freedom, my self-respect, my home, my children, my possessions, my family, my friends – it costs me my life, a high price to pay for using drugs.

Over the months inside, booking for the social worker every day, until I saw one after six weeks, trying to arrange for rehabilitation, just somewhere to be while I gain the strength to fight the drug that I need to survive all the hurt waiting out there. There's no chance: apologies, but no resources, cuts in the NHS. Again, poverty recurs, the eternal barrier between me and real freedom.

Afterwards, the pain's gone, I don't need anybody. I know I shouldn't have done it, starting all over again. I book into a doss-house; that's all there is for us, not a home, no safety, no security. It's an empty room – there's a bed and furniture of sorts, but still an overwhelming emptiness, years of loneliness and others' sadness clinging to the walls.

I start phoning round the few agencies. One tells me, 'Come back when you're re-addicted – you haven't been out long enough yet.' That's just what I'm trying to avoid, I tell him; it's now that I really need your help. The next question, 'How long have you been using?' seals my fate: twenty years, I say, already hearing the knowing answers: 'Waste of our time then' – it's too late, anyway at thirty-five I'm over their age limit.

So it goes on and on. No chance of seeing a clinic doctor, people more desperate than I have to wait up to four months for this privilege. I go over the other alternatives in my mind: private medicine, which of course brings me back to the overall evil, money. I try and justify to myself the rehab places run by religious organisations, but I don't think I could take it. It's so frightening, nowhere to turn – even if one of those places took me, I'm scared of the psychiatric treatment that is always deemed necessary, as addiction is seen as a mental illness.

By this time I actually feel the need for a fix just as if the last drug-free months had never existed; I need it to ease this terrible aloneness, to make it seem as if all these refusals don't matter. With my smack I don't need anyone else, I can cope on my own.

Once my mind and body have been numbed again, I have to start thinking about the next fix. Meanwhile I still convince myself that I won't get re-addicted, this time I will control it, I just need something for the first few weeks to get things together.

Social Security pay my hotel rent – the ridiculous sum of £10 per day (£70 per week) – but cannot give me a deposit for a flat. The government pay £160 per week to keep me in prison, yet now when I need help desperately there is nothing: no secure home with possessions, nothing to cling on to, no reason to change this vicious life I'm slipping back into.

I know now for sure it's not long before I am back to needing the numbness of drugs, to compensate for this world where nobody cares, where society demands re-employment of crime by punishment. It doesn't end with a sentence, except for a lucky few the punishment continues long after release.

It won't be long now, I think, before I'm arrested again. Somewhere inside me I'll be relieved when this happens, when all responsibilities are gone – as I said, it's a hell of a lot harder out here. For some, prison is safety.

MEDICAL FACILITIES: STYAL

SYLVIA

It must be mentioned that the cases I have written about were compiled from my own first hand experience during my imprisonment at HMP Styal, Cheshire. I have always believed that it is an individual's profound right to be treated with humanity and compassion, regardless of caste, creed or title. If one has the title 'convicted', this should not alter their rights to treatment.

That is not so from what I have seen. The Prison Medical Service is run by the Home Office, even the Governor has no authority. Anyone who has ever tried to unravel the administrative 'clangers' of the Home Office, know only too well that it is not the sort of organisation in which one would like to place their life. That, unfortunately, is the situation a prisoner faces if he/she has the misfortune to be ill during a sentence.

Firstly, there is always the indifference, the assumption that you are 'trying it on'. Then of course there is the inefficiency of coordinating records, by the time this has been organised, the patient could well be dead.

It is only in the belief that perhaps someone will read these articles, and will believe as I do in the rights of a sick person, and perhaps be able to make changes to ease genuine suffering. Prison is a totally futile experience anyway, it has long been accepted that it provides no rehabilitation. Surely, it must be seen that whatever crime a person has committed, they should not further have to try to rehabilitate themselves with severe handicaps and general ill health. God knows coming out of prison and trying to pick up the threads of life are not easy, and it takes a great deal of courage to stay 'straight'. It is for this reason that I write about Sylvia, who in my opinion has shown a great deal of strength in the most adverse of circumstances.

I first met Sylvia when she was transferred from Size House at Styal to Fox. At first we seemed to have little in common, except we were the older inhabitants on a Youth Custody House. Sylvia was a lady in her fifties, we both enjoyed Pork Free diets, I learned later that she was a Jewess. There is no great divide in prison and soon moslem and jew were sharing companionships and past experiences as though a friendship had existed for many years.

I knew Sylvia was graded as Labour 3, and I learned that she suffered from a severe hernia and kidney trouble. Prior to coming into Prison she had an operation for another hernia and also for the removal of kidney stones. Sylvia's home was in Manchester, so it can be assumed that to obtain medical records from a comparative 'local' hospital, would not have presented problems.

One thing that had been specified by the Consultant that treated Sylvia on the outside was careful monitoring of urine and blood, this was to be done through periodic check ups. Sylvia also had a weight problem, largely due to her condition, and she had been on a strict diet so that delays would not be great in getting the remaining hernia corrected. Sylvia had explained this to the Medical Service at Styal on arrival, but she was virtually shouted out of the Surgery by Dr. Godfrey. He had the belief apparently, that she should have considered these things before committing a crime. The fact that one can become ill, waiting excessively long times for trials to come to court seemed to be totally overlooked.

In addition to her other problems, Sylvia's sight was particularly poor, and her spectacles were very thick and powerful, she developed a nasty cyst on one of her eyes. Dr Godfrey removed this. At the time it gave her a great deal of pain, afterwards she insisted that her sight had been affected and

she feared that soon she would not be able to see in that eye at all. I seriously wondered at Godfrey's logic in doing such an operation, when clearly Sylvia's sight was in a particularly poor state anyway. He did however tell Sylvia that she was lucky, if she had been outside, it would have cost her over £300 for the removal of such a cyst. Clearly, he had the impression that the NHS would not have been used.

Following the compassionate prison philosophy, that if you can walk you can work, Sylvia was detailed into the Work Room under the even more compassionate Miss Nautia. Sylvia had to make boxes for shirts, she was having to stretch and reach which did cause her a lot of discomfort. The Workroom at Styal is the kind of place that if inspected by the factory inspectorate, it would immediately be closed down. One of the worst things about it was the inability to maintain reasonable temperatures. It was either dreadfully hot or cold. To someone as sick as Sylvia these conditions added to her already considerable pain and discomfort.

Sylvia had no one on the outside that she could rely on, she could neither read nor write. From our many discussions, I learned that Sylvia had turned to crime basically to live. Her basic social security rights had never been explained, and as she was vulnerable, as so many in our society are, due to demands to read and fill in forms, crime was the only way out. It is difficult to imagine, but despite her own numerous problems Sylvia was the most generous and kindly lady I have ever met. She became the unofficial House Mother, taking on all manner of problems, comforting the youngsters, solving disputes with her common sense and all manner of other things. She was always cheerful, and I freely admit that she helped me a lot through those awful first months.

Soon Sylvia's weight was increasing, she again saw the Medical Services and again received no assistance except to be laughed out of the surgery and told she would have to starve herself. Something that would have been highly unwise with her medical condition anyway. One night in particular we had to ring the alarm bell, Sylvia was rolling in agony. Ringing the bell was always done with great reluctance, it was an offence we were told, and generally it took a long time for the control to respond. Despite the fact that Sylvia was in great pain she still was not referred to the outside hospital, nor was she given any tests to monitor her condition.

Eventually, she was moved to Drake Hall, in Shropshire, and we continued to keep in touch, she had always vowed to me that it would be her last prison sentence. After getting my bail in October I continued to correspond with Sylvia, and on her release in April 1984 we have still continued to telephone and write to one another. When Sylvia came out of prison she found all her possessions had gone and she had to start again. Finally, she discovered that she was entitled to many benefits that had been previously unknown to her. Unfortunately, her health is causing her great problems, since her release she has had to catch up on over twelve months of medical neglect, that of course is not possible. Her life is one of pain, she has now to face additional surgery for Gall Stones as well as the hernia. At least she has the help of the NHS at hand, but this does not alter the fact that she paid her debt to to society, what right has anyone got to treat her in such a way that the quality of her life is so badly affected.

One wonders if a study could be undertaken, how many other lives have been blighted or even destroyed by this faceless bureaucracy known as the Prison Medical Service. One wonders what could be more fraudulent than drawing a salary for a medical service which exists only on paper.

MEDICAL FACILITIES HMP STYAL CONT/

It was not only my own plight that concerned me during my period at HMP Styal, but the suffering of others. When living in a close situation with others, it is difficult to adopt a selfish attitude and become detached from pain, worry and illness. It is with this background that I found myself compelled to write about the suffering that I saw at first hand, and which filled me with disgust. How could this country with its so-called 'fair' system of justice exercise such inhumanity to its fellow man, or in this case fellow woman.

One of the most profound of these experiences happened in June 1983, I was still feeling self pity for my own plight. Angela's case jolted me out of my own indulgence. Angela arrived onto Fox House with two others, they had all come from Risley. The other two, both pregnant were 'civil prisoners', non-payment of fines. Angela had however been convicted on a cheque charge.

At that time she was about five months pregnant. Over the course of the next few days we shared a table for meals. I knew nothing about this girl except that she came from Birmingham. The pain on her face was not difficult to disguise, it was evident with all recently sentenced women. Angela would sit in the Dining Room looking beyond the bars to the world outside, her big blue eyes would fill with tears as painful memories flooded through her mind. I had lived and worked in the Midlands for some years and set about making conversation with Angela. I could well identify with her pain, it was something that I was still experiencing.

Over the course of the next few months we became firm friends, this was not based on exchange of confidences, but the sheer need to survive the dreadful experience of prison. Angela, I learned had two children outside, they were being cared for by her Mother, she missed them a lot, it was clear to see she was a loving Mother. In addition to this she was of course pregnant, and experiencing all of the emotional problems most pregnant women have. This is something the courts seem to overlook, how can it be justified to lock up a pregnant woman, who can predict what harm it does both emotionally and physically.

One thing that concerned Angela was the problems she had with her blood. I learned that she had a negative blood group, which could, if unmonitored create many problems for the unborn baby. Before she had been sentenced Angela had been a patient at one of the largest and best hospitals in the country, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. Angela had had the problems spelt out to her about her blood, and was aware that she needed to be carefully monitored. It had further been suggested that if the antibodies in her blood increased, her pregnancy should be induced at seven months. Angela faced the trauma of trying to get speedy action from the Home Office, basically, to protect the unborn child she carried, and wanted so much.

I will never know how she didn't go insane with worry, the months passed and she simply got no action at all. At one stage, she was told by the 'Hospital' at Styal that her blood had changed, a physiological impossibility. She had suddenly changed from negative to positive blood. This was later attributed to the usual 'bungling communication' that was so evident in the prison medical service.

It is true that pregnant women go to the nearby Wythenshawe Hospital for anti natal clinics, but most women dreaded this, and the strip searches which followed it, particularly with their advancing state of pregnancy. In short, most of them felt that they were treated like animals. They would at some stage have 'scans', this was terribly inaccurate in placing their dates. The only use it seemed to provide was some indication when they could go from Labour grade 2 to 3, or from scrubbing to dusting duties. This seemed particularly inhuman, as some of the girls were huge even at five/six months, and found immense problems getting up and down to scrub, whilst others were so small it was difficult to imagine that their birth was imminent.

As time passed and Angela was getting nowhere, either with the Prison Medical Services, or with Wythenshawe, it became apparent that none of her medical records had been obtained from her GP or from the outside consultant that had been treating her. By this time she had also developed severe and painful varicose veins, eventually, she had to stop working as an Assistant Cook.

By this time Angela's parents had written to the Home Office direct, sending detailed reports from Angela's outside consultants. It was made clear that any damage to either Mother or child would be entirely due to the lack of blood monitoring. Even after this information was finally passed to the medical services at Styal there was further delays in getting the necessary blood tests.

Between the worry of the children outside and the dread that something would be wrong with the unborn baby, Angela became a nervous wreck. She couldn't sleep at night, and would often eat nothing. I had worked on the experimental research many years before into the plasma rhesus processing The 'pregnant fathers' experiments as they were known which was carried out in Liverpool during the mid sixties. I was all too well aware of the complications Angela could encounter. It was difficult at times to minimise her situation, but when she asked me I would tell her she was over reacting, and not to worry so much. Indeed, nothing could have been further from the truth, her worries were more than justified, for my part I could only watch with frustration, whilst the bungling bureaucracy played 'russian roulette' with an unborn child's life.

Angela passed seven months and there was still no word on what was to be done. They were now beginning to take her fears a little more seriously. She, like so many others had been originally labelled a hypochondriac.

In September she was transferred to Mellanby House, but I still saw her from time to time. She told me that finally she had been seen by a Consultant at Wythenshawe, who told her he had been waiting to see her. It was by that time at least the third or fourth time that she had attended. She was by this time at least 7½ months pregnant. Eventually, she was taken out to hospital, and gave birth to a lovely baby boy. It was not unexpected that he was critically ill at birth with jaundice and other complications, and was in hospital for some weeks following his birth. Angela was given a concession to stay at the hospital with her son. This was not always allowed. I saw her and the baby a few days before I was granted my bail, she told me all about her experience, and thanked God that her baby had been saved. I still write to her, and the baby is now almost twelve months old, photographs show him to be normal and bright. That is certainly no thanks to the treatment she encountered during those tormented months up to his birth.

You may well ask what her crime was. Would you believe that she had to serve a sentence of over 12 months for cheques which amounted to less than £100. The money she had used to feed her children. Where the hell is the sense or humanity. After all, she did what any self-respecting Mother would do faced with a similar situation. What was the alternative, see her children in need. Who sits in judgement in such cases, can they really comprehend how difficult it is to manage on a few pounds a week. Many judges would be better served looking at the causes and the real hardship that brings about crime. I have seen at first hand girls who have resorted to crime when in fact had they have known their rights and been able to get the necessary action from Social Security, they would never have ended up in a courtroom. It makes one wonder who the real criminals truly are.

What shocks and horrifies is the sight of so many deeply deranged and disturbed women being in prison

under her denim cap. She had two large butterflies tattooed

the Governor was holding her hand all the time we spoke.

says that of course she should be in a hospital. She has been

Guardian 15.10.84

New Statesman 9.12.83

PRISON Women behind bars

Melissa Benn and Chris Ryder-Tchaikovsky look into the cases of women who have died in British prisons and find a record of callous unconcern

Observer 14.10.84

Judge ends Tina's jail nightmare

by PHILIP TAYLOR

TINA EVANS, 18, is a mentally disturbed girl who, her mother, doctors and court officials agree, should be in a special hospital. Instead, for four months she was incarcerated in the psychiatric wing of Holloway Prison, London — known to inmates as the Muppet House — because there was neither the money nor the resources to accommodate her elsewhere. Her plight was first described

as 'a deal with elsewhere than a prison, but I have no control over who comes through my front door. The prisons were never intended to be a depository for such cases. The courts have a terrible dilemma finding places for people they feel cannot be kept in the community. A spokesman for the Prison Reform Trust said: "Tina's case is worrying and should never have been allowed to happen."

