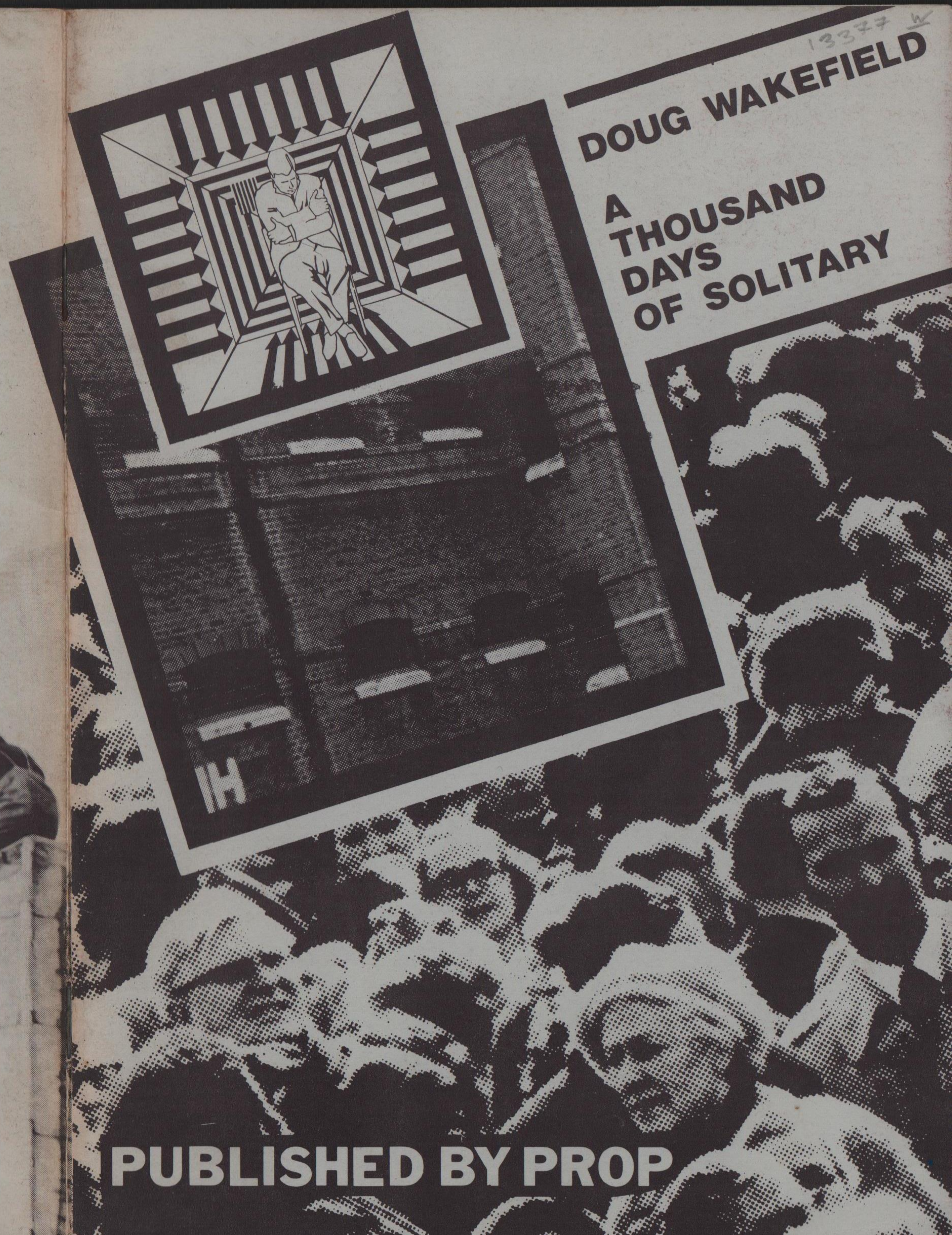


PROP (the National Prisoners' Movement) is an organisation of ex-prisoners, members of prisoners' and ex-prisoners' families and others concerned in publicising the prisoners' voice and in informing the public about the prison system and its links with other repressive developments within our society.

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A Thousand Days of Solitary

Doug Wakefield

PROP thanks the Friends of Doug Wakefield from Warwick University and elsewhere who have helped compile this pamphlet.

PROP
the National Prisoners' Movement

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Doug Wakefield

PROP
The National Prisoners' Movement

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Introduction

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He was moved as far away from his family in county Durham as possible, to Parkhurst in the Isle of Wight. He was refused permission to marry his fiancée. He was heavily sedated with a cocktail of psychotropic drugs - at one stage he was on 900 mg of Largactil a day! He was given ECT three times 'to calm him', by a prison doctor who admitted that electric shock treatment had no real effect on aggressive behaviour. He was kept for 18 months in two cage-barracked white painted cells, one of which had a wall specially built outside the window to cut him off from the outside world. And for most of his last four years (which he spent in no less than 10 different prison establishments) he was in solitary confinement.

Introduction

A Thousand Days of Solitary is not the story of a Russian dissident's experiences of a penal colony in the Urals, nor those of a Chilean refugee. It is an account written and smuggled out on many sheets of toilet paper from one of our own country's most modern prisons, Long Lartin, built in the 1960's in the heart of the Vale of Evesham - "the garden of England". Its author, Doug Wakefield, was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1974 and has since been shuttled around the segregation units of 12 different prisons.

PROP has published many prisoners' accounts of their experiences but we know of none more eloquent, nor more urgent in its appeal, than this. The last year has seen mounting concern at the numbers of deaths in police custody. Rather less attention has been given to deaths in prison although the numbers and the circumstances are every bit as disturbing ⁽¹⁾. Some, as with the deaths in police custody of Jimmy Kelly and Liddle Towers, have been short, sharp and brutal. Others equally short but inexplicable, such as the death in Ashford Remand Centre of a healthy young black prisoner, Richard Campbell. Richard, arrested on March 1st this year, appeared in court on March 3rd and 10th and was then remanded to Ashford for probation reports. On March 31st he was "found dead". At the time of writing, the inquest date has still to be set.

