GET IT WHILE IT'S HOT

Quick, Quick! - There's still time to buy loads of stuff - all from the Taking Liberties address:
- On the Border of a Police State. Hmoatbry Community Defence Association examine the latest police powers and initiatives on us from the box. £2.50 plus 5dp PnP.
- From Ascaria to Marion Te Forences - Control Unia in the US. The spread of high security control units in the US, ahead of controlling political prisoners. £1.50 plus 30p PnP.

Until All Are Free. The determination of US革命ary prisoners Rui Lou Lovemurse.

ABC GROUPS
- Devon ABC – c/o SHAW, PO Box 4, Buckfastleigh, Devon, TQ11 0TZ
- Brighton ABC – c/o Brighton Activists, Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton
- Manchester ABC – c/o 30b/A, 22 Mill Rd, Campden
- Birmingham ABC – PO Box 5774. Elgin
- Cambridge
- Reading ABC – 19, Reading Sun Institute, 30 Silver St, Reading, RG1
- Sheffield ABC – PO Box 446, Sheffield, S1 1YV

OTHER CONTACTS
- Conviction – PO Box 522, Sheffield, S1 3PF
- (Conviction supports framed prisoners)

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a radical African-American journalist on death row in Pennsylvania, USA for a 1982 conviction for the murder of a Philadelphia cop. Despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence (obvious forensic mismatches, witness changing stories, etc) and the blatant judicial racism and political bias in his legal case, Mumia and his supporters have unsuccessfully battled to have the evidence heard in the courtroom for thirteen years and now seem to have lost the legal battle to save his life. (See page 2.

SUPPORT CLASS STRUGGLE PRISONERS

DATE SET FOR LEGAL MURDER

INSIDE
- WOMEN IN PRISON
- FRAME-UPS
- DAVID BOWEN LATEST
- HOT INTERNATIONAL NEWS
- THUGWATCH

...and so much more!!!
INTRODUCTION

Hiya folks - welcome to Taking Liberties no 15. As usual we've got news, views and comment on the state of the prison system here and abroad.

For issue 16, we're doing a special on prison visits - we've already got a couple of articles, but we're asking any prisoners, their relatives, friends, supporters, to send any contributions, experiences, ideas, cartoons, accounts on the subject. Whether it's the hassle you have to go through to visit a Cat A prisoner; being strip searched before/after a visit; visits being denied, closed visits; the whole humiliating routine of visiting a prisoner; the joy of seeing a loved one; turning up at a jail to find the person has been ghosted 250 miles away; whatever. The good times and the bad, the emotions, tensions, the gripes - The Lot.

We'll try as broad a cross-section of stuff as we can fit in. Whatever it is, we want to hear from you. Send your material, by the middle of August, to:

Taking Liberties, c/o 121 Bookshop, 121 Raiton Road, London SE24 OLR
Fax: 0171 326 0353

UPDATES

Scrubs, Du Cane Road, London W12.

Jim Chambers

Long-time campaigner against the M11 motorway link in east London, Jim is still on remand after being charged with criminal damage to a road construction site. He's been moved to Pentonville. Write to: Jim Chambers, PV2504, HMP Pentonville, Caledonian Road, London N7. John Liu, a prisoner at Pentonville who was remanded after protesting against the M77 in Glasgow, has been released.

Whitemoor Mutiny Trial

Following the acquittal of Tony Bush and Matthew Vainclay in January, at their trial for brushing up the office on Whitemoor prison's C wing (see report in Taking Liberties no 14), the latest Whitemoor trial has collapsed. An attempt was under way to charge seven C wing prisoners with prison mutiny for a "disturbance" in support of that move. It was rumoured that some or all prisoners as scum or feel they all deserve what they get. But we don't agree that people should be locked away, denied human contact, abandoned to kill themselves or turn on each other.

Prisoners Justice Day

In the last issue of TL, we printed an old address for the Oliver Campbell Campaign. They are now at PO Box 6050, London E6 3TL.

Oliver needs a lot of support as he recently held a hunger strike in protest against the rejection of his appeal. Write to: Oliver Campbell, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, Du Cane Road, London W12.

P R I S O N E R S  J U S T I C E  D A Y

AUGUST 10TH

We call upon people to show their opposition to an unlawful death penalty that allows over 50 people a year to kill themselves. We call upon people who recognize that prison looks up in the poor in a society run for the interests of the rich, and to demonstrate outside. Everywhere, on August 10th.

Remember, people, just like us, who have been drive to despair, to suicide. There will be demos at Winson Green in Birmingham, probably Armley in Leeds, and at the London jail. Get in touch with your nearest ABC group to get a local protest organised, or just sort your own event out. Ideas, history, information and advice can be got from Taking Liberties. Let's make August 10th angry.

December 1983. However, Charlie McIver, held to be a 'ringleader', died in January of a heart attack, weakening the already feeble case of the remaining six, one of whom had been released from prison. At the committee hearing the charges were dropped: it was held to be 'absurd process' that they were not charged until 13 months after the incident. Whitemoor has a bad record of trying to slap criminal convictions on prisoners who protest against conditions and brutality against them. For them it seems to go badly in court.