Muppet house of horror at Holloway

by NICK DAVIES

THERE is growing concern over conditions in Holloway Prison's psychiatric wing — known to inmates as The Muppet House — where there has been an outbreak of self-mutilation among the

Exclusive

A week later, another Tina, also tried to dar sight. When discovered had severely bruised the

Observer 16.9.84

Observer 21.10.84

Ordeal in Holloway

You reported (News week) the ordeal of Tina Evans, 18, in Holloway psychiatric wing. Prison's last committed by patients, acts committed by non-patients, viz, as offences. These treated exactly as are similar

British Medical Journal 17.11.84
Mental disorder and prison

BY OUR LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

Yet another case has been reported of a mentally disordered person being sent to prison because there is no other institution willing to receive her. At Aylesbury Crown Court Judge Verney sentenced a severely mentally disordered woman aged 22 to life imprisonment for arson. Neither Buckinghamshire Social Services nor Oxford Regional Health Authority could provide facilities for her treatment. The woman had previously come before the courts in 1981 accused of arson of a printing works causing £100,000 worth of damage. On that occasion the Department of Health had refused her a place in a special hospital, and no other appropriate facilities were available in the county or region. But Milton Keynes Health Authority had paid about £40,000 for her to receive treatment at St Andrews Psychiatric Hospital, Northampton (where there are no secure facilities) under the terms of a three year probation order. In June this year St Andrews discharged her and within two weeks she caused £700 worth of damage to a car by scratching graffiti on it. While in a remand hostel she set a fire to a flat and was severely disruptive. St Andrews was now unwilling to readmit her, believing she would not respond to treatment, and in any case no funds were available to pay for her care there. In default of other appropriate facilities the judge reluctantly imposed a life sentence to protect the public. An appeal is proposed in the hope that the Court of Appeal can use its influence to obtain suitable facilities. The governing legislation (now the Mental Health Act, 1983 section 37) requires that the court shall not make a hospital order after a criminal conviction unless the court is satisfied by evidence that arrangements have been made for the admission of the defendant to hospital within 28 days of the date of an order being made. The options available to the court are therefore limited if facilities are known to be unavailable.

New Stateman 9.11.84

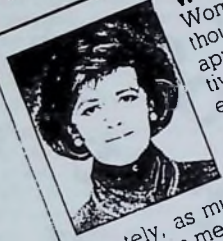
Pleas to Home Office about the 'Muppet House'

IN THE TWO WEEKS since the Women in Prison Support Group (WIP) held a demonstration outside the Home Office to publicise conditions at the C1 Psychiatric wing, HMP Holloway (known to prisoners as the 'Muppet House'), 17 incidents of self-mutilation involving nine women and three attempted hangings involving two women have been confirmed by the Prison Department. The demonstration on 26 October followed a spate of incidents on C1 in which two inmates gouged an eye out (one attempt successful, one not) and a third tried to cut off her breast. This last woman, Maggie Gill, told a WIP representative that she had done it 'to get out of my cell for a few minutes.' Demonstrators put up posters and handed out leaflets across the street

they can't sleep because of screaming and head-banging coming from the wing night and day. A representative from Mind (National Association for Mental Health) who was at the demonstration said that the organisation was 'alarmed' about the inadequacy of care on the wing and the 'conflict of care and security' which wouldn't arise if the system catered to mentally ill cases separately from normal prison sentences. Mind has drafted a letter to Lord Elton, Minister of State for the Home Office, expressing its 'grave concern' over reports of isolation and prolonged detention, inadequate food, light, and exercise opportunities, self-mutilation, and the high incidence of drug use (based on its own 1982 figures). Mind has

Woman Magazine
93, LONG ACRE, LONDON WC2

ISSUE DATED 13 JCT 1984



WE THINK

Women in prison is a very unthought for most of us. By it appear to be the less violent and criminal of the sex. ever, we also realise that instinct is alive and well in there is a growing number being sent to gaol. There is being overcrowding in women's prisons as many staff shortages. But surely there is nothing more horrifying than the recent reports of conditions in Holloway Prison's psychiatric wing. A number of women have inflicted upon themselves some of the most appalling injuries. Two have died, one by setting fire to herself, the other from a haemorrhage after repeatedly banging her head against a door. Recently one girl, alone in her cell for two days, gouged out an eye and another tried to cut off a breast with a broken light bulb. Neither had been convicted of a crime but were awaiting trial. Surely, if these girls are already deemed "disturbed", the last place they should be is in solitary isolation in the psychiatric wing of a prison. Would they not be much better off being cared for within the National Health Service whilst operating within these quasi-Victorian conditions. When staff are so hard-pressed, there is no chance for the compassionate side of prison life. It is positively inhuman to expect both inmates and prison officers to operate within these conditions. Just to bewail the situation will only lead to apathy is

Jo Foley
Editor

C1 FOR SORROW

PRISON BRIEFING

No. 9

PROP the national prisoners' movement

INSIDE

OUR PRESCRIPTION FOR

Doctor LOUCAS

THE ADVISER ON HEALTH CARE FOR PRISONERS

PRISON INSPECTOR'S REPORT

The "independent" Inspectorate of Prisons was set up in 1981 as a direct response to recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry into the UK Prison System 1979 (the May Inquiry). PROP was unenthusiastic at the concept of an Inspectorate so firmly tied to the Home Office. We, and other critics, were supposed to be satisfied with the pretence that because the new body was at Queen Anne's Gate (the Home Office), rather than at Eccleston Square (the Home Office's Prison Department), we were not being presented with the favourite tactic of governmental departments in setting up their own investigatory bodies to investigate themselves.

Our suspicions were confirmed when the personnel of the new Inspectorate was announced. The presence on the staff of prison governors, temporarily seconded from their departmental duties but eventually destined to return to them, suggested that something of an Old Boys' Network would, or at any rate could, be functioning within the Inspectorate. If the new body were to have any muscle at all it would seem to reside in the personality of the Chief Inspector himself.

As if the temptation to form an Old Boys' Network were not already sufficient, the Home Office made quite sure that loyalties were divided by seconding staff in and out of the Inspectorate with alarming frequency. During its second year's existence it suffered a turnover of more than 70% of its staff in just over twelve months. "In 1983 (says its current Annual Report) the disruption continued, although not on quite so large a scale. We began the year with a newly appointed Deputy Chief Inspector and two of the eight inspector posts unfilled. Subsequently two more inspectors left us, one on transfer back to the prison service and the other on retirement."

What is remarkable, in view of this obvious Home Office policy of impeding its work, is the outspokenness of many of the Inspectorate's reports. Its revelations on the lack of adequate fire and safety precautions in the majority of prisons inspected have been devastating - or would have been if anybody in the media or in Parliament had bothered to take them up. PROP drew together the strands of these individual criticisms in a special report and they then became the topic for a double centre-page feature in FIRE AND SAFETY NEWS. Even after that backing, and a brief mention in the NEW STATESMAN, there was no general media concern at all.

So that any review of this, the latest, Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons has to be tempered by the realisation that he is reporting into a vacuum. To review a publication which itself seems to be regarded as irrelevant must be piling irrelevance upon irrelevance and we will restrict ourselves to a few comments on the more immediately noticeable of the Inspector's remarks.

ON ALBANY PRISON

".... which had been the scene of a major disturbance earlier in the year After discussions with staff and prisoners it became clear to us that one of the major causes of the discontent which had led to the disturbance was the employment of prisoners on the sewing of mailbags - an occupation which many consider to be unsuitable for long term prisoners. We were glad to learn that the intention to continue with this form of employment at Albany has been abandoned."

Albany prisoners suffered and continue to suffer as a consequence of their part in the disturbance. The manner in which they were dealt with by Boards of Visitors became the subject of successful actions in the High Court, quashing the sentences handed down at those disciplinary hearings. Although the legal rights of all prisoners were advanced as a direct result of the High Court actions the authorities have continued to get their way by subjecting the prisoners concerned to continued segregation under administrative procedures which are not (yet) open to legal appeal. Furthermore many of the prisoners face the possibility of conspiracy charges arising out of the police investigation which Leon Brittan set in motion after the original punitive measures against the prisoners had been thrown out by the High Court. The requirements of Natural Justice alone should rule out the laying of such charges against prisoners who have already been punished for eighteen months and who are clearly going to be unable to properly defend themselves after all the arguments have been exposed during the earlier and subsequently abandoned internal hearings.

The Inspector's comment makes it clear that work on mailbags is widely regarded as unacceptable, and not merely by prisoners. It is also clear that it was prisoners' action, and not the concern of these other unidentified enlightened people, which caused it to be dropped. If the reformers can do nothing more than talk, then is it surprising that prisoners take it into their own hands to enforce changes?

ON STAFF "SHORTAGES"

"All the establishments we inspected in 1983 were short of staff.... One consequence of this was that the regimes were, to a greater or lesser extent, limited in nature The immediate effect on the prisoners was that they had to stay locked up in their cells instead of going to work."

This continued fiction of staff shortages has been repeated so often that many people, even within the more radical elements of the prison reform movement, are accepting it as reality. A call for the recruitment of more prison officers is scarcely a demand which one would expect to be made in the name of prison reform, yet this is precisely what has been happening in recent weeks, notably in relation to the need for more prison officers in women's prisons. This is simply doing a public relations job for the POA.

At least the Inspector expresses some words of caution: "The Inspectorate does not have the resources to carry out a detailed evaluation of manning levels or to assess accurately the efficiency with which the available manpower is deployed. It is difficult for us, therefore, to be sure about the apparent need for additional staff." Again, in a reference to overtime, the Inspector states "One of the more

serious effects of the apparent shortage of staff is the level of overtime worked by prison officers."

It would have been more useful if the Inspectorate spelt out the facts. Over the years the uniformed staff levels within the prisons have escalated out of all proportion to the increase in prisoners. Evidence given by government departments to the May Committee in 1979 showed that since 1965 staff levels had increased by 88% whereas prisoners had increased by 37%. This process has continued. In 1979 there were 2.83 male prisoners to each prison officer; by 1984 it was 2.54 to 1.00. In the case of women prisoners there were 2.21 to each prison officer in 1979. By 1984 this has become 1.51 to 1.00.

ON RACE RELATIONS

"We again encountered a tendency to give race relations matters too low a priority in the overall management of the establishment; the selection of books in a prison library which did not sufficiently reflect the interests of the ethnic minorities who formed 25% of the inmate population"

A valid criticism to make but rather late in the day. In 1980 a young Rastawoman in Holloway Borstal, Abbena Simba Tola, was being kept in solitary confinement and forcibly drugged for fighting on just such an issue. As in the Albany example given above it is obvious that it is rebel prisoners, not prison reformers, who form the effective vanguard in forcing change.

ON ADJUDICATIONS

"To ensure confidence in the system it may be that the balance of advantage will lie in transferring the judicial function away from Boards of Visitors to some alternative body However, if the alternative body is to have the confidence of inmates it would need to be familiar with the pri-

son system and with the way in which prisoners behave in an establishment. This could be achieved if members of the adjudicatory body were drawn from among those existing members of Boards of Visitors who have served for an appropriate minimum period as magistrates. Once appointed to the adjudicatory panel the magistrates would have to cease performing any of their former watchdog functions, just as the remaining members of the Boards of Visitors would cease to perform any judicial function."

These weird proposals, which really change nothing, are a direct result of the consensus of opinion amongst penal reformers that the fundamental defect of Boards of Visitors lies in the incompatibility of their twin functions - the disciplinary role and the inspectorial watchdog role. PROP has never gone along with the Howard League, NACRO, AmBOV or the Jellicoe Committee on this simplistic assessment.

What is wrong with Boards of Visitors is not this twinning of roles but the Boards of Visitors themselves. They do not represent local communities, nor are they answerable to them. They are creatures of the Home Office, appointed by the Home Secretary from names usually put forward by the prison governor and his BoV chairman.

Yes, there are individual members of Boards whose record might seem to contradict this view - but no, they don't exist in any positions where it really matters. To have the occasional token radical in a position of very little influence is meaningless.

There is not the slightest reason to believe that the existing boards, divided up as suggested by the Chief Inspector, would

operate any differently than they do at present. Although the critical emphasis in recent years has been on the manner in which they have discharged their judicial function, it is their inspectorial inadequacy which lies at the root of their unacceptability by prisoners, or for that matter by prison staff.

There is nothing wrong with the underlying idea of a board of lay representatives of the local community having both a managerial and a disciplinary role in prisons, or at least there would not be if they really represented the local community (assuming of course that prisons too served their communities). Such a body, providing it earned the respect of prisoners and staff by a robust independence in its inspectorial role, would in fact be a very sensible body to deal with run-of-the-mill disciplinary proceedings.

The reason why they cannot do so at present is not that they are pro staff and anti prisoner but that they are pro management. Their performance as public watchdogs has been abysmal. They failed prisoners at Hull, Wormwood Scrubs (MUFTI squad) and Albany; but equally they failed prison officers during the 1980/81 prison officers' dispute. The exposure of prison conditions owes nothing to these "watchdogs" and we are sorry to see proposals for reforms which, in fact, will change nothing.

ON SUICIDES IN PRISON

RAP's review of the Inspector's published report on the Prevention of Suicides appears elsewhere in this issue of THE ABOLITIONIST. We comment only on the continued timidity of the Prison Inspectorate whenever it is dealing with medical matters. From its inception in 1981 its reports, often scathing and outspoken in other directions, have always approached

medical matters with an exaggerated, almost cringing, deference towards the prison doctors. Its recommendations regarding suicide precautions are no exception: "Doctors appeared to be the best qualified and best placed to assume a leading role in setting up and supervising humane screening, referral and treatment procedures."

PROP disagrees profoundly that the Prison Medical Service is a body which can be relied upon to play a leading or any other sort of role in the humane treatment of anybody or anything. Whether one is talking about the death of Barry Prosser in Winson Green prison in 1981, George Wilkinson in Durham in 1979, Richard Cartoon Campbell in Ashford in 1980, John Duddy in Parkhurst in 1981, the assault by the MUFTI squad on Wormwood Scrubs prisoners in 1979, or most of the other savageries which have taken place in British prisons in recent years, it is the prison doctors who, either by their actions or inactions, have played the most disgraceful role of all prison staff.

We are not, of course, the only people to have pointed to the inability of the Prison Inspectorate to pierce the secretive defensive ring which the Prison Medical Service has placed around its activities. In January 1983 the Inspectorate's own medical adviser, Dr Benjamin Lee resigned over this very issue, claiming that the whole system was riddled with defensiveness and "carefully designed obstructions to free comment."

Who is now the Adviser on medical matters to the Prison Inspectorate? Dr Kyros Loucas. The extent to which prisoners can feel safe in his caring hands is spelt out in the following article of this issue of PRISON BRIEFING.

HAVE A CARE! ~ THE CASE OF DOCTOR LOUCAS OF BROADMOOR

Children used to be taught, and maybe still are, "Don't care is made to care." The problem with the Prison Medical Service is how is it going to be made to care for the prisoners in its clutches? PROP's view is that it cannot. Its loyalties are not to the prisoners who become its patients but to the Home Office which pays its wages. That is why PROP spearheaded the campaign, now widely taken up within the penal reform lobby, for the abolition of the Prison Medical Service and the transfer of responsibility for medical care to the normal community services of the NHS.

For all its obvious shortcomings the NHS is subjected to various controls, through Area Health Authorities, General Practitioners Committees and Community Health Councils. In the case of the Prison Medical Service it is the Home Secretary (ie, a Security Minister, not a Health Minister) who is answerable to Parliament; and the service itself is, in the words of the 1981 Annual Prison Report, "subject to a system of supervision by management and inspection by the Inspectorate of Prisons."