But most prison deaths are the culmination of long drawn out torture and medical neglect - Noel Jenkinson and Sean O'Connell amongst the many Irishmen who have suffered, and continue to suffer, such conditions. And, most recently, George Wilkinson, who died at Walton prison on December 5th last year after a final period of imprisonment which Terry Munyard, present throughout the inquest and writing for the *New Statesman*, has described (30/5/80) as "a documentary of the destruction of the human spirit". He went on to write:

He was moved as far away from his family in county Durham as possible, to Parkhurst in the Isle of Wight. He was refused permission to marry his fiancée. He was heavily sedated with a cocktail of psychotropic drugs - at one stage he was on 900 mg of Largactil a day! He was given ECT three times 'to calm him', by a prison doctor who admitted that electric shock treatment had no real effect on aggressive behaviour. He was kept for 18 months in two cage-barred white painted cells, one of which had a wall specially built outside the window to cut him off from the outside world. And for most of his last four years (which he spent in no less than 10 different prison establishments) he was in solitary confinement.

Rule 43

Rule 43 "Removal from association" is frequently mentioned in this pamphlet, and the rule itself is quoted in the Notes at the end.

The rule can be invoked for two quite separate purposes — at the request of the prisoner himself (for protection), or by the governor ("in the interest of good order and discipline").

Voluntary Rule 43 is not a disciplinary measure and it usually permits full privileges and association, within the segregation unit, with other prisoners in the same category. Sometimes a whole wing of a prison is allocated to this purpose.

It is quite different, in intent and in fact, from the regime inflicted upon Doug Wakefield under Governor's Rule 43.

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The prison doctors in those 10 prisons all pronounced him mentally fit, although many of them treated him as if he were mentally ill. Only one ever attempted to understand and treat the cause of his violent outbursts, during which he often smashed up his cell.

Significantly, that doctor has now left the prison service, apparently disillusioned by the attitude of the authorities to the proper medical treatment of prisoners."

Doug Wakefield is following almost that same path. It is up to those outside, and particularly those who have spoken out so strongly about deaths in custody, to see that the end of the path is not reached.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Rapid movement through the prison system (Doug Wakefield was transferred twenty times in the first five years) is a regular Home Office tactic of harassment and concealment. Apart from its obviously disorientating effect, it also makes it very difficult for fellow prisoners to keep track of what is going on. The table in Appendix 1 shows that most of his prison transfers were straight into and out of segregation. Only those prisoners with their ears close to the ground would have any knowledge of his existence.

At Wormwood Scrubs, where his time was equally divided between the wing and the segregation unit, he was noticed. A fellow D wing prisoner from that period (April to September 1977) remembers how badly he was treated:

Doug Wakefield was harassed and provoked from the moment he arrived on the wing. He was continually spun (cell searched) and was refused facilities available even to Category A prisoners, which he was not at that time. His mail was regularly interfered with, e.g. receiving letters 3 days after they had been processed by the censor. On one occasion when he complained that he had not received his entitlement of a prison letter, to write out, he was told that it had been issued and was refused a replacement. I have rarely seen a prisoner so consistently harassed as Doug Wakefield was during his time on D wing. Feelings about what had happened at Hull were high amongst the wing's prison officers. But none of the other ex-Hull prisoners on the wing at that time came in for the treatment that he received, even though he had played no part in the Hull riot and was in the segregation block during its progress. (see also Appendix 3)

Control Units

Campaigning on the subject of solitary confinement in this country has focused, almost exclusively, on the notorious Control Units. In one sense their notoriety has actually helped the Home Office, especially since their official closure in 1975. Resolutions calling for

their redeployment, from the annual meetings of the Prison Officers' Association and from the Prison and Borstal Governors' Branch of the Society of Civil and Public Servants, have ensured that prison reformers continue their vigilance, while the emotive nature of the original campaign to close the units, and its attempts to equate them with the sensory deprivation techniques of the German 'silent cells', have meant that the whole subject remains highly charged. 'Control Units' thus continue to be seen as the ultimate degree of segregation ever achieved in the English prison system, their closure as a major victory against repression, and the threat of their reopening as the main target - indeed for many people seemingly the only target - for continued campaigning on this issue.

The original campaign against the Control Units was an important one - but not because they represented anything worse than was common practice in the bowels of many prisons. The real threat of the two units at Wakefield and Wormwood Scrubs (the latter never opened as such) lay in the legitimisation and public acceptability which they were intended to give to the practice of segregation. Contrary to much that was written about them in the campaign of 1974/5 they were not introduced in secrecy. Robert Carr, then Home Secretary, announced the intention to build special segregation units in a Parliamentary reply on 11 May 1973. On 28 January 1974 their location was similarly announced. And on 24 July that year Roy Jenkins, the new Home Secretary, told Parliament that the "control units for intractable prisoners" would be opened on 1 August.

It was stealth rather than secrecy that marked the introduction of the units. The announcements, all very properly made, were low key to the point of blandness - so successfully that neither the penal reform groups nor prisoners, some of whom were involved in their construction and fitting out, were alerted to what was developing. The unit at Wormwood Scrubs was known to many prisoners in A wing at that time. Empty, and considered merely as cells, without reference to the regime under which they were to operate, they seemed vastly superior to the overcrowded cells on the dirty landings elsewhere in the prison. The story given to Wormwood Scrubs prisoners prior to 1974 was that they were intended for long term top security prisoners temporarily transferred from the dispersal prisons to London for accumulated visits by their families. The idea that they might have a disciplinary purpose simply did not fit the typical picture of the segregation cells generally in use at that time - damp ground floor or basement cells, double barred, double doored and double locked, cockroach ridden and inadequately lit.

It is little surprise that controversy only arose after the first batch of three prisoners had been sent to the unit at Wakefield and had been visited by their relatives.