Also, despite the trumpeting of 'Prison Mutiny' when it was introduced (after Stephenson), with its 10 year maximum sentence, it has not been much of a success. The trial last year of nine cons for a 1992 self-down strike, in Full Sutton prison resulted in pleas bargains and minor sentences (and this one has fallen to bits). We'll have to wait to see whether use of this charge is dropped up with the current turn to the right in prison policy.

Prisoners Day Round again. Every 10th August since 1975, prisoners in Canada have commemorated the anniversary of Eddie Mabo's suicide in Millhaven Penitentiary by refusing to work, etc, while outside supporters hold demos, vigils, concerts and broadcasts. Radio shows on prisoner suicides, brutality, murder, neglect. In Canada, thousands of people support this event.

In the UK the ABC network has been holding demos on PJD since 1992, where we picketed British prison, notorious for the numerous suicides in B wing. In 1993 there were demos at Armley, Pentonville and Winson Green jails, all known for brutal regimes and the suicides (or murder by screws) of inmates. In 1994 the ABC picketed Holloway women's prison in solidarity with women prisoners.

This year we'd like to see PJD broadcast out. We know that prisoners and prison issues are tough subjects to get people

THE APPEAL

On 5th May the Home Secretary announced that Sam Thornton's case is to be referred back to the Court of Appeal. This was probably a move to pre-empt a High Court application for judicial review of his original refusal which was due to be heard on the same day.

Regular readers of TL will know Sara's case well - jailed for killing her abusive and violent partner, her case was one of the first to really bring into the public eye some of the issues around domestic violence, and how men who kill partners get consistently much lighter sentences.

New evidence from eyewitness account of the violence inflicted by her husband and expert psychiatric reports will be presented at the appeal (although this evidence was new in early 1994 when her first appeal was rejected).

As of yet we have no date for the appeal but wish Sara and her supporters all the best, knowing how much of a lottery the appeal system can be.

AND SO DOES EMMA HUMPHREYS!

As we go to press, Emma Humphreys's appeal is set for Thursday 29th June. There will be a picket of support for her, organised by Justice for Women, starting at 9am at the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand.

Emma has been inside for the last 11 years, detained at her majesty's pleasure since 1987 for killing Trevor Armitage, the man who had sexually and mentally abused her and kept her a virtual prisoner. Since then she has been trying for an appeal date to at least get a fixed sentence. This is the first ever date. We'll have details of the outcome in the next issue.

Crabtree House, Kent TN17 2NA.
A pamphlet detailing the murder of Patrick Quinn's Malcolm's conviction and re-trials will be available from Taking Liberties or from HODA, c/o Colin Roth Centre, 56 Clarence Road, London SE10.
HODA and Hammersmith & Fulham Irish forum continue to picket Hammersmith cop shop, Shepherds Bush Road, London W8, on the first Monday of each month, 6-7pm.
THE GREAT ESCAPE

On June 21st, David Bowden was found guilty of escape at Nottingham Crown Court. David, who is already serving nine years for being present when Strangeways went off in 1980, and three years for a trumped-up charge of jury-nobbling, was standing trial for abscording from a prison van on the way to court, during the second Strangeways trial in December 1992. His trial opened on June 12th, with David defending himself. He was charged with escape and assaulting two prison officers in the course of the escape. The case rested on the grounds that he had been beaten and threatened by screws in Hull Prison where he was being held, having been assaulted in Preston jail previously and that he feared for his safety, which led him to escape.

To this end, David called as witnesses prisoners, who'd seen him attacked, other prisoners who gave evidence of the nature of violence in separation units, and supporters, who'd had letters from him at the time stating he'd been regularly assaulted due to his being on trial for Strangeways.

WE MARCH, WE SAW, WE HAD CONTEMPT

Thirty people (and a dog) picketed the opening day of David's trial in Nottingham, including members of ABC, Fight Racism Fight Imperialism, the Solidarity Federation, and other supporters. There was a good local response to the picket, which drew attention to David's case and managed to shout support to David as he was taken into court. Unfortunately, the Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty).

The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty). The Judge gave a warning about our leaflet, claiming it was in contempt of court - because it claimed he was innocent (we thought he was, till proven guilty).

At the end of the day, it's true: we hold all courts in contempt! There was also a picket of the day of the verdict, mostly from local supporters.

Newham, the repeated abuse of power by the police, and the continued failure of local government agencies in their dealings with the victims of racial harassment. This year's report details the brutal murder of Shij Lapte whilst in the custody of officers from Newington. Newington's SUCCESSFUL campaign to oppose the SNP in its attempts to gain electoral credibility and a local government seat in south Newham, and many of us, illustrating the failure of the local authority.

Thames South West Newham Action on Policing (SNAP), Newham, is launching a campaign for police accountability. While all us folks at Taking Liberties don't believe that any police force can ultimately be reformed or accountable, any pressure they can be put under is crucial. Particularly in areas like Newham, where there is a high level of racist attacks, and racist policing.