The same Annual Prison Report sees this as of great benefit to prisoners because "it would not be possible (within the NHS) to devise arrangements by which there would be the same degree of central control over and ministerial accountability for medical services in establishments." Precisely - and that is why anyone concerned about civil liberties wants to change it. It is this central control of all specialist prison services which both permits and encourages closing of the ranks for the covering up of abuses.

WHO CARES?

Meanwhile prisoners must put their trust in the Prison Inspectorate and its Medical Adviser, Dr Kyros Loucas. Where does Dr Loucas stand in regard to care?

We have very up to date information on this. Dr Loucas, who is a very senior psychiatrist at Broadmoor Hospital, gave evidence on October 4th at the inquest into the death of Michael

Martin in the seclusion wing of Norfolk House which is the special care unit of the hospital. Michael, a young black mental patient, died shortly after being subjected to maximum restraint and the forcible administration of a maximum dose of the barbiturate, Sodium Amytal.

In answer to the Coroner's question about his position within Broadmoor, Dr Loucas described himself thus: "At the time I was Consultant Psychiatrist in charge of Norfolk House. In law responsible for the treatment and care of Mr Martin."

Next day, at the close of the inquest, the jury returned the verdict of "Accidental death, aggravated by lack of care."

In PROP's view, those facts alone should rule out Dr Loucas as a suitable person to advise other people on matters of medical care. But this case does not stand alone.

THE SHOCKING DR LOUCAS

In 1979 Dr Loucas was at the centre of widespread controversy surrounding his use of unmodified electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) on patients. (The use of unmodified ECT means that the patient is not given either anaesthetics or muscle relaxants.)

The allegations were initially made by two Broadmoor nurses and then taken up by the organisation MIND. One nurse stated

"One morning just after breakfast a young schizophrenic

patient was in a side room. He was in a severely disturbed condition when the consultant psychiatrist arrived. The doctor asked for the patient to be brought to the infirmary for ECT. I noticed that the doctor made no attempt whatsoever to telephone an anaesthetist. We brought the patient in and put him on the bed. The doctor applied the electrodes and pressed the button. Although there were six nurses holding him down, his back arched and he rose six inches off the bed. He was obviously in a great deal of pain. I was visibly upset by what I had seen; the doctor asked me my name and said 'what we are seeing here is the use of ECT in an emergency: it is a simple case of clinical judgement of whether I use an anaesthetic or whether I don't.'

The second nurse described another incident of the use of unmodified ECT. In that instance the ECT box was taken to the patient and administered in a side room while the patient was lying on the plastic mattress. When the ECT was completed the patient was swaying and disorientated. Yet the nurses were ordered to leave the patient immediately and to lock the patient in the room by himself.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' own guidelines concerning the use of ECT state very clearly that "Every patient should be anaesthetised and given a muscle relaxant by an anaesthetist." They also specify that "ECT should be administered in a special room to which the patient comes. The patient requires a comfortable waiting room and there should be a recovery room."

At the time of this outcry at Dr Loucas's methods, MIND wrote that it could not think of any other hospital or consultant which administered unmodified ECT, nor of any possible clinical justification for its use.

In an editorial dated 16 February 1980, THE LANCET wrote that patients detained at Broadmoor, unlike those in ordinary NHS hospitals, had severe restrictions on their legal rights and their access to the media. "In such circumstances (it went on) they are more than usually dependant on high standards of professional care, and they are the last people who should be submitted to a mode of treatment generally regarded as an anachronism."

UNSATISFACTORY OUTCOME

The allegations, together with others of brutality by the prison officer staff of Broadmoor, were referred for police investigation by the Secretary of State. The police in turn would not investigate the complaint about ECT because this was a matter of clinical judgement. The Secretary of State would make no comment because the allegations of brutality were subject to police investigation and the use of ECT was, again, a matter of clinical judgement. It was a classic 'Catch 22' situation, effectively shovelling all consideration of the matter to inter-nal inquiries conducted within and by the establishment itself.

DR LOUCAS'S FINGERS KEPT OFF THE BUTTON

Although Dr Loucas thereby managed to escape public censure, the general outcry does seem to have saved further patients from the doctor's unmodified shocks. Even though no public statement was ever made, the practice of giving unmodified ECT to patients at Broadmoor appears to have been abandoned.

EXPERIMENTAL DRUGGING

"Lack of care" in 1984 and unmodified shocks in 1979 do not tell the whole story, though either on its own would give us cause for alarm at Dr Loucas's responsibility for advising the Prison Inspectorate on prisoners' medical care. There was an earlier furore surrounding experiments with the implanting of

hormones as a "treatment" for sex offenders. It was commenced in 1971 with the application of several drugs to eight Broadmoor patients. Later in the year the question of implanting the hormones was raised with the patients by Dr Loucas.

VOLUNTEER - OR ELSE !

Three of the patients subsequently alleged that Dr Loucas told them that if they did not volunteer for the treatment, they could expect to remain inside a long time, but on the other hand, if they did consent, a successful outcome was very likely, and with it their release from further detention.

The patients agreed that they were told that the treatment could cause them to lose facial and bodily hair and that they might find that their breasts grew as a result. But, they alleged, they were never told that one breast would grow but not the other, nor that the growth would be to such an extent that surgical removal by a mastectomy would be necessary.

Subsequent discussion by the patients with Dr Loucas was very difficult. If he was met in the corridor and asked a question, he would answer that there was a time and a place for everything, and would walk on. If a patient asked the staff if he could see the doctor, the answer would be to ask why and then to be informed that the doctor would make up his own mind.

HORMONAL IMPLANT TREATMENT STOPPED

As in the case of the ECT controversy the outcry over the experimental hormone treatment was resolved by the practice being abandoned, allowing Dr Loucas to crawl back again

NOTE:

Broadmoor Special Hospital is generally understood to be for the detention of the criminally insane. Certainly its patients include many who have committed very grave offences. But the important thing to realise, with all of them, is that they are patients - ill people whose need is for care and treatment. But even that is only part of the story. As many as a third of the patients in Broadmoor have committed no offences. Michael Martin, whose recent death in Broadmoor was found by the inquest jury to have been "aggravated by lack of care", was one of those who at no time throughout his tragically shortened life had been involved in any criminal proceedings. His mental illness dates from his childhood when he fractured his skull as a result of a playground accident.

We are quite sure that there are good and kind nurses amongst the staff at Broadmoor - possibly even doctors too. But the atmosphere of the place is wrong. Neither patients nor staff look upon it as a hospital and the nurses are all members of the Prison Officers Association, who wear prison officers' blue uniforms and peaked caps when not on actual ward duties.

Mentally ill people require and deserve something better than that.

JOHN SILVER: A BRAVE MAN SPEAKS OUT IN COURT

At the inquest into the death of Michael Martin in Broadmoor Hospital several fellow patients gave evidence. In the case of two of them it was clear that they were saying what they thought was expected of them - even to the extent of denying physical actions by prison officers which they - the prison officers - admitted.

PROP does not criticise them for this. Even more than prisoners in a prison hospital, the patients at Broadmoor are under intolerable pressure to conform. Failure to do so not only lays them wide open to physical victimisation but also to the more insidious institutional victimisation which can affect all the future decisions of Mental Health Tribunals reviewing their cases.

That is why we draw special attention to the one patient, John Silver, who gave his evidence without fear or favour and impressed everyone in the court with his quiet dignity. His calm demeanour was in strong contrast to that of the stream of prison officers who gave evidence just before and after him. They were tongue tied, contradictory and notice-

into anonymity to resume his activities as a consultant psychiatrist out of the glare of publicity.

MICHAEL MARTIN'S DEATH

As we go to press there are already indications of similar actions taking place within Broadmoor to deflect criticism from the doctor in relation to the recent inquest verdict. Reports in THE GUARDIAN speak of Broadmoor prison officers being instructed in safe methods of forcible restraint. The manner in which Michael Martin was restrained was certainly an important element in the cause of his death, but what was and remains wrong at Broadmoor is something far more fundamental than individual staff brutality, incompetence or neglect. What was revealed by the inquest into Michael Martin were grotesque and almost unbelievable failures of management and supervision. Dr Loucas, by his own admission, was the person responsible for the treatment and care of Michael. It is he, and not the prison officers under him, who should now be held to account by the inquest verdict of "lack of care."

In due course, when the transcript of the inquest proceedings is to hand, we shall be returning to the case of Michael Martin. Meanwhile our concern is with the case of Dr Loucas.

HIS INITIAL APPOINTMENT AS MEDICAL ADVISER TO THE PRISON INSPECTORATE WAS ALREADY AN ASTONISHING ONE IN VIEW OF HIS CONTROVERSIAL RECORD IN PRECISELY THOSE AREAS OF MEDICAL PRACTICE WHICH HAVE AROUSED MOST CONCERN IN THE PRISON CONTEXT. NOW, IN THE LIGHT OF THE RECENT BROADMOOR 'LACK OF CARE' VERDICT, HIS POSITION IS SURELY NO LONGER TENABLE.

ably embarrassed as each in turn tried to pass the buck along the line - the buck having been chucked at them by their superiors, the doctors, during the previous day's hearing.

John Silver is now vulnerable and will remain so for as long as he remains at Broadmoor. Within days of the inquest verdict he was being subjected to verbal abuse of a particularly cruel nature and was also told that he could now forget any hopes he might have of transfer to Park Lane Hospital.

Fortunately the indications are that his vulnerable situation is now sufficiently widely known - by MIND, RAP, INQUEST and PROP, and by MPs, journalists and other individuals - for the authorities themselves to want to keep him, and probably move him, out of immediate danger.

IN THE WEEKS, MONTHS AND YEARS AHEAD, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT JOHN SILVER'S COURAGE IN COMING FORWARD TO SPEAK ABOUT THE FATE OF A FELLOW PATIENT IS NOT FORGOTTEN. HIS FUTURE PROGRESS MUST BE REGULARLY MONITORED.

Wednesday, 14th November, 1984

Written No. 205
(9.11.84)

Jo Richardson (Barking): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the staff at C1 Psychiatric Wing, Her Majesty's Prison, Holloway, are registered mental nurses, state registered nurses and state enrolled nurses; and whether any of the staff are unqualified.

Women in prison

Leon Brittan
Home Secretary
The Home Office

26 October 1984

Dear Leon Brittan

We are picketing the Home Office today to bring to your attention the situation on C1 Psychiatric Wing, HMP Holloway. Within the last six weeks one woman on this wing has put out her eye, another woman attempted to do the same thing a week later, yet another woman has cut her breast and arms to get out of her cell "for a few minutes" and another young woman continues to bang her head on cell walls in a unit which has no padded cells to protect her.

The women on this wing are, as defined by Stewart and Shine of the Holloway Psychology Unit, "(Women who) should not be here". During the six month period from January to June 1984 73% of the women on C1 were diagnosed as mentally ill; 18% of those women were diagnosed as suffering from dementia, sub-normality, epilepsy and alcoholism.

C1 also acts as a national resource for 'difficult' women prisoners and 6.6% of these figures is comprised of women who were not on the unit because they were mentally ill, but because they constituted a prison 'control' problem.

We believe that this coalescence of the mentally ill with women who present a prison discipline problem results in both sections being subject to what is in practice no more than a punishment block or a control unit by another name. Our belief is compounded by the fact that 51% of the women on the unit were punished for such 'offences' as offending against good order and discipline and absenting self without leave. We ask you to consider whether any other unit for the mentally ill and distressed would punish patients for wandering off without first asking permission!

We also wish to remind you that the European Minimum Standards on Prisoners' Rights specifies that 'every prisoner should be entitled to spend a minimum of ten hours in every twenty-four outside the confines of her or his cell'. On C1 Psychiatric Unit the women are shut away alone in their cells with nothing to do for twenty three and a half hours a day.

We deplore a regime where the most vulnerable women are kept in isolation for such lengthy periods that they resort to self mutilation for some human contact.

In view of these and other matters regarding the appalling conditions on C1 Psychiatric Wing Holloway Prison we request that you take the following action:

- i) Visit C1 Wing Holloway Prison unannounced, as a matter of urgency.
- ii) Set up immediately an independent inquiry into the conditions on C1.
- iii) Engage Registered Mental Nurses to care for the women on C1.
- iv) Install padded (protective) cells on C1.
- v) Ascertain why Holloway, unlike other women's prisons, keeps no figures on the incidence of self mutilation.
- vi) Grant all the mentally ill in prison the full protection of National Health Service care.

We trust you will give the points raised in this letter your most urgent attention and we anticipate an early response.

Yours faithfully

Members of the Campaign for Women in Prison

MR. DAVID MELLOR

Of the nursing staff normally employed in C1 Wing, four are state enrolled nurses and ten are state registered nurses. Five of the latter are also registered mental nurses. In addition there are two auxiliary nurses without formal nursing qualifications.

INTERVIEW: JIM ANDERSON

Taken from the first issue of *Passing Times*, 12th August 1983.
J. Joseph did the interview in Styal.
Edited by Judy Wilson (WIP).

Have you any immediate plans for the future, or long term plans for changes here?

Now I like to listen to what other people have to say and I like to keep my eyes open to what's going on, because it would be just arrogance to come to a new place and change it to what you want it to be. If I was some sort of crazy meddlermaniac, I might say, yes, that's got to be; I just want to get the feel of the place.

To see what the girls need first?

That's right, it's no good trying to meet your own needs, I suppose I can always do that at some stage.

Do you see your role here as some sort of figurehead?

No, not a figurehead, I'm not that sort of person; some people draw institutions like a pyramid, a man at the top, sitting there like a tin god, and all sorts of other people at the bottom, so in terms of human relationships they won't be accepted; they may set up in discipline an organisation like this. Someone has to be there to some extent obviously, but other people see institutions as a circle with other people at different points round them. The important thing for a Governor to do is to be able to see between the centre and the outside; what I mean to say is if the Governor is trapped in the middle of it all, he may know everything that is going on, and then when he gets to the outside of the circle he won't know what's going on, on the outside there — and he won't be in a position to relate the inside world and the outside world. So I think the Governor has also got to be on the outside; I think too that the Governor has got to spend more time on the outer edge of the circle, so he can see the inside, outside and the middle. You've got to see all this, to be aware of what's going on, and to be aware of the staff's position.

So more or less what you are saying is, also keep a relationship with the girls?

That's great, yes, that's good what you've just said. It's all about relationships and people.

What do you feel about the relationships from what you've seen in this prison, between the staff and the girls, and do you feel as though it could be improved?

The staff seem very much aware of what the problems are, which is not the same thing as saying that they know the answers to all the problems. I think that sometimes people expect the staff to know all the answers; the important thing, I suppose, is like this — that other people understand you. I mean, you can't really organise a lot of people's lives, unless you're going to push them back into a state of dependency all the time. You've got to allow people to grow out and be adults. You've got to be understanding to people and give these people freedom to make mistakes. The other thing is, it's a lot safer to make mistakes inside than outside.

How do you feel about that, when a girl gets herself into trouble, because it isn't difficult to get into trouble in here, the punishment side . . . Do you hold with strong punishment? In my view, punishment never solves anything at all. There are times when people just have to be taken away from the people they mix with. Prison doesn't solve anything either, there are times when I think too, we've got to take people away. This is like a banishment or exile, a miniature form of Alderly House.