That the Home Office recognised the questionable nature of what it was doing is now evident from the briefing document sent by the Controller of Operations, a Mr D G Hewlings, to the Home Secretary and Under Secretaries. The document, ref PDG/68/174/4/78, is dated 7 May 1974. Two quotations will suffice to show the deviousness of the Home Office's pronouncements at this time:

We need to issue the Circular Instructions which set out the general principles, admission procedures and rules for the guidance of governors in the running of the units by the end of this month. This raises the question whether any publicity should be given to the imminent introduction of these new facilities, and if not, how much of the overall philosophy and detailed arrangements we should be prepared to disclose on request - if public interest is shown.

On the question whether such information should be volunteered, it is arguable that there would be tactical advantage in getting in first with an official and accurate account ... On the other hand the intense curiosity of the media which this can be expected to arouse could seriously handicap the smooth running of the units during their difficult initial stages. We feel that the balance of advantages lies in not putting out any advance publicity either when the Circular Instruction issues or when the first of the units is due to open. But since Members of both Houses and indeed the general public have a legitimate claim to general information about the nature of any facility touching - as control units must do - on the delicate ground of prisoners' rights, privileges and liberties, we should be prepared to issue a full account of what the units are doing on the first occasion that serious interest is displayed in them from a responsible source.

The essential feature of the Control Units' minimum 6 months' regime lay in its division into two phases, each of 90 days. For the first 90 days the prisoner was held in solitary confinement for 23 hours, the remaining hour being for solitary exercise. Normal contact with staff was reduced to a minimum and personal facilities severely limited. If at any time the prisoner 'misbehaved', i.e. refused work, answered back or was 'disrespectful', he reverted automatically to day one. Only after 90 days of 'good behaviour' would the prisoner go forward to the second 'associative' stage which included limited mixing with other prisoners in the unit, for work and leisure. 'Misbehaviour' or 'unresponsiveness' would again automatically mean the prisoner's reversion to day one of phase one. In other words the regime could last indefinitely without even the pretence of sanction by the local Board of Visitors. Being

not a punishment but merely an administrative transfer "in the interests of good order and discipline", there was no appeal.

The crux of the recent High Court action by NCCL on behalf of Michael Williams, one of the first inmates of the unit, was that the regime contravened the statutory Prison Rules, particularly in its disregard of the provision (under Rule 43) that any such transfer to segregation must be reported to and sanctioned by a member of the Board of Visitors, to whom it must also be referred for monthly review.⁽²⁾

Although the court accepted that the Home Office had in fact contravened its own Prison Rules, it nevertheless found in favour of the defendant (the Home Office) on the grounds that the rules, though a statutory instrument, were "not mandatory but regulatory".

The case provided not only a useful exercise in the use of the law as a means of raising public awareness to what is happening, but also a timely demonstration that in the last resort none of these matters have legal solutions. There is always a fall-back position to which the State can retreat without in fact giving ground at all. Indeed, unless the ruling is changed on appeal, the recent finding has provided just that legitimacy (though not the much more important public acceptance) which the Home Office was seeking when it introduced the units in 1974. If that acceptance had then been forthcoming we should by now have had many purpose-built and quite openly operated Control Units all over the country.

Doug Wakefield's account of his suffering places the issue of the Control Units in their proper perspective and underlines the fact that behind the furore which the opening of those units raised there already was, away from the spotlights, a widespread use of solitary confinement offering an even greater range of sensory deprivation for periods which were subject only to the rubber stamping of a compliant member of the prison Board of Visitors - in fact for limitless periods (see also Appendix 2). The use of solitary has since increased many fold while the penal reformers have continued to campaign against a name - rather as, in a not very different context, the National Front has drawn the fury of the Left while the actual mechanism of the police state has been steadily erected by the Labour and Tory administrations in control.

Segregation an International Trend

Segregation has become increasingly a feature of prison life everywhere - an international trend reflecting the threat which the modern highly organised and centralised State feels from the grow-

ing awareness of the people within it. It is fundamentally an antidemocratic trend, whatever the label chosen to describe those locked away - 'offenders', 'deviants' or 'dissidents'. A society that was democratic - that was truly of the people - would do the very opposite of segregating its dissidents. Instead it would expose them to the values of that society, confident that those values would triumph.

Only in a classless society working for itself, i.e. one for another, can there ever be such confidence. In no technically advanced country does it exist - least of all in some of those most ostentatiously labelled 'people's states'. In our own country, the repressive developments of the past ten years, under successive governments, demonstrate how rapidly we are losing those democratic safeguards and rights that we still enjoy - all of them won, and then tenuously held, over centuries of struggle, and now, if we don't wake up to what is happening, to be abandoned with little or no struggle at all.

Towards a Police State

This last decade has seen the rise of the SPG, the growing use of 'sus' and conspiracy laws, the whittling away of jury powers by the introduction of majority verdicts, the removal of the right to trial by jury for many offences, the blatant loading of juries by means of jury vetting, and now, as we publish this pamphlet, the removal from coroners' juries of the right to add riders or recommendations to their verdicts.

All of these developments, as with those inside the prisons, may still seem remote to many people, though they have quickly and progressively become part of the hazards of life for the black community, for the Irish and other minorities, and for young people generally in many of the disintegrating areas of our cities and towns.

For the law abiding steelworker or mineworker the prospect of death, or a living death, in a silent and featureless cell may seem unreal beside the struggle to maintain living standards. But for how much longer will he be law abiding, as the laws by which he abides are arbitrarily changed? For how much longer will he be a steelworker, a mineworker or a worker at anything at all, as the production of nearly everything is cut in order to maintain a 'satisfactory' level of profit?

The tensions within an economy and society breaking down as ours is doing will require more and more repressive measures to hold them in check. As unemployment mounts and real standards fall we shall discover the true purpose of the machinery of repression which has been steadily and stealthily built up - the army saracens,

SPG snatch squads, electronic surveillance, the Diplock courts and retrospective legislation introduced in Northern Ireland, and the faceless chain of command in secret underground bunkers linked by unjammable, untappable microwave transmissions.