At the beginning of the news, a public meeting is called for on Thames South West Newham Action on Policing (SNAP), Newham, is launching a campaign for police accountability. While all us folks at Taking Liberties don't believe that any police force can ultimately be reformed or accountable, any pressure they can be put under is crucial. Particularly in areas like Newham, where there is a high level of racist attacks, and racist policing.

At the beginning of the news, a public meeting is called for on Thames South West Newham Action on Policing (SNAP), Newham, is launching a campaign for police accountability. While all us folks at Taking Liberties don't believe that any police force can ultimately be reformed or accountable, any pressure they can be put under is crucial. Particularly in areas like Newham, where there is a high level of racist attacks, and racist policing.

At the beginning of the news, a public meeting is called for on Thames South West Newham Action on Policing (SNAP), Newham, is launching a campaign for police accountability. While all us folks at Taking Liberties don't believe that any police force can ultimately be reformed or accountable, any pressure they can be put under is crucial. Particularly in areas like Newham, where there is a high level of racist attacks, and racist policing.

At the beginning of the news, a public meeting is called for on Thames South West Newham Action on Policing (SNAP), Newham, is launching a campaign for police accountability. While all us folks at Taking Liberties don't believe that any police force can ultimately be reformed or accountable, any pressure they can be put under is crucial. Particularly in areas like Newham, where there is a high level of racist attacks, and racist policing.

At the beginning of the news, a public meeting is called for on Thames South West Newham Action on Policing (SNAP), Newham, is launching a campaign for police accountability. While all us folks at Taking Liberties don't believe that any police force can ultimately be reformed or accountable, any pressure they can be put under is crucial. Particularly in areas like Newham, where there is a high level of racist attacks, and racist policing.

At the beginning of the news, a public meeting is called for on Thames South West Newham Action on Policing (SNAP), Newham, is launching a campaign for police accountability. While all us folks at Taking Liberties don't believe that any police force can ultimately be reformed or accountable, any pressure they can be put under is crucial. Particularly in areas like Newham, where there is a high level of racist attacks, and racist policing.
There is a distortion in the way the national prison system of England and Wales operates regarding male and female inmates. As women make up just 4% of the prison population, they receive an incomplete and biased treatment when it comes to rights and privileges, but are more likely to be severely punished, when they step out of line. Whilst injustice throughout the entire system is prevalent, women are less likely to complain about their mistreatment through the courts.

There are a number of reasons behind this. The main one has its roots in the way the judicial system treats us – and this is accepted by society’s moral viewpoint which is dictated by the law. If we fail to live up to their expectations of perfect mothers, wives, parents, child bearers, lovers etc., then we are automatically judged as mad, bad, whorish, fans and iridescent. Once we fall off that pedestal, then we are condemned within the system.

At our trials, dominated by male judiciary and counsel, our past lives are paraded before the jury and any lapse in morals is seen as heinous. Female witnesses are not called in on our defence as our counsel advise us that their testimony will not be believed. Many women defend themselves, or friends who have given accurate evidence for fear of being abused. I myself was wrongfully convicted for not being able to fulfils the role that was expected of me and so I was sent on the inside, but I do not think that I should have not been in that position, so therefore deserved to be found guilty. How often does this happen in the legal system?

SOCIETY’S SCAPEGOATS

So once women are convicted they are considered to be more evil than men who have committed the same crime, and are therefore treated as such. The proportion of women in custody who have been physically, psychologically or verbally abused is much higher than the national average. Therefore many of the women have low self-esteem and feel guilty, even though a substantial proportion of them are women due to the abuse that I had suffered. A key prosecution witness stated that she did not want to be in the prison, but I do not think that she should have not been in that position, so therefore deserved to be found guilty. How often does this happen in the legal system?

PETTY OFFENCES

Most male prisoners that houselifters and long-term inmates have catering and maintenance problems, some even having plug sockets in their cells. There are still many female establishments that hold first and second stage inmates that do not have these facilities. Very little research has been carried out about women prisoners compared to men. What has been published shows that women are discriminated against and have not been treated as fairly as men in these establishments. After several hints, one of the officers suggested to us that we take part in a peaceful protest in the television room, promising that we would not get into serious trouble for doing this. But the police were watching us and would back us up and the most we would face would be a fine or a loss of privileges. None of us would be transferred or face any serious repercussions. She even gave us hints on how to conduct the protest which was to take place at 5pm lock-in. We met the evening of 6pm taking things into the TV room that we would need – blenkets, duvets, warm clothes, books, beer, cigarettes, hot and cold drinks, books, paper, food, flasks, crockery, etc – under the watchful eyes of the officers on the wing including a senior officer. By 7.45pm on Saturday the 10th of June 1995 (18 of 26 women on the wing were in the TV room and when they came to lock us in, the officer who had suggested the protest had left the room and said, “I take it none of you are going to your rooms then” and walked throughout the system. One third of women are in prison for their first offence and many end up there for fines and relating offences or petty shoplifting offences. Convictions are rarely made by the magistrates for the effect these have on their children who may have to be fostered or put in care for the duration of their sentence.