The important thing about punishment is, I think, that it expresses the disapproval of somebody who is respected. My own fairly strongly held views are that the disapproval of the house officer can be even more effective than the Governor's. Loss of three days' remission, or whatever it happens to be, doesn't always work.

Part of the Governor's job is to express what is right and what is wrong, and there's two sorts of misbehaviour — actually one is institutional misbehaviour and breaking institutional rules, and a lot of them exist for the well running of the institution, but nobody pretends that if you're late getting to bed you will be in trouble when you're outside, it's nothing of the sort. It's simply an institutional rule.

On another level we've got misbehaviour which is far more serious — criminology. That is the sort of misbehaviour that we'd have to take seriously, and quite rightly so, in the prison service. It would have to go to the Board of Visitors or a court outside.

Do you think any more should be done with helping with the rehabilitation of prisoners, more so with women with children at home? I think they need a bit more care than a man does, what do you think?

I think they both have needs, yes, and there are two things that strike my mind. The first is, there are two bits to imprisonment: one is accepting people as they are, as regards caring, and I think the Prison Service on the whole is quite good, and the second bit about it is expectations of them for the future. If you expect them to get into trouble again, they will. I think they don't do nearly enough in the way of pre-release preparations and rehabilitation. I'm not quite sure what that really means, because if you look at the world outside, there's a lot wrong with that as well. No, there's more things that could be done.

It's saying one needs to be an individual?

Yes, that's a problem, a big problem, prison trying to cater for all the individuals, as we seem to be a majority basis. One of the best things that I've discovered is that being done by staff in a number of prisons, is not to sit people down in rows and getting someone behind a desk to tell them and give them talks on benefits and so on. They can't take all that in, because when you talk to someone in here, it's a different world, so it goes in one ear and out of the other — and people forget mainly because they want to forget, but a lot more can be done with creating situations for individuals, to do things for themselves.

How do you feel about education?

Yes, the whole sense, I suppose, of some sort of experience is that it's educational, or else you might as well give up. I don't believe in prison being some kind of care custody for certain kinds of people. I don't think people want that, people don't want interference but they don't want just to be left where they are; they want to feel there's a possibility of changing. You can't force people to change if they don't want to. The person must decide for himself or herself, and if they don't want to change, well OK, it may be hard but people have got to accept it, that people are human beings and they have got to exercise the freedom of choice for themselves.

J. ANDERSON interview continued

How do you feel about women coming to prison? I mean, it really wasn't a heard-of thing years and years ago, but the figures have increased over the years. There's more and more women coming to prison.

There is an increasing number of people from both sexes coming to prison. I think people in the past may have said that women don't need punishment in the same way men do — well, this is absolute rubbish. I'm not sure what you meant by 'they don't need punishment' anyway, and to suggest that women just need to be treated is to suggest that they're sick in some sort of way — rubbish. The reasons why women come to prison are more or less the same reasons as why men come to prison, and if you're going to talk about sexual relations and equality, then this proportion is less alarming.

What do you feel about women coming to prison for non-victim offences, you know, like prostitution, do you think there's another answer to that particular problem?

I suppose it's possible to take the view that by sending them all to prison it's easier, and away from the immediate situation she's in, but what sort of situation are you creating for her when she goes out again? You know, she's maybe going back into something far worse.

How do you feel about seeing people going out and coming back time and time again, doesn't this put you off in any way? Well, there's a lot of people I have seen, gone out and not come back. Sure, I've seen people come back as well. I can think of a man at Coldingley; I was there six years and saw him on four separate occasions. He couldn't survive outside, he really could only survive on the inside, which was what I said earlier about there being no other place in society for him.

Is prison the answer to somebody like him though?

The sad thing is, I suppose, people have got to commit offences, they can't just come back voluntarily. That certainly is wrong in principle, that in order to keep yourself out of a preposterous situation you've got to put a brick through a window to get arrested.

Talking to you, I think it's right to say that you believe in the saying, 'We are here as punishment and not for punishment'? I think a lot of confusion about prison life is because nobody rightfully knows what prison is for. I see three different scales of imprisonment: first of all, there were the old medieval lock-ups, where you were stuck there because they were holding places. When the judge came down, he didn't fill the prisons up, he emptied them out. Half of them were hanged and later on the other half were transported, but the point was they weren't kept in prison, it was like a remand centre till a judge came round, let them all out, and sent them on their way.

Then there's the Elizabethan times and the houses of correction. There's a third, which is prison as a sort of dumping-ground, first of all because hanging proved to be quite an inappropriate thing except for the most serious offences. That's going back to the last century, and then they started transporting people to far-away places. When that was all finished with, what could you do? You couldn't exile them by sending them abroad, so you put them in prison. It wasn't because nothing could be done with them, it was because it was the next best thing.

Well, we've come a long way from sending them away. We can sentence a man now to life imprisonment, which is

probably a worse deal than his predecessor had. But I think then prison tends to become a place where they can discover what it is about themselves that makes them want to do the things they do; they have to discover what it is about themselves, and what it is other people dislike, what things are to be done and what things are not to be done.

A lot of the part that prison plays is trying to help people to understand themselves, to feel they have worthwhile status, that they belong in society and that they have got value and they are human beings.

Do you think it's because they lose their identity?

Absolutely right. In prison they are recognised, more so than on the outside. You come back inside and immediately you're back in a much smaller community.

What do you think of the Parole system in this country?

I am not in favour of parole — I really think the sentence ought to be fixed by the courts at the time. I'm not sure on life sentence, I'd have to think a bit more about that.

One of the worst things about parole is the person never really knows why they've got it or they haven't got it. If they did know, they'd often find the reasons are beyond their control. Another awful part that I don't like as well is the anxiety that it creates in itself. I think if you give someone a release date, three weeks, it allows them no time to sort out the things like we talked about earlier. I don't think it's helpful at all to keep someone in suspense, and then suddenly throw them a date, I think that's absolutely crazy.

Another thing I don't like about it is the effect it has on the families: suppose you're up for parole and you get a knock-back. Somebody may be understanding and someone else may say well, that's tough, but they may think (and not say it) that you've been misbehaving, and I've known that to happen. A wife will write to me and say, can you tell me why he didn't get his parole, and you just can't answer because you just don't know. Then reading between the lines or quite persuasively they ask, is it because he's been misbehaving? It's awful on the families.

So there's two parts to the parole system that I don't like: one being the intimate part and your living in hope, and two, the strategy and after-care. There is another part in prison that I would like to see, and that is much more home leave. You see prison is much more complete and total, you're in here one minute and you're out the next. I would like to see a prison where people go to work here all the week and then go home at weekends. Also in cases where people have been creating pandemonium at football matches they should get so many weekends in prison.

Do you think that there will be an alternative to prison in the future?

No, I don't think so; maybe it will be a lot more flexible. They should make a start with more generous home leave.

How do you feel about the 'short, sharp shock' sentences? Do you think they work or they should be done according to the individual?

I think that a lot of sentences are quite unnecessarily long. If I were talking about short sharp shock sentences in terms of special centres, it's absolute nonsense, it's no more successful for anyone who has been in before, in fact, in some cases it may have the opposite effect.

BOOK REVIEW

Policing by Coercion by Louise Christian

by June Battye

The Police and Criminal Evidence Bill was first published in October 1982; it fell with the General Election in June 1983 but has been re-introduced with only slight modifications. The Government wasted no time in pushing the Bill into its Committee stage in November 1983.

This is the time when lobbyists and campaign groups seek to influence the Committee members and to get amendments through. With the time scale so compressed it is vital to have both the information and analysis for use in campaigns against this Bill.

Louise Christian's book, published in October 1983, is the second of a series of books produced by the GLC's Police Committee, with the basic aim to respond to a crisis in policing in Greater London. The book therefore maintains a focus on London where the Metropolitan Police has either retained or used powers which do not exist in the rest of the country.

It is written with the seriousness of attitude, fact and detailed argument necessary to counter one of the most important Bills this century. It is crucial to an examination of the Bill that Louise Christian addresses herself to the political context of the Bill and examines the attitudes which have prevailed in the criminal justice system over the last twenty years in order to add to our understanding of the Police Force's role in today's society. It does so by taking each issue as a separate chapter and it combines a legal appraisal with good examples of people's personal experiences.

The title reflects Louise Christian's main argument; namely, that traditionally police were citizens in uniform who policed by consent and with the co-operation of the public, but with the Bill as law they would have powers not available to the public and could and probably will, police by coercion. Whilst this distinction allows the changes to be clearly illustrated it is journalistic licence that is flawed. Many of the Police's current powers are not available or easily accessible to the public. They already police by coercion; the point of the Bill is that it will give the police the full backing of the law.

Many in the Police Force would support the view expressed by the Chair of the Police Federation that the police were currently operating with 'one hand tied behind their back'. The same Federation has announced its opposition to the new Bill (presumably) because it believes there would remain too

much outside interference. The police in general believe that abuses of current law have been inevitable in order for them to function. It is therefore no wonder that many people were not easily aroused by the Bill when first published because they did not feel it would alter anything in practice. But what this book makes clear is that random stop and searches, the setting up of roadblocks to check cars were not meant to have happened. With the Bill it will be legal to do so.

Louise Christian's book analyses each new power to illustrate that abuses in current law will be legitimised so that police officers will be able more easily to stop and search people and search premises. It will sanction the police's demand that the Law should reflect their changing role as agents of social control so that they can better maintain order on the streets and gather intelligence on citizens.

It is ironic that the Bill originated from the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, which in turn was set up because of a concern that police were either breaking or ignoring Judge's rules (guide lines) for the interrogation of suspects. The Royal Commission in fact, under the influence of the Police, accepted the need for changes but endeavoured to temper these changes with safeguards. The Home Office, however, went further; it added new powers and dropped most of the recommended safeguards. In doing so it has become a lax piece of legislation, full of loopholes and as Louise Christian asks, how will 'reasonable suspicion', a 'serious arrestable offence to warrant a search for evidence' be interpreted by police officers when it is not defined in the Bill because it was too difficult to reach a consensus view?

The Bill is made worse, however, by its philosophy and argument that accedes to the need for more powers to combat increasing crime. Louise Christian's book shows that there is no need for the new powers (stop and search) because sufficient powers already exist and the likely effect of the new powers will be to create crime and not prevent it. As she says the Bill will fall disproportionately on black people, the young, the unemployed and the homeless.

Other reviews have examined this Bill in terms of its effect on particular groups, for example, the young, and black, and women which it is important to recognise. But basically this Bill could affect us all in our political work, trade union activity, on demonstrations and as citizens.

Apologies: re the lack of Judy Ward's name on the 'H Wing' article in the last issue -- this was due to adhesive failure of the Cow Gum and was totally accidental.

women in prison

'Women in Prison' — campaigning for WOMEN PRISONERS — demands:

1. Improved safety conditions, particularly in Holloway Prison where women have been burned to death in their cells.
2. The introduction of a range of facilities (e.g. more visits, including family and conjugal visits in relaxed surroundings, more association with other prisoners, fewer petty rules) aimed both at reducing tension and, subsequently, the number of drugs prescribed for behaviour and mood control rather than the benefit of prisoners.
3. Improved, non-discriminatory and non-paternalistic education, job-related training, leisure and work facilities.
4. Improved training and supervision of prison officers, aimed at reducing their present discriminatory practices against women from ethnic minorities and lesbian, disabled or mentally or emotionally disturbed women.
5. A mandatory and non-discriminatory income-entitlement to meet the basic needs of women prisoners.
6. Improvement of the existing child-care facilities in prisons together with the introduction of a whole new range of child-care facilities for mothers receiving a custodial sentence (e.g. new centres specially for mothers and children contacts with local nurseries and parents' groups).
7. Improved medical facilities in general and specialised facilities for women during pregnancy, childbirth and menstruation.
8. Dismantling of the punitive disciplinary structure coupled with the development of official recognition of prisoner participation in the organisation of the prison.
9. Non-discriminatory sentencing of women.
10. Unrestricted access to the Boards of Visitors for representatives from women's organisations, community, ethnic minority and other minority (e.g. lesbian) organisations.
11. Democratic control of the criminal justice and penal systems with: suspension of Official Secrets Act restrictions on the availability of information about prisons; public accountability of the Home Office Prison Department for its administration of the prisons; public inquiries replacing Home Office internal inquiries into the deaths of prisoners, injuries and complaints in general together with Legal Aid to enable prisoners' families to be represented at any such inquiry.
12. Reduction in the length of prison sentences.
13. Replacement of the parole system with the introduction of half-remission on all sentences. Access to a sentence review panel after serving seven years of a life sentence.
14. Increased funding for non-custodial alternatives to prisons (e.g. community service facilities, sheltered housing, alcohol recovery units) together with greater use of the existing sentencing alternatives (e.g. deferred sentence, community service order, probation with a condition of psychiatric treatment etc), with the aim of removing from prisons all who are there primarily because of drunkenness, drug dependency, mental, emotional or sexual problems, homelessness or inability to pay a fine.
15. Abolition of the censorship of prisoners' mail.
16. Abolition of the Prison Medical Service and its replacement by normal National Health Service provision coupled with abolition of the present system whereby prison officers vet and have the power to refuse prisoners' requests to see a doctor.
17. Provision of a law library in prisons so that prisoners may have access to information about their legal rights in relation to DHSS entitlement, employment, housing, marriage and divorce, child-custody, court proceedings, debt, prison rules etc.
18. Improved living and sanitary conditions together with a mandatory income entitlement to meet basic needs.
19. Non-discretionary rights to call witnesses and to full legal representation of prisoners at Visiting (internal) Court proceedings together with the abolition of the charge of 'making false and malicious allegations against an officer'.
20. A review of the existing methods of the recruitment and training of prison discipline staff.

Women in Prison — campaigning for ALL prisoners demands:

11. Democratic control of the criminal justice and penal systems with: suspension of Official Secrets Act restrictions on the availability of information about prisons; public accountability of the Home Office Prison Department for its administration of the prisons; public inquiries replacing Home Office internal inquiries into the deaths of prisoners, injuries and complaints in general together with Legal Aid to enable prisoners' families to be represented at any such inquiry.

Women in Prison
Unit 3
Cockpit Yard
Northington Street
London WC1 2NP
Tel: 01 430 0767/8

Funded by the GLC
Women's Committee

WOMEN ONLY MEET AT HOLLOWAY PRISON, PARKHURST ROAD, LONDON N7, from 6.00 to 7.00pm on the FIRST DAY OF EVERY MONTH. PLEASE COME AND SHOW OUR SOLIDARITY WITH THE WOMEN IN HOLLOWAY.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

I wish to join the Campaign for Women in Prison

I enclose for membership (£5) and as a donation towards the Campaign's running costs.

I will receive an annual report and a calendar and will be informed of any open meetings of the Campaign.

Name (block caps)

ADDRESS

Signature

AFFILIATION OF ORGANISATION

The (name of organisation) wishes to affiliate to the Campaign for Women in Prison.

I enclose £10 affiliation fee.

Our organisation is/is not willing to allow its name to be used for publicity purposes on the Campaign's list of sponsors.