It may not be long before we reach such a pass. It is there, in essence, waiting for us now. That is the relevance of the message of Doug Wakefield from the solitary cells of Long Lartin prison. It doesn't matter what he was imprisoned for. He is not being shut away from the world - even from the limited world of the prison around him - because of that, but because of his attitude.

It is a path travelled by others before him and being prepared for others after him - for all, in fact, who challenge, in whatever way, the futility which is long term and life imprisonment in this country. We no longer judicially execute people, and our newspapers are full of condemnation, selectively applied according to political leanings, of those countries that do. Yet from those same 'humanitarian' voices there is all too often a complete silence about the manner in which we shut away our own prisoners, physically and mentally to rot.

It is Right to Rebel

The human reaction to being confined in circumstances of such total disregard is liable to be a violent one. It is not only a completely normal but also a positive response. From it may develop, as it clearly has in Doug Wakefield's case, a growing realisation of what is happening within and without the prison system, which, given his obvious ability to articulate that awareness, makes him even more of a threat. But the starting point, common to Wakefield, Wilkinson and all those who have languished, and languish now, in solitary cells, is the refusal to meekly bow down to the intolerable.

The spotlight which we hope this publication will turn on the case of Doug Wakefield must, if it is to lead to any real change, illuminate the plight of all who are segregated under rule 43 or any alternative administrative procedures used by the prison authorities to gain the same ends. That, clearly, is Wakefield's own intention and particular notice should be taken of his concern for his fellow prisoner, Barney Heywood, who was thrown into segregation and then hurriedly transferred to another prison after being caught trying to draw attention to Wakefield's situation.

Action Now

Such matters are urgent. They demand immediate and persistent probing by the media if lives or sanity and health are to be saved.

The Rt Hon Dennis Healey, PC, MP, also clearly has a statutory responsibility to his constituent. So has Michael Spicer MP in whose constituency lies the prison of Long Lartin. But our experience, over the years, of appealing to MP's of whatever party is that in the vast majority of cases involving prisoners it is a fruitless exercise.

Rather than be dependent upon the interest or lack of interest of a particular MP, we urge that the All Party Penal Affairs Group, under the chairmanship of Mr Robert Kilroy-Silk, should propose their own collective responsibility for probing such matters and, specifically, for carrying out unannounced spot checks on segregation units and cells at any prison, detention centre or borstal, interviewing in private, anyone found there, and reporting back on their findings, not to the Home Office or Home Secretary, but to the House of Commons itself.

But, whether we use Parliament, the courts or the media, the pressure must come from us and must be maintained if anything is to develop from it. And ultimately - and that means now, because there is little time left - the overwhelming majority of people in this country, for whom our steadily contracting economy is not working and cannot work, must decide where it is that we want to go, and unite to get there. Only then shall we be able to set about eradicating defects that are the inevitable byproducts of an economy which is motivated by greed and which, as it disintegrates, must be increasingly maintained by the machinery of a police state.

PROP, June 1980

A Thousand Days of Solitary

My name is Doug Wakefield. I am 32 years old and I am at present serving a life imprisonment at Long Lartin Prison, Worcestershire. I was imprisoned in May 1974.

This statement is being collated and written in the hope that anyone reading it may be so touched by its overall content that they may feel motivated to support the case which I put and to appeal on my behalf by drawing the attention of the governing forces and authorities concerned to the fact that such inhuman and insensible treatment, such as that which I am being subjected to, cannot and will not go either unquestioned or unchallenged and that a large degree of improvement must be forthcoming before the situation will be allowed to rest.

Since my initial imprisonment I have been forcefully detained for over 1,200 days in total isolation and solitary conditions under the classification of Rule 43.⁽³⁾ This period was not a continuous one but rather a series of spells ranging from 7 days to 500 days plus. It is in particular Rule 43 that I wish to challenge. This rule creates for the governor the opportunity to impose at will a totally arbitrary and discretionary judgement whereby as a consequence, the prisoner is segregated under conditions of solitary confinement. No reason need be, and rarely is given for such a decision being made but the standard blanket excuse when given is 'to prevent a threat being made against good order and discipline'. This term is applied in so many cases as to be as a result nothing less than a general threat to the prisoner, showing what can happen should he ever get out of step. The rule, being what is is, can by definition be imposed on any prisoner at any time, night or day, for any length of time. This is to say that there is no limited maximum period of time set over which it is said that the rule must be rescinded. It is therefore quite possible to spend years under such conditions and indeed my present spell has to date been over 500 days. Often excuses, when actually given, are of such a petty and minor nature as to be against any definition or concept of a rational sense of justice. Even the simple act of a fellow prisoner (or indeed any other 'anonymous' person) placing, through reasons of spite, jealousy or maliciousness, a 'note' in the letters box is enough to ensure the prisoners is subject to a period of Rule 43 conditions. The fact that any such note may contain completely unfounded allegations is entirely ignored.⁽⁴⁾

The prison system, in order to offer the prisoner no possible room for manoeuvre, has been through the years so engaged in imposing

rule upon rule and counter rule upon counter rule that it has generally become so steeped in bureaucracy and a multifarious process of red tape that, in order for it to function at all, it is quintessential that the governor of each prison be given, to all effects and purposes, a carte blanche with which to achieve a general order. Rule 43 is the ruling that was tailor-made for this end and as such enables the governor by hook or by crook to enforce such an order. It gives him sweeping powers, the consequence of which no body or authority sitting in a court of appeal is willing to countermand simply because of the intrinsic role that Rule 43 has in the maintenance of the present order of things within the prison system. Whilst the prisoner has no effective means of appeal, and because of the resultant apathy of his part, springing from the utter hopelessness of the situation, the whole process in itself is given a free reign and continues unabated.