This article was sent to us by Clare Barstow. She was jailed for life for the murder of Cathy O’Neill, although she maintains she is innocent. We hope to have details of her case in a future issue. Clare Barstow, HMP Holloway, Parkhurst Rd, London, N7

GUINEA PIGS

Many measures being introduced by the Home Office in penal establishments are first tried out on women to see if they are acceptable. The officers’ Association decided to work in protest against the new security measures being introduced, aimed to move to the Home Office. They are unworkable as they could not be implemented without the prison system to a halt, as they did not have sufficient staff to carry them out. At Bullwood Hall the officers supported the POA by carrying out daily cell searches for approved premises and a half hour per room, which was extended to 30 days. This was a direct form of aggression amongst the other women who were locked in during this period. The whole room would not be spilt as it was otherwise and it created that it was important, not to the need to discover illegal possessions. This happened on Swan Wing, which was for lifers and long termers. Other rules were introduced such as the decrease in property allowed and the reduction of privatized spaces to £11.50 per month including phone cards, beer, stamps and tobacco. These particularly discriminated against foreign nationals and others who did not have family and friends in this country who can visit us or offer support. The officers hinted to the women that they were not allowed to go on strike were we were transferred or face any serious repercussions. She even gave us hints on how to conduct the protest which was to take place at 5pm lock-in. We met the evening of 6pm taking things into the TV room that we would need – blanked, duvets, warm clothes, books, beer, cigarettes, hot and cold drinks, books, paper, food, flasks, crockery, etc – under the watchful eyes of the officers on the wing including a senior officer. By 7.45pm on Saturday the 10th of June 1995 (18 of 26 women on the wing were in the TV room and when they came to lock us in, the officer who had suggested the protest had left the room and said, “I take it none of you are going to your rooms then” and walked out, locking the door. During the evening we asked to see one of the governors and detailed our grievances for overcrowding and staff. We were denied access to a governor and eventually received written confirmation that he would come to see us concerning our problems. Then at approximately 12.30pm, we all returned peacefully to our rooms.

SET UP

The next day, Sunday, we were informed that the Governor would come to speak to us about our grievances on Monday. Then, during the lunch hour lock-in, 8 of the 18 of us went down the segregation unit and then transferred without our possessions to Holloway’s Prison Punishment Block. We were placed on report the next day by the same officer who had advised us to do the protest in the first place. At the adjudication, the officer in question was present, towards the end of her term, stating that she had told us each individually to go to our rooms. Obviously they still preferred to believe in a situation of her term, so we were found guilty. I asked for legal representation but was denied this. We were given 14 days no association meaning no communication, including toilet and a £12 fine. We were denied the opportunity to work or go to education and only to be able to appeal against the decision but was refused. We were given Request/Complaint forms – which is illegible. Anything I asked for was denied. I was discriminated against in every situation - only being allowed to talk with your visit while others received an hour, being denied private spends, being given 5 days without clean clothes. Some of the other women from Bullwood were treated harshly too. We were viewed as major security risks, when none of us had been on report before.

POLITICAL PAWNS

The officers won in the end as they proved to the Home office that the rules could not be implemented in other prisons, particularly in male establishments, without serious disciplinary and financial consequences. Also they showed that daily cell searches so that every inmate was searched once a week were impossible to implement. Therefore they manipulated us women to be used as political pawns in their grievances against the Home Office.

This is a regular occurrence where rules are tried out on women first to see if they will accept the changes. Many of the changes we are forced to put up with is unthinkable in men’s prisons. As we live in a patriarchal society which is reinforced by government policy, this is unlikely to change.

Women are encouraged to be the passive stereotypes the media creates. If we show any unusual situations we are automatically put in a corner and then the authorities and other bodies take us seriously, female prisoners will always suffer more than men in the legal system.
Frame-ups aren’t the big news they used to be. A couple of years ago, in the wake of the disabling under a cloud of the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad, and the freeing amongst others of the Guildford 4, the Winchester 3, the Birmingham 6, two of the Tottenham 3, the Cardinal 3, etc., etc., they were headline stuff – for a while.

Probably most people in the country were aware that there were large numbers of prisoners serving long sentences for things that hadn’t done – victims of false or forced confessions, beatings, planted evidence by the cops, and fitted up by collusion with judges, prosecutors, forensic experts, and as often as not with the help of corrupt or crooked solicitors.

After a stream of quashed convictions, there was a big outrage. According to the polls, faith in British justice fell sharply. Reforms were talked about, dossiers of framed prisoners handled about and the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice made its recommendations – largely ignored even by the government. Very quickly though, there was a fierce crackdown on the brief tide of framed prisoners being freed. Appeals started to get rejected, whipping campaigns about some of those already freed were started. It was very important for the state to regain the ground lost – because lack of faith in the state’s power to catch the guilty and ‘deal fairly with the rest of us’ leads people to take matters into their own hands. So long as people were getting the guilty people up – How many more? – if you don’t let anyone go, hopefully people will forget about it.

ROTTEN APPLES?

In one major respect though, the true nature of frame-ups and police work has been carefully missed or disguised. Many of the (infamous) cases of framed prisoners have been in ‘serious’ cases – murder, terrorist offences, armed robbery, rape – leading to people serving life or very long sentences. And they were presented in the media and even by some of those campaigning against them as aberrations, a blot on the otherwise fair and equal justice system.