NAME (block caps)

POSITION HELD

ADDRESS

Signature 25

DANGEROUS DRIVING

Figures obtained for INQUEST from the Home Office by Clive Soley MP show that deaths resulting from police car accidents seem to be rising dramatically. The Home Office figures are limited as they deal only with accidents in London since 1981. But 29 people have been killed in police car accidents in London since then, 21 of them members of the public. The figure for 1981 was 3; for 1982, 5; for 1983, 11 deaths; and so far this year deaths total 9. The total number of injuries in this period reaches a staggering 1,150. The national figures are likely to be roughly four times as high.

Not surprisingly the number of accidents per police car in London in terms of operational mileage is also increasing. In 1974 police cars were involved in some form of accident every 20,787 operational miles. By 1980 this figure was down to one accident every 10,856 miles. London's worst case in recent years happened in Ruislip in 1982 when a police car travelling at speeds 'of up to 100mph' hit a car containing four young people killing them all, together with one of the policemen. Although the annual report of the Metropolitan Police always gives the numbers of policemen killed in car accidents it never mentions the number of civilians killed!

These figures are surprisingly similar in number to deaths in police custody, yet while deaths in custody are a much aired and contentious issue, deaths caused by police car chases are not. Yet they also illuminate a crucial aspect of contemporary policing discussed in the PSI report on the Met published earlier this year. It stated 'that a considerable amount of police behaviour can best be understood as a search for some interest, excitement and sensation', with fast driving being one of the most obvious examples. Car chases are the high point of any mobile policeman's working life with many policemen (and it is mainly men) simply speeding for the hell of it. What the PSI report didn't show, but these figures do, is the threat that such behaviour poses to the innocent pedestrian or motorist.

The police are, of course, subject to the same laws as anybody else. Yet to date there is no evidence of police drivers involved in such accidents receiving the heavy fines or even periods of imprisonment for dangerous driving which would clearly happen if they were civilians. £100 fines and a transfer to other duties seem to be the most common result of DPP investigations and prosecutions.

The car which killed 5 people in Ruislip was chasing a suspected stolen car which in fact got away. In July this year another car chase in North London after a suspected vehicle resulted in the death of one police officer and the serious injury of two others. In June this year Michael Shanley was killed crossing Staines Road by a police car answering a summons for help which had grown out of an incident in which some teenagers had been kicking a bus shelter. A 10-mile high speed car chase last month in West London left 7 people in hospital, 3 of them seriously injured. Other victims have been children on pedestrian crossings and passers-by.

Yet none of these accidents is justified even by police standards. For the Home Office Manual of Police Driving Instruction states that: 'No police call is so serious to justify an accident. It is far better that a criminal should escape for the time being than that the crew of a police car or other road users should be exposed to risk or injury.' The rising number of police car deaths suggests that this manual has been neglected in recent years, in preference for the rather more pervasive excitement of flashing lights and wailing sirens which have become a rather scaring feature of London's roads as the Met continues to parade its authority and presence in a more visible form. A high profile exacts a high toll.

Melissa Benn
Ken Worpole

Melissa Benn and Ken Worpole have been commissioned by INQUEST on a grant from the GLC to write a detailed study of deaths in police custody in London. This study will be published in autumn 1985.

IN BRIEF

Police investigating two deaths at Broadmoor Special Hospital have submitted a file on the case to the DPP. (Gloucester Citizen 10.10.84)

Three coroners' officers at Southwark Coroner's Court pleaded guilty in October to taking bribes from undertakers. PCs Edward Bundy (57), James Sawyers (60) and Peter Webb (58) have resigned from the force and are living on their pensions. Defence counsel said they joined 'a time-honoured malpractice of taking gratuities from undertakers' in return for notifying them of deaths. Between them they took £2,606 in bribes and were fined £700. (*Guardian*, 10.11.84)

An open verdict was returned on a man who died in police custody after a car accident in Hayes. At the request of the man's family, we are not publicising any details of this case.

According to the list of deaths in custody in the Metropolitan Police Commissioners' Report, Colin Roach 'walked into police station in possession of a sawn-off shotgun which he later used to commit suicide in an interview room.' The police evidence at the inquest was that the shooting occurred in the foyer. It could be a simple mistake, but the Stoke Newington and Hackney Defence Campaign reckons that 'our good old master of repression has mixed up the police's private information with the public story'. Either way, it shows that the accuracy of the details given in the report can't be taken for granted, as does the omission of the fact that the inquest verdict on Matthew Paul was suicide due to lack of care.

INQUEST

Ground floor

Alexandra National House.

330 Seven Sisters Road.

Finsbury Park.

London N4 2PJ.

Tel: 01-802 7430

SUICIDE IN PRISON

by Tony Ward

During the present year, H.M. Chief Inspector of Prisons has issued three reports dealing with suicide prevention. The first, on Ashford Remand Centre, was discussed in Bulletin no 3. The Chief Inspector's general report on Suicide in Prisons was published in September and his Annual Report for 1983 summarises its main findings. The Chief Inspector acknowledges that these reports were prepared as a result of 'public concern' following the verdict of lack of care on Jim Heather Hayes in 1982. Without the activities of INQUEST and the Heather-Hayes Committee few of the public would ever have heard of that verdict; and if the suggestions as to verdicts in the new Coroner's Rules are followed there would never be such a verdict again. The Prisons Inspectorate, the Prison Department and the civil servants responsible for the Coroners' Rules are all part of the Home Office.

The Chief Inspector's recommendations for suicide prevention are few and modest. There should be new procedures for referring potentially suicidal inmates to medical staff, in place of the present 'F' marker system. What, if any, preventive action to take should be at the discretion of the prison medical officer. Lectures and discussions on suicide should be included in staff training courses. And there should be 'a more methodical and thorough approach' to the monitoring of suicides, with a view to building up research data (Annual Report paras. 5.05-5.08).

The Chief Inspector makes no great claims about the likely results of these changes, and we can agree that any improvement is likely to be modest. We can agree, too, that there is 'no instant solution to the problem'. But the Inspectorate might have come up with more answers if it had not fudged many of the most important questions. What follows is an analysis of the main weaknesses of the full report on Suicides in Prison, which is available free from the Home Office Library, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT. Paragraph numbers refer to that report unless otherwise stated.

1. SUICIDE AND SELF-INJURY

Defining suicide, according to the report, 'is quite straightforward'. A reading of some of the basic literature on suicide¹ will reveal that the question of definition is, in fact, quite contentious. This is not merely an academic question: as the late professor Erwin Stengel, a leading authority on suicide, argued in the *Prison*

Medical Journal in 1971, it is also a critical factor in prevention. Strangely, Stengel's article is not mentioned in the Inspectorate's review of the literature on prison suicides. In it, he criticises the 'dangerous fiction' that self-destructive actions are either 'genuinely suicidal' — motivated by an unambiguous wish to die — or else merely 'manipulative gestures' (or, in the kinder language of the outside world, 'cries for help'). The lack of a sympathetic response to so-called 'manipulative' actions may well make a major contribution to the prison suicide rate; Stengel goes so far as to argue that many prison suicides are 'iatrogenic' — i.e. caused by doctors.

The Inspectorate has little to say about non-fatal self-injury in prisons, except that it is much more common than suicide — 2,310 such incidents were recorded in 1982 — and that some Canadian statistics show certain differences between the prisoners who injure and who kill themselves. The report notes that different establishments have very different ideas of what constitutes a 'suicide attempt' but seems to regard this as purely a bureaucratic problem about the accuracy of records.

One consequence of the Inspectorate's 'straightforward' definition of suicide can be seen in the single sentence accorded to women prisoners: 'We decided to include a visit to one establishment for females (Holloway), even though suicide, as distinct from self-injury, is rare in female establishments' (5.1). In fact, if one regards any self-injury causing death as suicide, there have been three such deaths in women's prisons in the last five years (officially recorded as one suicide and two accidents) which in relation to the relatively small female prison population gives almost exactly the same suicide rate as for men (0.4 per 1,000 per year). But the Inspectorate finds it unnecessary to comment on the appalling incidence of self-injury in Holloway's psychiatric wing; nor on the risk of prisoners' setting fire to themselves (which caused the deaths of Julie Potter and Patricia Cummings); nor on our own well-publicised remarks about self-inflicted wounds being stitched up without anaesthetic (see the Women in Prison section of the last *Abolitionist* for evidence in support of this claim).

2. THE PRISON DOCTORS

Apart from some improved form-filling procedures, the Inspectorate's recommendations leave the question of what preventive action should be taken almost

entirely to the discretion of the prison medical officers. But the evidence and background literature cited in the Report casts doubt on the competence of the prison medical service to perform this role. Another article from the *Prison Medical Journal* draws attention to 'the institutional forces which perpetuate the myth that prisoners can cope with anything . . . the doctor who shows understanding and concern can be all too easily labelled as "soft" by other members of staff'. A more trenchant comment comes from the Secretary of the SCPS Governors' Branch:

It appears to us that there is too much emphasis upon the role and decision of the Prison Service Medical staff in this area. Not wishing to put too fine a point on it, the medical profession retains unto itself a form of 'mystique' in diagnostic areas. It may well be that some lay people are equally adept at recognising signs of depression and in so doing may be unencumbered by the need to recognise and reduce malingering which, quite properly, influences medical officers. (2.11)

A reasonable suggestion in the light of this evidence would be that independent doctors, whose main practice was in the outside community, might be somewhat less susceptible to the 'institutional forces' described (the governors draw just the opposite conclusion — that the doctors should be placed firmly under the governors' control). The Inspectorate brushes the question of the prison medical service's position aside as a 'hardy perennial'.

3. RULES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The most important information disclosed by the report is that neither of the two principal preventive measures laid down by existing Standing Orders and Instructions — the 'F' marking system and the 15-minute 'special watch' — is operated properly. The Chief Inspector does not seem inclined to blame anyone for this state of affairs. The trouble with the 'F' marking system (by which prisoners identified as suicide risks have a red 'F' stamped on their files) is, according to the report, that central instructions

... lay down criteria for identifying suicide risks which, even when not applied diligently, sweep in a substantial proportion of all prisoners. . . . The resulting surfeit of 'F' cases leads to a vicious circle: prison staff doubt the value of the marker system, they begin to neglect the bureaucratic procedures (such as making appropriate entries in files) necessary to keep the system running, the value of the marker is thus further undermined, faith in it is reduced even more, and so on. The system also fails

as a result of discipline staff often being unaware which prisoners are 'F' cases. (7.15)

This does not reflect well on prison officers: as members of a disciplined service they should obey even those instructions of which they 'doubt the value'. But it says more about the incompetence of management in the prison service, as does the following:

Turning now to the matter of instituting a 15 minute watch — a matter dealt with by Standing Order 13 60 and paragraph 5a of Circular Instruction 39/1973 as amended — medical officers cannot expect discipline officers to carry out the procedure entailed with any great degree of effectiveness. The demands made by inmates on officers patrolling at night may well prevent them returning to a particular cell every 15 minutes, and checks of this frequency are really only practicable where an inmate is held overnight in hospital or on a suitably staffed hospital landing. (7.12)

What sort of idiots lay down procedures which they cannot expect to be effectively carried out? Could it be that these are what the Policy Studies Institute, in its report on the Metropolitan Police, calls 'presentational rules' — the real object being to reassure the public by telling the inquest that the prisoner was checked at the prescribed intervals? Certainly we have never known prison staff to testify that, for whatever reason, the prescribed checks were *not* carried out. Since it's hardly likely that it's only when the difficulties referred to in the report don't arise that people die, this seems to imply something about the incidence of perjury by prison staff.

According to one of the articles cited in the Inspectorate's review of the literature, most US prison administrators identify as one of the 'five requirements for successful suicide prevention': 'formal investigations of all suicides, which not only make officers accountable for lapses in security and judgement but also lead to an understanding of the system's flaws.' (1.18) In its summary of the literature, the Inspectorate identifies four promising means of reducing suicides, one of which is 'painstaking investigation'. After the revelations of rule-breaking and mismanagement later in the report, one might expect the Inspectorate to return to this point with greater emphasis. Instead, we find a suggestion that better 'monitoring' of suicides could provide 'a valuable body of data' (7.20). The fact that the existing regulations are broken is treated as being the fault of the regulators themselves: the answer lies in making the them clearer and less demanding, and leaving most of the details to the doctor's discretion. The Inspectorate notes, but does not comment on, the proposal by INQUEST and others that the (revised) standing orders should be published or at least made available at inquests, thus making it even harder to know whether they will in fact be followed.

4. LOOSE ENDS

We have seen, in relation to the treatment of self-inflicted injuries, the role of doctors, and the investigation of deaths, how the Inspectorate has noted important



Mick Ryan (l.) and Douglas Kum (r.), found hanged in Canterbury Prison in 1982. Both were victims of bullying.

questions in reviewing the background literature and the evidence it received, but has failed to deal with those questions adequately or at all in its conclusions. This happens again in relation to the question, raised particularly by INQUEST, of the vulnerability of prisoners — and especially young male prisoners — to bullying. Bullying, like suicide, is a form of behaviour which is encouraged by the pressures of institutional life and which prison staff have a duty to prevent: this was a major theme of our evidence to the Inspectorate and of our pamphlet, *Murder Near the Cathedral?* (now out of print). The Inspectorate acknowledges that an 'important specific point was that staff should consider carefully which inmates to locate together in the same cell, so as not to expose the more vulnerable to unsuitable companions' (2.5). The report's conclusions, however, say only that 'Placing a *clear suicide risk* in a shared cell should only be done when the other occupants are specially selected and after a period of observation in the hospital' (7.11: our emphasis). A prisoner who is not suicidal to start with may well become so through being cooped up with unsuitable companions.

Another question to which this applies is that of emergency access to cells, which is touched on in the 'Background Literature' chapter. The report does not even mention the fact that an officer patrolling at night who finds an inmate hanging or even on fire cannot get into the cell without first collecting the key from another officer.

5. 'GENERAL PREVENTION'

The organisations which made submissions to the Inspectorate were virtually unanimous in stressing that general improvements in prison conditions were likely to be the most effective means of reducing suicides. The Inspectorate gives only a half-hearted endorsement to this view:

We thought it reasonable to assume that some reduction in the number of prisoners resorting to suicide would follow upon improvement in regimes, staff/inmate ratios, counselling facilities and prison conditions generally. However, some inmates who kill themselves are distressed about the crimes they have committed or about the breakdown of personal relationships. For them it was felt that improvements in immediate living conditions would probably not be crucial. (Annual Report, 5.04)

The Prisons cannot be absolved from responsibility for the breakdown of prisoners' personal relationships; many of the recommendations submitted to the Inspectorate were designed to help prisoners maintain outside contacts by, for example, allocating them close to their home areas and allowing them to make telephone calls. And surely one of the main purposes of counselling would be to help prisoners come to terms with their past actions. The Inspectorate might have made more of the fact that Grendon Underwood Prison, with its relatively 'liberal, supportive and therapeutic regime', has not had a single suicide in the last ten years. According to Lord Donaldson, a former Chair of Grendon's Board of Visitors, 70% of the prisoners there have a history of suicide attempts, though the Inspectorate found 'F' markings on only 25% of prisoners' files.

The full report is even less positive in this respect, concluding that the case for reform 'is better argued on broad penological grounds than solely on the narrow — though important — issue of suicide' (7.3). It must be within the Chief Inspector's competence to decide what reforms are desirable on 'broad penological grounds', and one would expect measures which possess this merit to be given more emphasis rather than less.