On the present term I have been detained under Rule 43 since September 20th, 1978. I am given no reason officially though I am led to believe by unofficial asides and comments made to me that I am regarded both as a 'natural leader' and a possible threat to security and prison discipline. None of this is the least bit true for firstly, my personal and political beliefs do not incorporate the leadership concept and secondly, I have stated at all times that I offer no trouble and only wish to engage in passing time doing Open University studies. My personal prison experience reads as follows:

In May 1975, after a 12 month period of being shifted from prison to prison, I was transferred to Long Lartin Prison on a more permanent basis. Due to my original offence being of a domestic nature and the subsequent unsettling effect it had on me, I found prison life more than a little difficult to adjust to. It thus came about that from the start I was branded as an outright non-conformist. There never was, nor ever has been, any understanding whatsoever shown by the prison authorities to me and the real situation still passes unattended.

After periods of varying lengths in solitary confinement and after being subjected to an endless and merciless barrage of totally negative behaviour together with an attitude that was from the first designed to provoke and aggravate me into adopting retaliatory measures, I finally showed my frustration by barricading my cell door and holding a prison guard in the cell. This I thought would add dimension to the situation and cause the prison authorities to review their wholly unsociable attitude towards me. During this operation no physical harm was shown to the prison guard and after a brief confrontation with the prison governor I was assured

that changes would be made and that I would in future be given adequate and proper assistance in any matter that gave me cause for concern. On these terms I released the prison guard. I was then placed in solitary confinement. I was transferred to Birmingham prison where I was punished for the above and I was then immediately transferred to Wakefield Prison where I was placed in the segregation unit at that prison. (The Segregation Unit is the feature at each prison wherein prisoners both on punishment and on Rule 43 serve out their time. These units are particularly harsh and have very strict routine and regime). I had only been at Wakefield Prison for three months when an incident occurred.

I had been detained for the whole of this two months within the confines of the segregation unit and throughout this period and contrary to the previous promises made to me that I would, in future, receive adequate and proper assistance with any personal problems I may have, I was subjected to a series of guard aggravation and suffered occasions in which my mail was being suppressed without reason, thus causing me to sink into extensive bouts of depression. I decided once again to hold a prison guard in an attempt to highlight my case and secure for myself the adequate and proper assistance I had earlier been promised. In the attempt to take the prison guard hostage, which was in the first instance nigh on impossible due to the number of prison guards that were present, all I could really do was to make a desperate lunge at no-one in particular. I was very quickly overpowered and beaten to the ground under a hail of blows from hands, feet and truncheons into a state of unconsciousness. When I came to, I found myself in an empty cell. During the course of the following 2 days, I was attacked in a most savage manner on two occasions. In each instance I was knocked unconscious. Neither of these two later attacks can be justified as at the time I was lying down and could not offer resistance, which is the usual excuse given for beating prisoners up.

Four days after this incident, I was amazed, bewildered and confounded when after being confronted by a police officer I was charged with attempted murder. The charge was in its entirety utterly ridiculous and it was quite clear that the prison guards had exercised their power and had pressured to have me charged, to show other prisoners just where they stood in relation to any incident that included a prison guard. As the segregation unit by definition does not allow the prisoners to see what goes on outside their cell, there was absolutely no way that I could find any witnesses to testify on my behalf. One week after being charged I was transferred to Leeds Prison. Upon my arrival at this prison, I immediately filed a complaint against the prison guards at Wakefield

for inflicting brutality upon my person thus causing me loss of teeth multiple bad bruising around my face and body and a swelling on my head which is still in evidence. The Home Office frustrated me in all my attempts to take legal action and proceedings against the Wakefield Prison authorities responsible and after a further two years of such frustration I eventually abandoned all such attempts aimed at securing redress.

At Leed Prison I was placed, under Rule 43, in the strong box. This is a cell that, whilst being located within the segregation unit itself, is sealed off from the other cells. It is, in fact, secluded from the other segregation cells by three large and thick, heavy steel doors which serve not only to seclude from the secluded but also to prevent any communication between the two. Any communication with any other prisoner is thus rendered impossible. Once in this cell, the prisoner is, in fact, in a segregation unit within a segregation unit, a prospect that is as terrible a one as it may appear. The strong box is a soundproof cell and is without windows. It is stripped bare and has no furniture inside at all. The bed consists of a wooden boarding that is encased within the cold concrete floor. The only articles allowed in this cell are a plastic container for doing toiletries in and a jug of water; nothing else is permitted. Generally speaking, the usual period of time that any prisoner is subjected to such a harsh and restricted existence as the strong box offers does not exceed two or three days. This is quite understandable because the prison authorities have found through past experience that any prisoner detained in such conditions for a time exceeding this period can suffer lasting and permanent effects.

I was detained in the strong box at Leeds Prison from November 7th 1975 until April 12th 1976, a total of 156 days without interruption. This is still the longest number of days spent in any strong box in the UK prison system. During the whole of this 156 days, I was not allowed possession of my radio. Nor was I given any books or newspapers and to all intents and purposes I was thus effectively cut off from the rest of the world in every respect. I received no visits and was not allowed to associate with or even see any other prisoner at any time. I was given no wages nor any work to do that might occupy my mind. My only alternative occupation was either to daydream, fantasize, or sit staring at a cold blank wall. Throughout the entire 156 days, during which occurred an exceptionally cold and frosty winter, I was issued no sheets, blankets or mattress. The clothes in which I stood were the only ones given to me and these were not changed for me at any time. All my meals were brought to my door and were constantly tampered with. Dirt was frequently evident in the food and a white (toilet cleaner?)

powder in the tea. During each night the night patrol guards constantly kicked and banged the cell door and told me how I would not try to take a prison guard hostage again, until eventually I abandoned any hope of getting an unbroken night's sleep and subsequently slept in snatches whenever the opportunity presented itself. After only a short time under these conditions I began to feel quite disoriented from the world in both space and time and my senses became very dull and sluggish, forcing upon me an apathetic outlook and attitude to such a degree that I actually began to feel a strange sense of security within the strong box confines. As a result I could not inspire myself to complain at the treatment being given me.