Given colour are often seen as Fair Game – even if not guilty of a specific ‘offence’, they are held to be basically criminal and guilty because of their colour/look/origin. This is especially true if you have been ‘in trouble with the police’ over anything before – once you have come to their notice it is in their training to keep an eye on you, check up on you, suspect you. Since many officials see crime as either a moral failing on the part of the individual or the way you were brought up or your parents, once you are ‘a criminal’, you’re marked down for life. This leads many to take out their frustrations, the pressure to solve crimes, get promotion, increase the feeling of power over others that many have already, by fitting people up and keeping them in jail.

Questions on this, who is responsible, the role of the police, is involved in ‘subversive’ political or strikes, who expresses views wider-different to the prevailing social system, is also fair game.

SYSTEMATIC

This view of crime isn’t coincidental. It serves important purposes. In the communities targeted, in targeting the system, whether as individuals through crime or collective, systematic framing up cannot be seen as mere intimidation against fighting back. It can get you jailed for doing nothing – well you’d better keep your head down, work as hard as you can, move out of the area as soon as you can, etc. It also reinforces the police’s position with the middle and law-abiding working classes – the impression that they’re not ‘real criminals’ is vital to the cops being given the Neighbourhood Watch sort of support they need to exist, the kind of confidence that allows them to control the people in the interests of the power that be. Some sections of the working class are reassured that crime is a problem coming from the ‘underclass’, from scapegoated minorities. This gets the masses away from the crime of the whole capitalist system off the hook, but it’s also a threat. If you don’t keep on working hard, paying your way, you’ll also be done for...

LET’S GET ‘EM

Frame-ups aren’t just ‘misunderstandings of justice’ – they are integral to the work of the police, the courts, solicitors and the whole system. It is important to realise that people from the communities who are fitted up for short sentences/ fines, need support in the same way that the longer term framed prisoners do. We need to develop community defence groups that help people with their cases, help raise cash for fines, get witnesses together, develop collective defences in cases of mass arrest, publicise what’s going on, make links with other campaigns, as well as targeting police and government institutions where frame-ups go on. Work like this is already going on in some areas, for instance Hackney Community Defence. This is a local group, which has done brilliant local work in supporting people and exposing the crimes of the coppers. Such work needs to be spread, become part of our culture. The seeds are already there in many communities – we all help out when a mate gets arrested. Let’s try to build it up with fighting the cops whenever we can, spreading distrust of the force, and talking about and offering real alternatives to the imposed ‘justice’ of cops, courts, prisons, etc.

They get away with framing us up because it’s a system. Let’s try to hit it and all the rest of the crap.

BARRINIS SPECIAL UNIT: THE END OF AN EXPERIMENT

The recent announcement by the Scottish Prison authorities that the famous Barlinnie Special Unit was to be closed in March represents clear evidence that those experiments in the treatment of long-term prisoners are now definitively over.

Closed in the early 1970s as a safety valve for a prison system convulsed by rebellion and protest, the Barlinnie Special Unit was heralded as a radical departure from traditional methods of control and punishment. It was a pioneering attempt to deal with the psychological and emotional needs of some of the most difficult and dangerous prisoners.

Therapy and the caring approach would now replace the notorious cages of Inverness and outright physical brutality. The Barlinnie Unit was in essence a strategy of control that emerged from the nationwide prison struggles of 1972. Prisoners engaged in a series of extremely well-organised and highly publicised demonstrations in pursuance of greater basic rights. The 1972 prison demonstrations were highly politicised in terms of their demands and organisation, and they inspired the first ever national prisoners’ movement in Britain, PROP (Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners).

Despite the scale and the proportion of the 1972 protests, the prison authorities in both England and Scotland inevitably sought to deflect public attention away from the structural causes of the rebellion (an almost total lack of human rights, institutional brutality and over-pressive regimes) by claiming that only a tiny minority of ‘hard-core troublemakers’ were responsible for the ‘disturbances’, thus paving the way for the creation of ‘special facilities’ for troublemakers a few years later. In this context, the creation of the infamous Wakefield Special Control Unit, a veritable psychological torture chamber, where ‘difficult and ‘subversive’ prisoners were held in conditions of complete isolation, was a clear violation of the Pavlovian methods of behavioural modification. Public disquiet about the Unit eventually resulted in the Home Office abandoning the Control Unit experiment.

In Scotland, while the prison authorities exaggerated the same views about the need to isolate and segregate ‘prison troublemakers’, it was decided to sugarcoat the control unit idea with liberal and humane soundings of ‘complete re-education’ of which was the Barlinnie Special Unit. Unlike the Wakefield Unit, Barlinnie’s was designed not to break ‘subversives’ but instead purify them and subdue them into conformity. Unfortunately, a programme that was supposed to get the old-fashioned methods of brutality and abuse, the Unit was halted by liberal reformers and academics as a pio
This article was blatantly nicked from issue 13 of Conviction News, the newsletter covering the cases of framed prisoners. See list of publications for address. We didn’t expect much of the government, but the Bill to set up a Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC), and now it’s out, it’s even worse than expected. We hoped that at least it would allow these cases more quickly than the Home Office Department C3 it’s replacing. But the bill proposes to make things worse for prisoners fighting to have cases reheard.