CONCLUSIONS

That the Inspectorate's review of suicide precautions will lead, at best, only to minor improvements is an inevitable

result of the approach it has adopted: confining its recommendations to the narrowest possible area while at the same time stressing, quite rightly, that within that area only a limited amount can be achieved.

Two things should be said to the Chief Inspector's credit. Firstly, except for a passing reference to the possible benefits of 'more comprehensive supervision' the report gives no support to repressive measures against suicide such as stripping prisoners naked, as is the practice in Broadmoor. Secondly, it does deal with the three issues which INQUEST identified as arising out of the Heather-Hayes case: failures of communication; non-observation of existing procedures; and the medical inspection to determine an inmate's fitness for internal disciplinary proceedings, which it recommends should be more thorough than is often the case at present. One can have little confidence, however, that the new procedures it recommends will in practice be implemented any more effectively than the existing ones.

So where do we go from here? Firstly and most obviously we must continue to draw attention to prison suicides as one symptom of the immense human misery caused by imprisonment, most of it for no socially useful purpose. Secondly, an investigation into prison health care by a Parliamentary Select Committee could deal with some of the key questions which are skated over in the present report, such as the incidence and treatment of self-injury and the position of prison doctors. Thirdly, the campaign for accountability of the police must be extended to embrace the accountability of prisons.

The discredited Boards of Visitors should be replaced by new 'watchdog' bodies, appointed by local authorities instead of the Home Secretary, which among other duties would investigate prison deaths and would publish their findings. Coroners' procedures should be reformed on the lines we have advocated elsewhere, and any revised instructions prepared in the light of the Inspectorate's report should be published. The matters of detail on which the Chief Inspector concentrates — and others which he neglects — are not unimportant; but only an approach which goes beyond them to tackle the wider issues of the use of imprisonment, prison conditions, health care arrangements and accountability can be expected to make a major impact on the problem of prison suicide.

1. J. Maxwell Atkinson, *Discovering Suicide*, Macmillan, 1978; Erwin Stengel, *Suicide and Attempted Suicide*, Pelican, 1970; Steve Taylor, *Durkheim and the Study of Suicide*, Macmillan, 1982 (Atkinson's and Taylor's books also contain some interesting material on coroners).
2. *House of Lords Official Report* 9 Feb, 1983 col 1296.

Thanks to Sheila Heather-Hayes and Stephen Shaw for their suggestions.

Making the Rules

by Phil Solomons

The Departmental Cttee on Coroners attached 'particular importance' to uniform rules for the operation of Coroners' Courts. That was in 1910. The Wright Committee made the same call twenty-five years later. By 1937 the Home Office admitted 'Although the practical advantages of an attempt to draft rules may be small, the Home Secretary may be open to criticism if we do not try'. Much to everyone's relief MP's were uninterested and the matter could again be safely dropped.

But by 1950 the pressure was on again. The British Medical Association produced a report (mostly concerned with medical fees). The Coroners' Society made recommendations. And questions were asked in the House. Mr Chuter Ede, the Home Secretary, tried to stall proceedings by reference to the great controversy any changes might cause, but fired MP's with his provocative remark 'Coroners are also God's creatures'. He was forced into promising action (or at least due consideration).

Whitehall rose to the challenge and in a breathtaking nine month burst of activity set up a committee, chaired by Mr Justice Austin Jones. He was rather busy being a judge during the day and had a train to catch at tea-time, so the committee met between 4.30 and 6.30pm. Lawyers, doctors, journalists, policemen, civil servants and of course coroners were all represented. Lay people were not invited because as His Honour put it, 'A member of the public would not be able to make any contribution'.

The main witness was Bentley Purchase, Secretary of the Coroners' Society. His opinion (shared by most of the committee) was that 'no improvement will be made to the coroner system by the making of rules'. That didn't prevent him from writing much of the report for them.

It was he who pointed out the biggest failure of the report. It produced no definition of who was a 'properly interested person' — that is, who was entitled to question witnesses at an inquest. Trades union officials often appeared in cases involving industrial accident or disease. The police wanted a similar right in any case where they might have an interest, but coroners were wary of attempts to make inquests merely a part of police enquiries. (Or, as the Association of Chief Police Officers put it, 'Once we've decided there's no crime, there's no need for an inquest'. 'Why?' 'Because we've decided there's no crime!'). The Bar Council was concerned that they alone should represent those concerned, but it was considered politically impossible to remove a trade union right (oh distant days!). And so who was or was not a 'properly interested person' was

left 'at the coroner's discretion'

The most heated debate was between the medical and legal professions, or, as a later draft had it, the legal and medical professions. The Medical Protection Society was worried that coroners might not have good enough medical qualifications, and the BMA thought legal experience was unnecessary. The Bar Council thought barristers would be ideal and the Law Society reckoned solicitors would do a good job. A compromise was found: either medical or legal qualifications would do. Peace was restored.

The majority of the medical witnesses were concerned about money or pecking order. More than half of the evidence considered by the committee was on the subject of doctors' fees. A small exception to self-interested wrangling came with the Christian Scientists' suggestion that Coroners' Officers should not be policemen, in order to promote impartiality. Despite a Chief Constable's frank assertion that policemen 'appointed as Coroners' Officers are still under the Chief Constable's command', the subject was dropped with no discussion.

One matter on which there was general agreement was the jury and their bad habits. The Law Society was 'unimpressed by the quality of person who sits on a coroners' jury. (They are often) obtained from the Labour Exchanges . . . and are not people of the highest intelligence'. The Coroners' Society thought summing-up necessary 'so as the contents of the jury-box knows what it's supposed to think'. But apparently the jury sometimes did know what it thought, and expressed itself the only way open to it, by adding a rider to its verdict. A coroner, who didn't 'feel the need for women jurors' complained that juries 'just trot riders out on their own initiative'. The Bar Council agreed, denouncing riders as 'an evil without justification'. Everyone looked forward to legislation to ban them (passed eventually in 1980).

The committee met 17 times during 1951 and early 1952, most meetings lasting about one and a half hours. A few members attended every session. 'Rules which said at every line "at the discretion of the coroner" wouldn't look very good' remarked one member, and he was right — they don't. The central question of what an inquest is for — narrow, factual discovery or full public inquiry — appeared briefly on the agenda, but was hastily dropped. The location and timing of an inquest, where the post-mortem should be held and who should conduct it, who should be called at witnesses, who should question them and on what subjects, who should be allowed to buy copies of the transcripts and who should not, all these were left 'at the discretion of the coroner'. And so they remain.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CRIME PREVENTION

by Carol Gaca, NACRO

The problems of crime, like other social issues need to be tackled where they occur, in communities, according to the priorities of those communities themselves. This means that crime is everyone's concern. The way we live is influenced directly and indirectly by the effects of crime and it is clear from past and present failures to reduce crime that it is not a question of more policing by the statutory agencies. Crime will not be prevented by filling the streets with more policemen, appointing more judges or building more prisons, even if such a policy were in itself desirable.

It is this philosophy which has led NACRO to broaden the traditional scope of its work with offenders. In the late 60s and early 70s NACRO was more or less exclusively concerned with the provision of services and facilities for the resettlement of offenders and operated largely in relation to the criminal justice system. 1975 saw a change of direction in NACRO's work with the setting up of our first neighbourhood crime prevention initiative, the Cunningham Road Improvement Scheme (CRIS) in Widnes, which introduced NACRO to a completely different approach.

CRIS was designed to establish whether vandalism and other types of minor crime will decrease if the residents in a particular neighbourhood become involved in deciding what happens on and to their estate and if this in turn leads to environmental and other improvements, including a reduction in crime, in line with their wishes and needs. Three years after the initial consultations with residents research was undertaken to assess the impact of the scheme, the main findings of which were:

- residents felt that the appearance of the estate had improved there was less litter about, people were looking after their gardens and there was a friendlier image overall;
- the local authority had implemented new policies which had led to more responsive repairs and estate management services — better liaison had been established between the housing department and tenants' associations;
- there was better provision for young people on the estate — a play leader had been appointed, an adventure playground had been built and a youth club opened;
- the police had responded to requests for better policing by introducing local beat officers to augment panda car patrols;
- considerable progress had been made towards reducing vandalism and minor crime — in 1976, 17 per cent of residents reported having had a burglary, by 1979 this had fallen to 8 per cent.

NACRO learnt a lot from this first initiative, both in terms of the 'nuts and bolts' of setting up such a scheme and the extent of the contribution which this approach could make to crime prevention. We found that residents were far from apathetic when asked their views about the way they wanted to live and they put forward realistic and achievable proposals.

We found that a local authority was willing to seek the advice of an outside agency and, even more important, was willing to respond in a positive way. We also found that it was possible for residents, statutory agencies and the local authority to work together to improve the quality of life in at least one neighbourhood and we felt that there was no reason why this could not be achieved elsewhere.

The Widnes scheme attracted widespread interest from other local authorities with the same problem — what to do about their run-down housing estates where no one wanted to live. The misery of high-rise, high density living has been well documented but NACRO was to find that many estates, often on the edges of town with a range of housing often outwardly pleasant in appearance, shared the same multitude of problems as inner city areas — high unemployment, poverty, family breakdown, lack of communal facilities and high crime rates or fear of crime, as well as poor living conditions and poor local reputation or image. This factor is reflected in the location of NACRO's projects which are to be found in areas as different in character and geography as Birmingham and Wolverhampton in the Midlands, Ipswich in East Anglia, Havant in Hampshire and Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales. Since 1979 when NACRO received funding from the Department of the Environment to set up a small Crime Prevention Unit, we have helped to establish projects on 52 estates in over 30 local authorities. In 1980 the GLC invited NACRO to set up the Safe Neighbourhoods Unit and more recently NACRO has used Community Programme funding to recruit and train teams of workers to carry out consultation programmes, as well as funding from the Department of the Environment's Urban Aid programme.

No matter where NACRO is working, however, the approach is very much the same. When a local authority invites NACRO to develop a neighbourhood initiative the first step is to set up a steering committee which brings together at a senior level the key agencies which deliver services or provide facilities on an estate. These are usually any tenants' associations, the housing department, technical services, social services, education, probation and the police. Local councillors and representatives of voluntary organisations are also invited. Once the committee is set up, it chooses which estate or estates should be part of the neighbourhood scheme and a team of neighbourhood workers begins a consultations programme. The basic approach is to ask all the residents what they see as the problems of the area and how these problems should be solved.

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

Having outlined in theory what NACRO's neighbourhood approach to crime prevention is, what does it actually mean in practice? The best way of explaining this may be to look in more detail at one NACRO scheme which has been running for two years in North Staffordshire and contains a number of elements common to several other projects. The scheme

NEIGHBOURHOOD CRIME PREVENTION (continued)

began on the Crackley Estate in Newcastle under Lyme in July 1982 when it employed workers under the Community Enterprise Programme (CEP). It has since expanded on to two other estates in Stoke on Trent and Biddulph as it has grown into a 135 place scheme funded by the Community Programme (CP), which replaced CEP.

When the scheme started explanatory leaflets were delivered to all residents. Teams of neighbourhood workers then carried out a sample questionnaire survey of about 10 per cent of residents to find out what they saw as the main problems. After the survey, the neighbourhood workers invited random samples of residents to join small discussion groups. Each group, of six to a dozen people, met three, four or sometimes five times at about fortnightly intervals. The idea is for everyone to have a say, think about problems, work out solutions, develop recommendations for estate improvements away from the quicker but hardly representative setting of the public meeting. As the meetings progressed residents met representatives of the steering committee and were able to question senior housing officials about and others on such issues as the quality of house repairs or the lettings policy. The Action Plan which resulted from these consultations was presented to the project steering committee by the neighbourhood workers on behalf of the residents and implementation of the improvement plans has been going on over the past year or so. Some recommendations were the responsibility of the local authority or statutory agencies, some were taken up by the residents themselves and others have been acted upon by NACRO's own staff. For example, following signs that the community was becoming more active, Newcastle-Under-Lyme provided £30,000 to renovate former shop premises to serve as a community centre and a range of activities such as playgroups and pensioners groups have been set up. The street lighting has been substantially improved, as recommended by the residents. The lack of facilities for young people was another area of concern and Staffordshire Council has greatly increased the level of paid youth leaders in the youth club.

During the process of consultation residents realised there was the possibility of bringing about improvements through their own efforts if they worked together in a tenants association. With the initial support of the CP consultation workers a residents' board has now been running for 18 months and no longer requires practical support from NACRO. The residents' board has turned its attention to some difficult problems such as noise and dust nuisance from an opencast mine adjacent to the estate.

NACRO's work teams have helped residents to implement some of the recommendations for environmental improvements. Decorating and gardening for the elderly, handicapped and single parent families have had a big impact on the appearance of the estate. A BMX track has been built to give the youngsters something to do in comparative safety off the roads. One of the larger scale improvements which took a year to complete has been the creation of the 'Pocket Park'. Residents were concerned about an unsightly piece of waste ground which had been used for years as a dumping ground

for rubbish. They suggested that it should be turned into a small community park. Working with the residents the NACRO team drew up plans, meetings were held and the outcome was a small park area with seats, stone walling and a safe grassy area for children to play. Significantly, the park has not been vandalised at all and the NACRO team is now working on an adventure playground on land adjacent to the community centre. The need for play areas had been readily identified by residents as there are 600 children under the age of 12 living on the estate. NACRO is actively involving local people in building the playground so that they will play a leading role in managing and running it when it is completed.

It is not yet possible to assess the full effect of this work because North Staffordshire, like most of NACRO's housing estate-based projects, has been running for a comparatively short period but the evidence so far collected does indicate success in helping tenants to plan and achieve improvements to their neighbourhoods. A recent review of its work by a similar NACRO project on an estate in the West Midlands showed progress had been made in a number of areas. Tenants' opinion of the area had changed considerably: there was greater satisfaction with estate cleanliness, less fear of going out at night, fewer people hearing about incidents of violence, increasing awareness of and membership of the tenants' association. The beat police officer felt that community spirit had increased and the NACRO project had been a major factor in a significant reduction in major problems of crime and anti-social behaviour. Local officials felt that the consultations programme had been of value to the council in sorting out priorities and they welcomed the support given by the project to residents in getting their own activities established. Both tenants and officials commented that there was much still to be done which depended on action by the local authority and the continued involvement of the new residents' association.

NACRO's experience of running neighbourhood schemes has shown that problems of vandalism and crime cannot be dealt with in isolation from all the other problems that typically affect run-down, demoralised areas. Similarly, it is clear that the inter-agency approach and the consultative process with residents is essential to tackle the multiplicity of problems which exist. NACRO has increasingly focussed on working with agencies outside the criminal justice system and on improving living conditions and the general quality of life, crime being just one of the contributory elements, in the expectation that improvements in general aspects of community life will effect a reduction in levels of crime. We feel that such an approach can be successful in revitalising such environments and that the people who are most often forgotten, the residents who have to survive in these environments, are willing and able, if given the means and the opportunity, to contribute to this revitalisation.