Given the situation where I was alone in the cell under such deprived conditions and was cut off from all mankind for such a long period of time and the fact that I was gradually beginning to break up mentally, there was no way that I could organise or conduct my court defence. I had seemed to lose all my sense of responsibility and was generally disinterested in anything at all complicated. The apathy on my part brushed off on my solicitor, who had by the time we went to court given up all hope, and due to this and a growing inability to think clearly on my part it all served to prevent me from offering any real defence at the court hearing. After 156 days in the strong box I had been effectively broken. After a very short time I was found guilty (in the face of much perjury on the part of the prison guards) of a crime that I could never possibly have been guilty of or committed. I was sentenced to five years imprisonment. The only compensation I received was the fact that after I had left the court the judge reprimanded the prison authorities for ever having charged me on such frail evidence in the first place. Perhaps this extraordinary reprimand will show the whole matter for the facade it really was. Upon leaving the court house I was bundled into the back of a prison van amidst a number of smirking and giggling prison guards and taken to Liverpool Prison where I was placed, without reason, in the segregation unit under Rule 43.

For the following four months I was aggravated, provoked and frustrated at every conceivable opportunity. I was then, without any prior warning once again bundled into a van and transferred to Hull Prison where yet again I was placed in the segregation unit under Rule 43 without any reason being given to me. After four days during which time I refused to eat any food I was finally and for the first time in more than a year released on to the prison wing proper. I had only been on the prison wing for eight days when the now notorious Hull Prison riot occurred. This was in September

1976. This riot took place as a reaction to gross brutality that was being inflicted by prison guards upon prisoners who were located in the segregation unit of the prison. Despite the obvious and blatant facts that I could not possibly have known any of the Hull populace (I was confined to my wing for the whole of this eight days) and subsequently had not even the merest inkling of any imminent riot and thus could not relate to the episode in any way whatsoever, I was nevertheless placed once again on Rule 43. Shortly after the termination of the Hull Prison riot I was without warning put in a van and transferred to Strangeways Prison where I was immediately placed in the segregation unit on Rule 43. Because of this fact, and as a result of all the relentless harassment I was receiving, I went on a hunger strike. When I had not eaten for sixteen days I was assured that I would be transferred to another prison with better amenities shortly. I resumed eating my food and the following week I was transferred to Durham Prison where I was placed not on the wing that was being used to house all the other Hull prisoners, but in what is commonly termed 'The Cage'.⁽⁵⁾

I was yet again on Rule 43. The cage consists of four prison cells that are located on a basement landing that lays immediately below the wing that is used to house 'punishments' and Rule 43's. It is actually separated from the wing proper by a large steel gateway which is surrounded by an even large steel grill and wire mesh. Access either in or out of the cage by anyone other than a prison guard is impossible. The regime and routine of the cage are harsh and most strict. Whilst other prisoners from Hull Prison were allowed to associate and mix freely and generally enjoy normal privileges, I was allowed none of this. In a short time, I was charged on four charges relating to the riot and was subsequently and in the face of many lies told by prison guards found guilty on all these charges. I was sentenced to a lengthy term of punishment conditions and informed that a very damaging report would be placed in the back of my record so that it may be referred to whenever I was reviewed for parole in the years ahead. During this 'trial' I was not allowed to call my witnesses and the whole of my evidence along with my innocence was ignored. It was at this prison that I was to learn that a whole variety of articles which were my own personal property had disappeared somewhere between Hull Prison and my eventual arrival at Durham Prison. I was at no time after the riot allowed to see or check my personal property which was in the hands of prison guards. Such property as was missing included private letters, photographs, educational papers and a manuscript of a nearly finished book that I was engaged in writing. All these items were catalogued in my presence at Hull Prison yet were not

registered -or so I was told after I had made a claim for compensation. During the six months that I was detained in the cage I was constantly harassed and had all my requests for privileges refused. I also had mail suppressed and various letters disappeared without trace. On one occasion when a friend sent me £3 in a letter I was handed the letter and told "There was no money inside - we know nothing about it".

At the end of this six months I was bundled into the back of a van with no prior warning and taken to Wormwood Scrubs Prison in London.⁽⁶⁾ I should say that this manner of bursting into a prisoner's cell at any time of the day or night and handcuffing him and bundling him to a van with absolutely no previous warning is standard procedure. It is only when you arrive at your destination and see the name of the prison on the gate - unless you are familiar with the city itself - that you know where you are, for you are never told your destination, even in the van! Sometimes, if it is a strange city or prison and you are unable to see the name on the gate you have to ask inside the prison where you are or alternatively you can wait until you receive your prison letter which has the name of the prison on it. All this has the effect of disorientating the prisoner and confusing the mind.

Inside Wormwood Scrubs Prison I was placed, after one week's isolation, on D Wing. I had been at this prison only two months when, as I sat quietly eating my meal one evening, the cell door burst wide open and six to eight prison guards rushed in and surrounded me in a most menacing and threatening manner. They told me to stand up and that I was going on a trip to the segregation unit. They did not say why nor did I ever find out though I could draw my own conclusion as to the reason, for only the day before this incident I had been placed on report for arguing with a prison guard concerning the suppression of my mail. But because I had undergone so much solitary confinement during the previous three years, the governor decided simply to caution me and thus it came about that the prison guards decided to show their strength by personally, and without the governor's directive, placing me in the segregation unit. When I had stood up in my cell I began to gather a few personal effects together but I was then pushed out on to the landing where the guards were lined up all the way along both walls of the landing and likewise along the basement landing along which I had to walk on my way to the segregation unit. Apparently they had specifically waited until tea-time as this is the time when all the prison guards congregate and they could deal with me. It was an obvious terror tactic and it was designed both to instil me with fear and to illustrate to other prisoners the power the guards have. It

was a kind of symbolic 'We rule OK' gesture. I was told that any personal effects such as they saw fit to give me would follow later. I was then frog-marched to the segregation unit in the midst of about 40 to 50 guards who were pushing and tripping me and making sexual inferences about my person. (see Appendix 3)