Setting up the CCRC was a recommendation of the Rebecca Review Commission, which was itself announced on the day that the convictions of the Birmingham 6 were overturned. The Runciman Commission was supposed to deal with the problem of the numerous miscarriages of justice which were embarrassing the State. In fact the Commission totally ignored all cases of miscarriage of justice, and made no proposals that would prevent them happening in the future – instead it made proposals that would make them more likely in future. The government’s latest proposal continues in that vein.

What is wrong with the present system apart from it’s unbelievable slowness and inefficiency, and the reluctance of the civil servants and politicians like Michael Howard to refer more than a handful of cases a year back to the Appeal Court? A major problem is that it does not conduct independent investigations.

Often the reasons for a wrongful conviction include police misconduct, such as planting evidence or putting pressure on witnesses to give false evidence. Now the government’s proposals exclude new statements. The Home Secretary sometimes includes new statements on cases referred back from the original trial, saying that they lied in court because they were threatened by police if they did not do so; they would be charged with serious offences, or have their children taken into care, or if they were already (illegally) denied bail and receive heavier sentences if they were convicted. The Home Office’s response to complaints about such practices has been to refer the complaints to the original police force for their response.

The police refer the matter to the original investigating officers. The officers visit the witnesses again, with predictable effects. Witnesses who have had the courage to contact prisoners’ lawyers and make new statements are subject to hostile attentions from the police who threatened them previously. The problem with asking the police to investigate themselves is not just that they don’t want to expose their own mistakes (read: brutality and lies – 71 note), but that they can cause further problems. When the prisoners are eventually released, having completed their sentences, they are subjected to harassment by police who are aware of the precise complaints that have been made and of the prisoner’s continuing claims of innocence. Prisoners who dare to complain they were wrongly convicted find themselves the victims of further attempts to fit them up with serious crimes on their release.

We now have serious doubts as to whether we should approach the Home Office with petitions and fresh evidence. We do so only because there seems to be no other way of having cases re-opened, but with serious fears that not only will the request be denied, but that we are causing various problems for witnesses and prisoners trying to rebuild their lives following long sentences.

What difference is the CCRC going to make? At present we rely on the help of MPs for any response from the Home Office’s C3 Department, and hope that the fact that it’s in the public interest will deter the police from abusing the information we supply. This new quango will be held off, but will not be open to any ministerial interventions. It will continue to require police to investigate fresh evidence, and so will reinforce police power at the precise points where it is alleged to have been abused. The proposed commission is not simply a cover-up, a pretence that the government is doing something to prevent miscarriages of justice, but a dangerous extension of the power of the State in an area where it is least to be trusted. It is the CCRC has no resources or powers of its own to make independent investigations – no police officers will be assigned to work for it, but all investigations will be carried out by existing forces – usually the original investigating force.

Recently there was a glimmer of light for wrongly convicted prisoners. The High Court decided in the Bridgewater 4 case, that when police investigations were carried out on the direction of the High Court, they had to be passed over to the prisoners’ lawyers. Police investigations of themselves are a whitewash, but at least there is a chance of getting important information to support demands for a fresh appeal, because they could turn up documents and other evidence held back at the time of the original trial. But the new Bill destroys even this chance: the CCRC will not undo an obligation to divulge what it finds to the people whose cases it is reviewing. The CCRC is being set up so that police can keep a tighter control on information, and keep cases of wrongful condition covered up. Under these circumstances, we can only oppose the setting up of the CCRC, because:

- it is a cover-up – a pretence that something is being done about the major problem of miscarriage of justice, when in reality it will just be hiding the problem away more effectively;
- it extends police powers and controls over information.

It should only be supported if it is amended to include the minimum conditions that:

- it has extensive resources for carrying out its own totally independent investigations and powers to make such investigations possible;
- everything it’s investigations discover is made available to the person whose case is being investigated;
- it is required to respond to demands for action from those interested in the investigation;
- if the proposal goes ahead without these minimum conditions, the setting up of the Criminal Cases Review Commission must be opposed because it will make the present situation worse.

- an experiment in the control and pacification of rebellious prisoners, and gained almost international recognition as a prison system success story.

Meanwhile conditions throughout the rest of the Scottish prison system were, to set up a Criminal and while the storm of 1972 was weathered by the authorities, the deference and reliance of the prisoners remained. Following 1977, and the resurgence of collective unrest and resistance in Scottish prisons, the Barlinnie Special Unit was permitted to function as a small oasis of liberalism in an otherwise increasingly repressive system. The prison system (though more open and flexible cells outside the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Prison Officers Association agitated constantly for its closure, condemning it as a “soft option” for “psychotic and dangerous prisoners”.