Carol Gaca, NACRO Press Officer
3 October 1984

WATCH NEIGHBOURHOOD

Julian Scola

Neighbourhood watch, in the words of a Metropolitan Police press release of September 1983, is a scheme 'for ordinary home and car owners who want to protect themselves and their community from burglars and thieves'. It is supposed to represent 'a new partnership between the police and the public in a bid to beat crime'. In London it involves five components: a network of residents co-operating to look out for and report 'suspicious' activity (to be the 'extra eyes and ears of the police'), a marking scheme to identify property by post coding, home security surveys to recommend improvements to residential protection, the promotion of crime prevention and environmental awareness to improve neighbourhood life, and the deployment of Divisional Support Unit, District Crime Squad and Special Patrol Group officers to target so-called known criminals within the area of a scheme which is being set up. The fifth component, although mentioned in guidelines issued to all District Commanders and Divisional Chief Superintendents, is not referred to in any of the publicly available promotional material! One could argue that this is indicative of the sort of 'partnership' which the police want with the public.

By June 1984 neighbourhood watch schemes had been launched by twenty-two police forces in England and Wales, with a further eleven planning to do so. In London the police claimed that they had set up three hundred and ninety schemes by May 1984 with a further five hundred planned. Their development has been very patchy, ranging from a claimed 44 in Lewisham to 1 in Waltham Forest (May 1984). An important factor in the growth of the schemes is the attitude of the police hierarchy. That is not to say neighbourhood watch is equally suited to all types of housing areas. Although there has been no systematic research, the indications are that it has been better received in owner-occupied districts. Indeed, a Metropolitan Police Officer recently did a study of why the police had so much difficulty getting into 'bad' areas. There are no neighbourhood watch schemes in Brixton division.

Will neighbourhood watch cut crime? London-wide it seems that its effect will be marginal: by May '84 less than half of all London boroughs had ten or more schemes. Due to the police's practice of counting a scheme as operational after only two meetings it is unlikely that all listed schemes are actually active. For a real dent to be made in London's crime figures the schemes have to be set up in high crime areas. In this respect the police have failed. One of Lambeth's most successful schemes is operating in eleven streets with less than five burglaries a month. Moreover, the police have encountered complete failure to set up schemes in many areas: out of eight attempts to set up neighbourhood watch in West Hendon division only four had succeeded by May '84.

Apart from the question of the numbers and distribution of schemes in London is the problem of displacement. A decrease in recorded crime in a pilot neighbourhood watch in Kingsdown, Bristol, was accompanied by an increase in crime in an adjacent area. Unless neighbourhood watch is established far more widely it may be that much crime will merely be pushed from one neighbourhood to another.

There are also grounds for questioning neighbourhood watch's effectiveness in the areas where it has been set up, particularly in the long term. There is evidence to suggest that schemes enjoy a 'honeymoon' period after which participants lose interest and schemes either stagnate or collapse. Eight of the

twenty-six schemes operational in Tooting division in April had collapsed within five months. Between April and July a quarter of East Ham division's twelve neighbourhood watch schemes had collapsed and were replaced by new schemes. There is, therefore, a high turnover of short-lived schemes.

But its impact on crime is not the only criteria by which the schemes can be judged. One need to ask how appropriate a measure it is in a wider social context. A number of points suggest that it is not. Firstly, there is little evidence to suggest that it actually addresses the main concerns of those living in high crime areas. The problem lies with neighbourhood watch's emphasis on burglary and the defence of personal property. For example, a police canvass of an area in Barnet in which they were attempting to set up a scheme found that burglary was only the fifth main public concern after vehicles parked on pavements, vandalism, rowdiness and drunkenness. It does not address problems of racist attacks or sexual assaults which are the dominant concerns of large sections of inner-city populations. It is likely that schemes along the lines of NACRO's Safe Neighbourhood Unit would be far more relevant to the needs of high crime inner city areas.

Secondly, as a scheme it is best suited to homogeneous communities: which most high crime areas are not. Indeed the scheme could seriously heighten tensions and divisions existing in inner-city communities. The police make no attempt to ensure that neighbourhood watch groups are representative of their area as a whole. The police do not exclude racists, fascists or the power-hungry. Chief Superintendent Peck of Stoke Newington told the *Hackney Gazette* 'I don't care if there's only two people in a road prepared to do the neighbourhood watch, if they want our support, we will give it'. What limitations are placed on participants are frequently overlooked. The Met have regularly stated that participants should not patrol the streets: but they do in several areas without the police either preventing them or withdrawing their support for the scheme. Both these factors open the scheme to abuse, and could create hostility and suspicion whatever the group's motives. For instance, the creation of a neighbourhood watch on the Ferry Lane Estate in Tottenham, by a group splitting off from the Tenants Association, led the Tenants Association Chair to claim that it could split the estate on racial lines.

In short, in low crime owner-occupied areas neighbourhood watch may reduce crime temporarily and have no detrimental effects on community relations. But the scheme, at best, is no answer to the problems facing high crime inner-city areas and, at worst, could greatly exacerbate them.

Julian Scola works for the Libertarian Research and Education Trust which is funded by the GLC to monitor NW schemes in London. If you have information on NW in your area or want further information contact: Julian Scola, Libertarian Research and Information Trust, 9 Poland Street, London W1, tel. (01) 734 5831.

(Typesetter's note: what a pathetic analysis! NW is a recipe for racial (and sexual) harassment by gangs of white blokes fancying themselves as unofficial special constables. Its value to the Police lies at least as much in its power to turn parts of the community against each other and towards the police - the police's battle for the people's hearts and minds - as in its ability to reduce crime. The prospects are absolutely horrifying - except that it seems to be failing.)

RACIAL VIOLENCE

The police have often come under criticism for the way they respond to racist attacks. Here, Tommy Sheppard and Viki Carter from the Community Alliance for Police Accountability examine their performance in the East End of London.

According to the police computer at Scotland Yard there are about 30 racist incidents in Tower Hamlets every month. Bengali people are the main victims of these crimes. This figure is however only the tip of the iceberg as far as racist violence is concerned. For a start crimes in which black people are attacked or abused are often not recorded by the police as being racist in nature. Secondly, of course, not every incident reported to the police is actually officially recorded. Perhaps most importantly, many black people don't bother, or have given up, reporting crimes committed against them. They can't see the point and think that nothing will be done if they do report something - because long experience has taught them that the police are simply not interested in most crimes committed against them.

We therefore feel that we can say quite confidently that the real extent of racist crime is far higher than the police figures show. There are no statistics in existence that accurately reflect the current situation. How many attacks do you count when you go on to an estate to visit one family only to find that all their neighbours have suffered for months or years from attacks they have given up reporting? How many attacks do you count when you visit a family over a recent attack on one child, to find they tell of a whole catalogue of incidents spread over the last two years involving a knife through the leg of a 3-year old child to snakes through the letter box? There are no figures. All that can definitely be said is that racist violence is widespread throughout the entire East End of London. All black people are at risk from the racists, but harassment and attacks are concentrated from time to time in particular areas or housing estates. For black people in these areas, racist harassment and attacks have become a way of life. Many live in terror, fearing for themselves, their families and their home every single day.

It is important to look at the different forms that racist crimes take because police reaction to such crimes does vary according to their severity. The relatively rare murder or near-fatal stabbing will produce a near-adequate police reaction on many occasions. Certainly a recent particularly violent and cowardly attack on a 14-year old school boy stirred the police into action. The extent of the injuries and the shock of the entire community left little room for anything short of proper investigation and subsequent court appearances. The victims of less severe attacks and the victims of racist harassment have a far less contented story to tell. A Bengali woman went out to collect her child who was playing outside. She was attacked by a neighbour; she was hit in the face and had her hair pulled. After she fell to the ground, the attacker kicked her several times. The woman eventually escaped and ran to her flat. The attacker followed and started banging at the closed door shouting abuse such as 'come out you black bastard'. At that point a policeman arrived on the scene; he had been elsewhere on the estate when he heard the commotion. There were witnesses all around and the attacker was still banging on the door and shouting. The police response was to suggest a private prosecution. The police themselves initiated nothing. The

policeman could have arrested the attacker on the spot for 'threatening words and behaviour' - and we have plenty of examples where people have been arrested on this charge for far less - or could have charged the attacker with ABH (Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm).

Harassment by its very nature is difficult to police; difficult, but not impossible. Harassment is the sum total of a variety of incidents perpetrated for a particular motive. These incidents can take many forms, the most usual being threats, abuse, assaults, the throwing of bricks and stones, breaking of windows and the pushing of all manner of disgusting things through letter boxes and windows. The consistent response to these crimes when the victims are black, is for the police to do virtually nothing. By doing nothing, they are seen by both the attackers and the victims as condoning racist violence; by suggesting victims take their own private prosecutions, they are exposing them to further threats from the attackers and placing on the victims a tremendous burden that they simply should not have to bear.

When the police are telephoned by a Bengali person in an emergency, they are often slow to arrive - one or two hours is consistently reported to us as being a normal wait for a response. Having arrived, many police officers are quite capable of telling the victim that he or she is wasting police time: even if this is not said explicitly, many victims gain this impression from their attitude. Unless the crime complained of is obvious and severe, it is extremely unlikely that the police will conduct an investigation into what has happened. They may listen cursorily to a story they may only partially understand because of the language barrier and they will then usually say that there is nothing they can do. It is extremely rare for a proper statement to be taken at any stage or for an interpreter to be used at all. It is unlikely that witnesses will be positively sought and interviewed and even if those witnesses actually present themselves to the police they stand a good chance of being ignored, particularly if they are also Bengali. Very often crimes that are reported to the police are not officially recorded. A Bengali man recently called the police after he had been chased by some youths and been shot at by an air gun - the police arrived, did nothing and no crime was officially recorded despite the fact that the victim knew where the youth concerned lived and could identify him.

POLICE POLICY

As has been said, harassment is not easy to police. It can however be policed where there is the will within the force to combat it. The police in the Midlands are policing the 'harassment' of working miners by clever use of the media, by extensive prosecutions and by vastly increasing their own numbers. In Chesterfield the police hold weekly briefings of the media and issue press releases detailing the 'horrendous' crimes that have been committed the week before, eg 'Mr... working miner, received information from a neighbour that striking miners are going to cause damage to his property...'. 'Wife of working miner was intimidated by striking miners

who said she had better watch out whilst at home alone. Mrs . . . is now afraid to stay at home by herself'. The police appear on local television expressing their deep concern at the way people are being harassed and how their lives are being made intolerable. The increase in their numbers and the willingness to prosecute has meant that the situation is totally controlled by the police and the 'victims' are protected and, what is more important, feel protected. Whilst in no way advocating a similarly intensive policing campaign in London, *some* concern both privately to the victims and publicly, *some* positive action against the attackers, *some* evidence that the Bengali victims are believed when they tell of their experiences and *some* indication that the police have developed the desire to stamp out racist crimes, would have an enormous effect on what is a rapidly worsening situation. A radical change in policing is however, distressingly far away; while the political will may be present to deal with the situation in Chesterfield, it is patently not there to deal with the situation in Tower Hamlets.

The Bengali community in Tower Hamlets has been pressing the police for better protection for 10 years. Nothing has made any difference. There have been the Home Office Report on Racial Attacks of November 1981, the PSI Report, the GLC Panel of Enquiry into Racial Harassment, the Trades Council book *Blood on the Streets*, the Metropolitan Police's own figure for Tower Hamlets in terms of racist attacks, representations from Ian Mikardo and Peter Shore, extensive press coverage, and *still* the police appear to have taken none of this in. They respond with public utterances of concern when they are under pressure, but talk to any Bengali family on almost any estate in Tower Hamlets and you will hear the old, old story of inaction, indifference and even outright hostility in the way that the police deal with their problems.

We recently wrote to the Community Relations Commander at Scotland Yard asking why the police consistently re-write the law between Common Assault and Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm at an artificially high level, leading to a refusal to prosecute certain cases because of the Force policy not to prosecute Common Assault. We also asked why the police refuse to prosecute for Common Assault when in law there is nothing to prevent them doing so. Our reasoning being that it is important for the police to act decisively in racist attack cases even if the injuries are fairly slight in order to deter potential attackers and be seen to be responsive to the needs of the victim. In his reply, the Commander conceded that both our points were correctly made, but he argued that a change on policing policy would be difficult and would lead to a waste of court time! This attitude runs contrary to the findings of all the reports that have dealt with racist violence which consistently state that racial attacks should *not* be treated as the general run of neighbour disputes but should be treated with the utmost seriousness by both the police and the courts. Police policy in this area is now under review. Scotland Yard is said to be trying to set up local racial incident panels in which the police would participate and which might, among other things, make recommendations for changes in local police policy and practice.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Our experience leads us to have little faith in such initiatives. The appalling service which the black community receives from the police, and indeed, the disastrously inefficient and unsuccessful operation of the police in the prevention and detection of crime more generally, will only be changed by a more fundamental approach. The genesis of any such strategy for change must involve a radical appraisal of why police performance is so bad. In the meantime, piece-meal palliatives

whilst appearing to superficially improve the situation, will merely prolong the life span of factors which are causing the decay. These factors are varied. Undoubtedly some police officers are openly racist, many more hold racist opinions which they would claim do not influence their work. The toleration and even promotion of such attitudes by senior officers hardly creates an atmosphere of sensitivity and diligence amongst the force in their dealings with black victims of crime. Certainly also, the fact that less than one per cent of metropolitan police officers are black is unlikely to bring a multi-racial, never mind an anti-racist dimension to the character of the police in action. We believe however, that the overriding reason why the service the public get from the police is so contemptible, is that the public themselves have no control whatsoever over what they do. British police forces in general, and the Metropolitan Police in particular, have throughout history become less and less answerable to the local community, and more and more directed by a small central state apparatus. This not only results in an increasing separation between the police and community and resultant inadequate policies, but on an everyday level creates a vacuum of control within the force leading to division, incoherence and cover-up. The analogy we drew, for example, between the policing of the alleged harassment of working miners and the sustained racist violence in the East End of London, illustrates how the nature of policing has got more to do with the political priorities of central government (in this case breaking the miners strike) than with the everyday prevention of crimes against ordinary people.

The local community throughout London now have no effective say in the day to day working of the Metropolitan Police. Until they, the people who suffer crime, are able to direct the policing of it, it is reasonable to assume that there will be little improvement in clear-up rates. Changes in political control of the police to make them accountable to elected representatives of the local population are unlikely to come about without substantial change in the national political situation. It is however essential that the broad political support for such change is built now. In large part, that is the business that CAPA and similar groups are engaged in.

In the meantime no-one should delude themselves that the plethora of consultation schemes now being talked about by the Home Office and the police themselves will advance the cause of a democratic police force. The platitudes used by senior police officers to fend off accusations of racist behaviour may seem plausible to some, but it should be remembered that it is not the District Commander, nor indeed even a high-ranking Divisional officer who will arrive when a call goes out for help, but more often, insensitive, inappropriate and racist junior ranking officers.