When I later received my personal effects my radio was broken and beyond repair and various letters and photographs were missing. When I complained about this matter I was told that there was nothing that anyone could do to ascertain the truth of the matter as there were so many guards involved. I replied that while this was the case it was hardly satisfactory. As a means of protesting, both against my property being interfered with and against my being placed yet again on Rule 43 with no sufficient cause or reason given, I again engaged a hunger strike. At this stage of my prison sentence I had deteriorated both mentally and physically as a consequence of all the periods of isolation and sense of deprivation that I had been made to suffer, to the point where when I was particularly troubled or emotionally pressured I would suffer painful stomach spasms when eating my food and vomit the food back up again. My constitution was beginning to break down. After I had refused food for five days I was seen and interviewed by the senior prison doctor and it was decided to "get him over to the hospital unit as soon as possible". I had by this stage lost any interest I may previously have had in life. I just could not generate enough interest in anything any more. I had as a child been subject to much depravity, loneliness and parental violence of a very bad nature and I was taken from my parents and placed in care whilst still in my schooldays and everything now just seemed too much to bear. I simply felt that I had truly had enough and wanted just to rot away in my cell. I had never suffered these mental complications before these extended periods of isolation under Rule 43 and I had not been drawn towards suicide. They are direct results of Rule 43 conditions.

Two hours after seeing the doctor I was taken to the prison hospital unit which has a special security unit within it which houses a small number of prisoners. I was put on a course of drugs but was never told the name of these drugs. After fourteen days I began to eat my food again and my spirits picked up. After six weeks of being detained in this manner I was interviewed very briefly by a Home Office psychiatrist who recommended that I be transferred to the psychiatric wing - C wing, at Parkhurst Prison, Isle of Wight, as soon as possible. This transfer took place the following week and was in September 1977. When I arrived on C Wing I was in very poor shape both physically and mentally. I was terribly, terribly depressed at what the authorities were doing to

me, and besides being totally disillusioned I also felt like a sack of garbage being shifted and dumped from one institution to another. At all times I was being made to feel as though I was the most bloodthirsty, violent and despicable creature that ever walked the face of the earth and yet all I harboured was a desperate craving to be simply left alone to myself so that I may live a good, quiet and peaceful life such as any one else would desire to live. I was trying to protect my rights of independence and self-assertion and what the prison authorities were - and still are - trying to do was to have me surrender these rights unquestioned in order that they may, unbridled, proceed to break down the whole structure of my personality and character and in its place create and implant a new one.

I am fully aware of the not too well known fact that the POA (Prison Officers Association) issue and second motions calling for various so-called troublesome and unmalleable prisoners to be for all intents and purposes hounded and ground into uncompromising submission by, where more accepted methods fail, any means thought practicable at the time. I have certainly been made thoroughly aware that all my prolonged sufferings are a result of this general policy and that they reflect the feelings of both the POA and its members to the original charges that I was accused of involving prison guards at Wakefield and Long Lartin Prisons.