The protests of 1986-7, which included a number of high-profile hostage-taking incidents, persuaded the Scottish prison authorities that the segregation of individual “troublemakers” would no longer be a sufficient weapon of collective control or a means of keeping at bay the huge wave of resistance that was threatening to engulf the system and render it unmanageable. Greater overall repression was needed and so began the process of co-optation of the system in long-term prisons; one that would eventually result in the closure of the Barlinnie Unit and its replacement with a number of more obvious control units, and a general tightening down of all regimes throughout the system.

The era of therapy was now over.

Male long-term prisoners in Scotland are now allocated immediately to Shotts Prison in Lanarkshire (an open prison), or to long-term units (though more open facilities exist in the Scottish Prisons Service and the Scottish Prison Officers Association agitated constantly for its closure, condemning it as a “soft option” for “psychotic and dangerous prisoners”).

The protest of 1977, which included a number of high-profile hostage-taking incidents, persuaded the Scottish prison authorities that the segregation of individual “troublemakers” would no longer be a sufficient weapon of collective control or a means of keeping at bay the huge wave of resistance that was threatening to engulf the system and render it unmanageable.
NEW HIGH TECH TORTURE
CONTROL UNIT AT FLORENCE

The Bureau of Prisons designed the new ad
max at Florence, CO to be a high-tech
replacement of the infamous lock-down
prison in Marion, IL. This January, 1995 the BOP
began moving prisoners from Marion to Florence.
Political prisoners are among those targeted. Oscar

"Legal Murder"

contr’d from Front Page

All Mumia’s legal appeals have been
exhausted, a death warrant has been
singed and the date for his execution is
17th August ’95. Mumia has been consistently targeted
for his activism, but despite imprisonment
and simple tactics, like donut of a
type writer or much libary time, he has
not been silenced. He contin-
ues to write articals and essays
on a wide range of political
issues. The police managed
to get a series of radio broadcasts by Mumia from death row
dropped from national radio, and
also tried to pressure the
publishers (Addison Wesley) of Mumia’s new book. Live From Death Row isn’t in stopping the book. However, this move was
unsuccessful.
The fight for Mumia’s life now
goes critical. It is vital that we
support legal actions by any
means possible.
Write to: FDOC Box 4986, Long-
wood, FL 32750 and add a phone
number to go on the list for
emergency dam. Any
protest you can organise – do it,
everything helps. Write to

Lopez Rivera and Tom Manning were flown out in a private Lear jet with that same
and was involved in the
demanding prisoner rights. Tom
Manning was flown out in a private plane. (The editorial writer, Tom
Manning #10373/016 and Oscar Lopez Rivera #6765/0124 at USP Florence, Box 8500, Florence, CO 81226-8500.

A correspondent for the group, Friends of Political
Prisoners (Madison, WI) will go in a similar manner. The 'less dangerous' - the jailhouse lawyers, those of diminished IQ, the insane, the strike leaders/drinkers, go in long chained coffins
on backboard, on charter 707's. A group is moved every
Wednesday. ” Ray Luc Levissawa writes of the BOP's first attempt to move the prisoners from Marion to Florence. A private
army of guards entered this callout to rout us. They
dressed in the nines in the latest security garb: black
helmets, black shirts, black pants, black boots, black
gloves, and a gas mask that looked like a modified flame-thrower.

They take on the aura of cartoon characters. Then,
again, I played on my toes because they do main and kill
on occasion. They look 40 total, leaving behind a
small number of prisoners including me.” (Ray specu-
lated that they planned to move him later with a

Conviction News: No 13, 75p (free to prisoners). Latest issue is number 3, 75p. About framed prisoners,
including detailed case briefings, correspondence, letters.

The Solnno: No 2 (March 95). Free news sheet produced by supporters of Kevin O'Neill (framed for murder and still
doing hard time). Latest on Kevin’s cam-
paign, other related cases, news from
Kevin himself. Send donations to: Kevin
O’Neill, Case for Concern, Christ Church
49 Brompton Road, London SW9 0DX

Schnews: Weekly, free news sheet against the
CJA, produced by Brighton’s Justice
Group. Round up latest on anti-CJA actions, developments in the
Army trials and "Anarchometer". Send
subscriptions to: Schnews, c/o OTF,
PO Box 2600, Brighton.

Prison Life: Glossy US mag written by
and for cons and ex-cons. Mix of
prisoners’ art, opinions and experiences; some
good writings about the current "crack-
down" on crime and prisoners in the US.
Latest issue (June/July) has stuff on
gangs, their drug world, etc. Subs are $36.75 outside the US (US money only for 6 issues. Dues, but
you get over 80 pages. Write to: Sub
Dept, 4200 Westheimer, Suite 160,
Houston, TX 77027-4428, USA.

Comment: can be heavy masculinity element.

Prison News Service: No 50 (Mar/Apr),
London. Contains case summary, prisoner
letters and articles from political
prisoners in governments in the UK,
US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia.
Cheque to PSC Publishers or
BullDozer.

The Law: No legal news. (Free to
cons and ex-cons. Staffed by
Jailhouse Lawyers, "criminal defence
lawyers". It’s all a bit liberal in outlook but has
good info and well produced stuff. Get to
The Law, PO Box 16978, London SW2
0DX or look out for free copies in
alternative spaces.