When looking at the type and pattern of racist crime in this borough, it would be a mistake to imagine that it is all necessarily highly organised and politically motivated. Of course some of it is – the National Front and similar organisations have footholds in the area and are undoubtedly behind some of the more sinister behaviour. More often, the perpetrators are the young residents of the estates where the Bengali families live. Their motivation can only be guessed at; certainly they have racist attitudes, certainly they are bored, violent, bitter and resentful – none of them can be said to be getting a fair share of society's resources. They may inhabit rotten housing, feel that society holds out no real future for them or just wish to react against their depressing inner-city environment. They may well be victims of a type themselves. It gives us no pleasure to wish prosecutions and intense police activity on anyone; but police inactivity has directly led to an escalation of racist violence because it can be engaged in with virtual

impunity. It has led to a complete crisis of confidence in the police by the black community in the borough and it exemplifies the distance between the police and the community they are here to serve.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

The recent attempt by the police to set up Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the area illustrates just how low down their list of priorities is the tackling of racist crime. The pilot scheme for the borough was set up in the only owner-occupied estate in the Spitalfields area of Tower Hamlets. It was an estate totally unrepresentative of the rest of the borough. The residents of that estate are overwhelmingly white and middle class. Hardly a cross section of the multi-ethnic working class population that inhabits the E1 area of London. The emphasis was on the prevention and detection of crime related to property, such as burglary and auto-theft, rather than offences against the person. This choice by the police should not however surprise us. Anyone who has examined the evidence presented in detailed studies of the internal ethics of the force, such as volume 4 of the Policy Studies Institute report on the Met, will be aware that middle class property values are dominant and that upwardly mobile workers who have bought their own home are held in high esteem in the eyes of most police officers. Racist attitudes impregnated in the force at all levels create a perspective in which black people are seen as the perpetrators of crime rather than the victims.

When the police were asked whether the scheme might have positive benefits in an estate where there was a high incidence of racist crime, they replied that they would not be setting up a scheme on such an estate. They added that if the residents there did want such a scheme, they would have to create the demand themselves. This reaction was not unexpected, but it clearly illustrates just how far the priorities and initiatives of the police are from the community. Indeed, whilst Tower Hamlets has very little Neighbourhood Watch, experience in other areas of London points to a sinister and retrograde character in such schemes. Not only do they provide a physical opportunity for the translation of racist police attitudes into racist police behaviour, but they can induce and encourage racist behaviour amongst the community by providing a forum for white tenants to spy on their black neighbours.

On the estates where there is racist crime, the police rely on Home Beat police officers for the day to day community policing. This is without doubt an improvement on the patrolling panda cars of the past, but it has not answered the needs of the victims of racist crime. If there is a need to call out the police on an emergency basis, it will not of course be the Home Beat officer who arrives – it will be the nearest mobile patrol. The officers in that vehicle will not be those noted for their sensitive and non-racist approach and are highly unlikely to have the patience to listen carefully to a person with limited grasp of English. The best Home Beat officers have done much on their estates to assist the black community, but the average (let alone the worst!) officers are seen to side with the white racists on the estate and to disbelieve what they are told by the black victims. The suggestion that the Home Beat officer should visit every Bengali family on the worst estates together with an interpreter has been dismissed by the police, and yet many families will say that the language barrier is one of the greatest difficulties they encounter with the police.

What is needed in order to police racist crime, is an acknowledgement that it actually exists. In order to police harassment there has to be the ability to look at the overall pattern of crimes and decide that harassment is taking place. While the police consistently refuse to acknowledge that particular crimes had racist motives, for example, a Bengali woman was hit, called a 'F . . . Paki' and after she had fallen, had her purse taken, was reported to have been the victim of 'theft' and not the victim of a racist crime. In police terms, they are mutually exclusive – and whilst no-one would deny the theft element, it is equally foolish to ignore the racist attack. Similarly, whilst police procedures do not allow the logging of racist incidents on a 'victim' basis, the police can regard each incident as an isolated case and not part of a campaign of harassment. This attitude is particularly serious because whilst each individual incident might be trivial on its own, when put together with the brick through the window last night, the threats the night before, the attack on a child before that etc etc, a completely different picture emerges.

As stated above CAPA does not pretend that there will be any significant improvement in police behaviour towards the black community until their isolation from the people whom they are supposed to protect is ended. Pressure however has its immediate effects and although permanent change is unlikely at the present time it is in our experience possible to exact a near adequate response in certain cases through sustained public campaigning.

We must conclude however with a second qualification. We would not wish to give the impression that better, even democratic, policing would in itself prevent or eradicate racism. The causes of this social disease are complex and legion. Local, and most importantly national, government will need the political will to adopt social and economic policies to fight unemployment and provide better housing and leisure facilities, in order to combat the conditions which breed racism. There will also need to be a sustained ideological campaign which actively attacks racist attitudes and behaviour. But again, there are interim improvements which are worth fighting for. One brick through one window will certainly not produce intense police activity, but if it were to be acknowledged as a small part of the daily suffering of thousands of people, and the enormity of the whole crime against black people were to be policed as its extensiveness requires, then although racist attitudes may not change, the violent manifestation of them would cease to be a daily occurrence.



DRUGS by Phil Solomons in PRISON

There is little comfort to be drawn from recently released figures showing how many drugs were handed out to British prisoners in 1983. As the table shows, the overall picture is one of depressingly little change. Criticisms made by RAP in previous years are still valid.

The Home Office's presentation of the statistics is deliberately confusing and vague. Their classification of mind-controlling drugs seems arbitrary, with no explanation given as to which drugs count as 'hypnotic', which are 'psychotropic' and which are 'other drugs'. It seems possible that a single drug may figure in more than one column, depending on what time of day the dose is administered, and in what strength. The report contains no details on the size of doses given, only the number.

To make matters worse in several cases prisons have been grouped together. No figures are given on drugs taken in individual prisons within the group. The largest such group contains 25 gaols. That is because, claims the Home Office, they are 'establishments in which medical services are largely provided by a single doctor (and) it is not considered appropriate to publish information about an individual doctor's prescribing practice'. But the largest prison so grouped has up to 926 inmates, far more than many of those separately listed. Surely they don't expect us to believe that one doctor 'looks after' all those prisoners?

The effect of this is to render some of the information almost totally useless – groups larger than two have been excluded from our table. It allows the Home Office to bury particularly bad prison statistics by lumping them with better ones. The pairing of the two prisons at the top of the table, Cookham Wood and Styal, is a good example of this, for Styal is far bigger than Cookham Wood and it has a reputation as a low drug user. Perhaps one day we'll be told the truth about Cookham Wood, where the true dosage rate must be appalling.

Although Holloway's drug use has declined over the last few years, it's still obviously the practice to drug women prisoners more than men. All seven women's gaols shown – that is, the three pairs and Holloway – have lowered their rates from last year, but even this slight improvement may be called into question. For the first time the report's figures are based on doses actually administered, not on the number dispensed. This makes it possible that the number of doses actually handed out (rather than thrown down the sink) has increased since 1982.

Among the male prisons, Wakefield, Wormwood Scrubs and Winchester have all registered sharp increases. Prize for the fastest mover, however, goes to hitherto bottom-of-table Dartmoor, whose use of 'other drugs' has increased almost tenfold since last year. This rise seems so rapid that I suspect a misprint – perhaps the H.O. may care to comment?

And while they're at it, perhaps they could provide us with detailed, usable information, the sort which they now give us on overcrowding. Mr. Brittan, why all the secrecy?

REVIEWS REVIEWS

Jimmy Boyle,
The Pain of Confinement,
Canongate, 1984, £9.95

TABLE OF DOSAGE RATES, 1983:
Average dosage rate per inmate per year in British prisons, remand centres and borstals of psychotropic, hypnotic and other drugs acting on the central nervous system

Position '82 '83	Establishment	Psycho-tropic drugs	Hyp-notic drugs	Other CNS drugs	Total Dosage Rate	Total Dosage Rate 1982	
1	2	2 female closed prisons ¹	164	53	78	295	327
2	1	Holloway	144	39	64	247	365
3=	4	2 female borstals ²	71	20	92	183	194
3=	8	Wakefield	114	15	54	183	119
5	6	Parkhurst	74	25	74	173	138
6	3	Brixton	115	12	36	163	201
7	5	2 female open prisons ³	131	1	23	155	186*
8	10	Wormwood Scrubs	77	9	44	130	108
9	7	Wandsworth	69	10	42	121	121
10	14	Winchester	44	3	61	108	67
11	13	Cardiff	19	1	55	75	79
12	11	Risley	37	10	23	70	97
13	9	Norwich	37	2	30	69	116
14	15	Birmingham	24	3	40	67	64
15	26	Dartmoor	12	4	49	65	17
16	12	Manchester	28	6	25	59	79
17=	17	Leeds	14	0	39	53	54
17=	16	Durham	18	3	32	53	61
19	21	Liverpool	19	4	26	49	41
20	19	Grendon Underwood	16	5	24	45	46
21	20	Bristol	23	3	16	42	45
22=	18	Pentonville	20	2	17	39	50
22=	22	Ashford	25	4	10	39	39
24	25	Feltham	22	2	10	34	22
25	23	Leicester	13	1	13	27	37
26	24	Lincoln	14	1	9	24	33

¹ Cookham Wood & Styal
² Bullwood Hall & East Sutton Park
³ Askham Grange & Drake Hall
(Last year's figure also included Moor Court)
(CNS = Central Nervous System)

Throughout the last two hundred years, the richest and most moving descriptions of confinement have come from those men and women who have experienced it directly. Both the verbal and written accounts of prisoners (as well as mental patients, young offenders and the aged) have sharply and poignantly underlined what it means to spend every second of every minute of every hour of every day behind prison walls and to have each movement regulated and controlled by servants of the state. Such accounts resonate with a fierce passion as prisoners have described the experience of being subjected to regimes and conditions which are often physically intolerable and where their individuality is slowly chipped away piece by piece by the seemingly endless pressure of the prison environment. On release, this pressure continues in terms of looking for jobs, and houses, maintaining relationships and coping with the fragmentation of the personality which the prison experience induces. For many, the spectre of the prison haunts them for years to come. It is, as Arab people say, engraved on their eyeballs.

For long-term prisoners in Britain, this pressure has been acute. In order to cope with the major disturbances which have racked the system in the past 15 years, both the Home Office and the Scottish Office, have introduced punitive regimes based on isolation and segregation in order to maintain discipline and impose order. The latest report by the Home Office on the long-term prisons¹ offers the same prescription to cope with the challenge of prisoners in the dispersal prisons namely identify the 'leaders' of the recalcitrants, segregate them in spartan isolation units, discipline their minds and bodies and hope that this stabilises the system. Identifying the trouble-makers leaves the fundamentals of the system intact to continue on the path of strife, conflict and disorder.

For long-termers, the only shaft of light during this period has been the introduction of the Special Unit at Barlinnie Prison, Glasgow. Jimmy Boyle's second book, *The Pain of Confinement* tells the story of the Unit based on diaries that he kept after being moved there from the grim barbarism of the Cages at Inverness and the segregation unit at Peterhead. The book picks up from where *A Sense of Freedom* left off describing the years from September 1974 to his eventual release from Saughton prison in Edinburgh on November 1st, 1982.

The book is a magnificent and inspirational work. Boyle details the day-to-day life of the Unit, its ups and downs, the development of the relationship between staff and prisoners, and the emergence of a penal philosophy which moved the process of confinement away from the authoritarianism of the traditional system to one which attempted to treat prisoners as full human-beings rather than as objects to be vilified, humiliated and in many cases, beaten.

PUBLICATIONS

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This day-to-day life is revealed not as one where everything slipped easily into place from the start but rather where staff and prisoners groped their way forwards into unknown territory. Both groups had to unlearn many of the negative habits which had been built up over the years in the traditional system. Learning not to be authoritarian, to be trusting, to be supportive, to understand the dynamics of inter-personal relationships, not to resort to violence, to face the pain of their own prison and external socialisation were fundamental issues which both groups had to confront. In that sense the Unit was no easy option, as many have alleged. Indeed, according to those involved, it was a more painful experience to go through, to be challenged by the others in the Unit, than much of what they had to cope with in the traditional system. Sitting in the Unit hot-seat and psychologically undressing in front of the others was, especially for men, no easy option but a difficult and very painful process.

The Unit was also no easy option because prisoners had access to colour TVs or telephones and frequent visits by relatives and friends. Critics have often pointed to these 'luxuries' as indicative of the regime's liberality in treating criminals. Yet as Boyle movingly argues, no matter how many physical possessions that prisoners have, the fact that they cannot walk out of the prison gates in the evening is the ultimate punishment, a constant and nagging reminder that their mind, body and spirit are still the property of the State. They might not be broken but they still suffer.

On the whole I live day to day with a vague sort of long term ideal of my own future, it would be too painful for me to sit down and consciously plan my every step for the next two or three years. The way to get through this sentence is to keep to the foreseeable future. In spite of this, there are times when I get glimpses ahead and still see myself sitting here. They are momentary flashes into the future and somehow they obliterate everything else. They are so painful that I wilt. It could be because of the good weather; the sun is shining and I deeply yearn to walk in the countryside. I want to do the simple things of life but can't.²

Boyle also beautifully describes the process of change which he himself went through. In particular, the struggle with his own identity and with the past, diving deep into his soul in order to come to terms with himself and emerging as a different human being. By shedding these layers of psychological skin he was no longer a 'hard man' but a sensitive, more fulfilled and insightful human being. In this process he was helped by officers in the Unit, notably Ken Murray, and by Sarah Trevelyan who proved to be a continual source of strength.

In addition he details the external pressures on the Unit. First, the Labour government's attitude to it was antithetical to any socialist or principled stand on issues of penology. For all of the rhetoric when in opposition, as soon as they took office, the Party namely in the form of Bruce Millan and Harry Ewing continually attempted to restrict the Unit's activities and to pander to the primitive statements of its more outspoken critics. Indeed, the book points out that the Unit was treated more fairly by the Conservative Party Ministers than by their Labour Party successors. For those on the left who say that the Labour Party have never had a position in law and order, the book provides a perfect illustration that they indeed have had a position which ultimately has consolidated rather than

challenged the power of the State. In this the Party were helped by the media whose shameful behaviour only served to underline that sensationalism and titillation are structured deep into the newspaper industry's organisational goals and journalistic practice.

By the end of the 1970s the pressure on the Unit had become intense. First, Ken Murray was transferred in July 1979 back to a traditional prison. The prison authorities did not even provide transport for him to take up his new position. Next, in the Autumn of 1980, Jimmy Boyle himself was transferred back to the traditional system, to Saughton Prison in Edinburgh as a prelude to his eventual release. This transfer brought him back face-to-face with the brutalisation of the old system, the haunted faces of men whose daily existence pushed them further into a pit of despair.

The pain that is locked up in this building where I sit can be felt. Behind each cell door is someone aching like an open wound. Each is just a human being needing to be treated as such. This dinosaur of a system is tearing them apart emotionally.³

Words in a review such as this cannot really do justice to the power of this book. The depth of feeling in the writing shows that prisons and prisoners cannot be written or talked about in a cold, clinical, sanitised manner. They are about human beings who have passions and feelings, dreams and depressions. They do not contain inanimate objects or laboratory animals but real men and women who are as complex and as emotional as those beyond the prison walls. The book also provides an alternative politics to many of those on the left who spend the better part of their political lives in committee rooms, in all male company, drinking beer and endlessly debating largely irrelevant political dogma. The politics in *The Pain of Confinement* are as much about the personal as the structural. It is, quite simply, one of the finest books that I have ever read.

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1. Home Office (1984). *Managing the Long-Term Prison System*. The Report of the Control Review Committee. HMSO.
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3. *Ibid*, p.211.

Joe Sim is co-author of *British Prisons* (Basil Blackwell, 1982). Thanks to Kerry Llewellyn for discussing some of the themes of the book with me.



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Layout: Community Graphics 01-430 0769

Typeset by: Bread'n Roses, 01-354 0557

Printed by: Women In Print

01-701 8314

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