New & Exciting Publications

Capital punishment means... without the capital they get the punishment.
Some traps and ending up in prison themselves.

The second organisation, 'International Solidarity Action', has been set up to ensure that Mauritanian refugee children in Senegal and Sengalese children repatriated from Mauritania, street children, handicapped and impoverished children, are given education and health care with the aim of enabling them to take care of themselves.

This political work cannot be separated from the social work. The children of today must be made aware of the mistakes of their parents. A good political work must begin with the children, who could otherwise become the oppressors of tomorrow.'

Solidarity Action also plans to arrange for released prisoners to share their experiences with the children in order for them to avoid falling into the same traps in which our comrades are still kidnapped, it’s necessary that we work together through an informational network. We will get no positive results as long as we work in dispersion.'

International Solidarity urgently needs to open an office which will function as an information bureau and space for local prisoner support work. In order to ensure that such an undertaking is effective they have estimated that this office will need to raise about £1000. This would get the office up and running, pay for equipment and facilities for the production and distribution of information including the first edition of a news bulletin, which would be shared as widely as possible (with the aim of improving the day to day conditions of detention and methods of political struggle in prisons). Correspondence with prisoners in Senegal and liaison with other human rights groups, families, providing stamps for prisoners and the launching of a campaign of mass mobilisation in order to demand the freedom of prisoners in the UK and Senegal. To destroy all these fascist concentration camps in which our comrades are still kidnapped, it’s necessary that we work together through an informational network. We will get no positive results as long as we work in dispersion."

LA SANTE INCARCERE, MEDECINE ET CONDITIONS DE VIE EN DETENTION
(The Imprisoned Health: Medical Conditions and Conditions of life in prison) By Daniel Gonin, Paris 1992

A research team led by Dr Daniel Gonin worked for five years in prisons in order to assess the health conditions of inmates.

The notion of health adopted by the researchers was borrowed from the World Health Organization's approach, which involves the development of both 'physical and mental well-being'. Prisoners were visited, screened, tested and interviewed, and the study uncovered crucial aspects of imprisonment which had been all too often overlooked. What is the real effect of custody on the body and mind? What are the consequences of this effect measurable? The author tries to answer these questions by attempts in other words to outline the features of what one could call 'imprisoned health'. The type of suffering inflicted by prison is sometimes only vaguely definable it is nevertheless to be found under all prison regimes, and is characterised by symptoms echoing those which, during the 18th century, were given the definition of 'prison fever'. Let us summarise, drawing upon the findings of this research, some aspects of contemporary prison fever.

The cell is a space without time, an empty shell. The meaninglessness of time is disorientating: 35% of the prisoners studied by Gonin were unable to calculate: 60% after one year in custody could not control their memory properly: 60% experienced 'sudden blank voids'. Three quarters experienced dizziness, which was described by some as a menacing emptiness. This menacing emptiness, Gonin argues, leads prisoners to self-negation, whereby they try to make themselves invisible. The constant observation to which they are subjected, along with the constraints given by prison for their desires to hide themselves. But hiding oneself may have destructive consequences, as it may lead to self-amputation, incarceration: prisoners may therefore shift towards mental and physical diseases.

束缚 functions and senses were observed to undergo a process of change. For example, eyesight was found to deteriorate. Gonin explains that the visual space of a prisoner is too small, the eyes are forced to effect double effort. Also he remarks, there is no reason to look around, in fact it is best not to. The eyes of prisoners become expressionless, empty. Gonin says in the 'blind state' of prisoners yet another of their attempts to disappear: to become invisible also means to abolish one's expressions, in order to hide feelings which could be conveyed in our eyes.

Most prisoners overdevelop their hearing. They become hyper-sensitiveness. The author claims that, because prisoners partially give up the capacity to see what surrounds them, they are forced to develop their hearing as the only form of defence from the prison environment. Those interviewed claimed that they were obsessed by noises: a sudden flutter could frighten them. The sense of touch, in Gonin's findings, tended to disappear. Tactility, the author argues, is another diaphragm between the body of the prisoners and the outside. The disgust that is felt in touching a menacing environment is identified as the reason for the denial of this sense. Gonin tells the case of a prisoner who was so scared he could lose his sense that he constantly looked for soft things to handle: clothes, silk, wool. Before losing it, or because he feared he would be bound to lose it, he had everything to revive his faculty.

Many prisoners had ulcers: an outcome of nervous distress, fatigue. Symbolically, ulcers are likened by Gonin to a process of 'autodigestion, cannibalism, a solution offered to prisoners to disappear'. The extreme expression of the attempt to escape is associated with self-mutilation, and finally suicide. Here, prisoners chose the path that leads from themselves, from their body. The rate of suicide in prison is usually six or seven times higher than in the outside world. Much more information is needed in this remarkable book, aptly titled 'The Imprisoned Health. The author does not discuss abolition, or alternatives to custody. But the lack of an anti-custodial argument does not diminish the quality of his study: after viewing such devastating material, readers may decide on their own what it is to be done about prisons.

This book review originally appeared in 'Prison Writing' no 3.