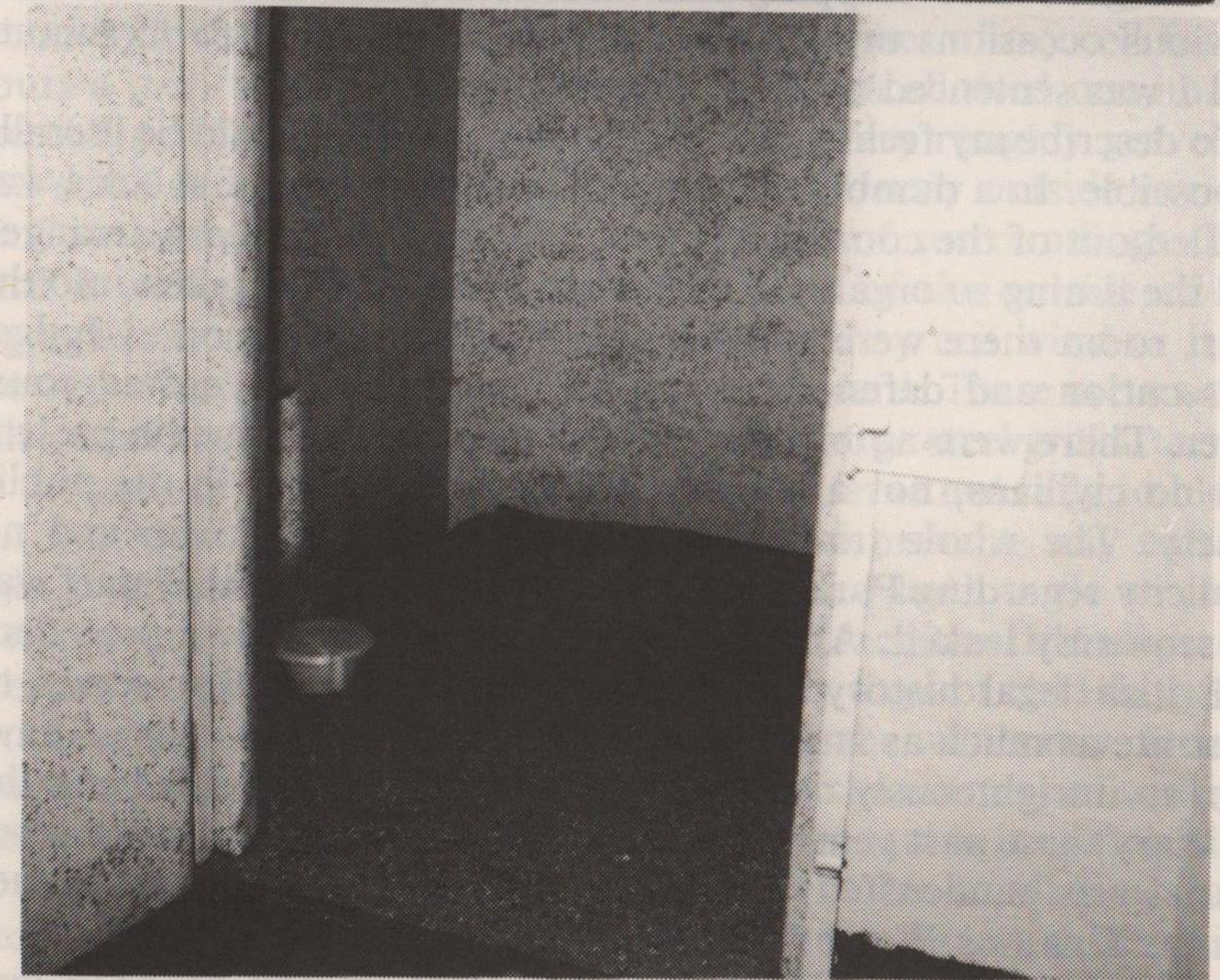
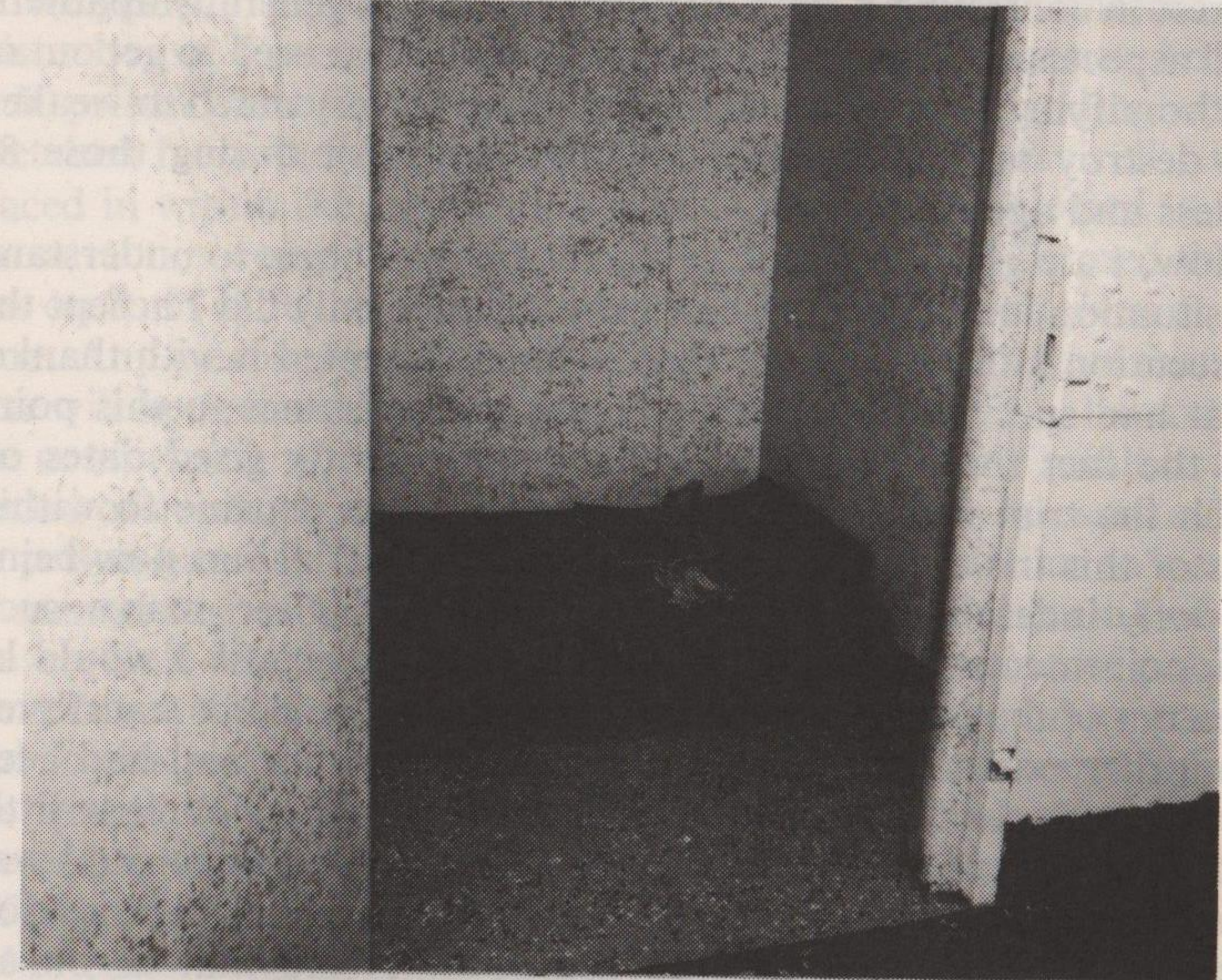
C Wing at Parkhurst Prison houses on average about twenty prisoners at any one time and these prisoners are watched intently by ordinary prison guards with no qualifications whatsoever for assuming such a responsibility. Any comment, opinion or feeling of these guards towards the prisoners is accepted unquestioned by the prison psychiatrists and medical guards and is referred to as gospel. These totally unqualified observations are thus of great influence in deciding the future and fate of the prisoners on this wing. C Wing is ostensibly a psychiatric unit for prisoners who are in need of urgent and qualified help of the highest nature. Many of these people are mentally ill - illness occurring only after imprisonment - and a high percentage 'graduate', as the guards say, to Broadmoor and Rampton mental institutions. I have never in all my life felt so obviously out of place as I did whilst on this Wing and in this company. I was given drugs intermittently but not the names of these drugs. I was also generally harassed which is in itself incredible when considering the purpose of this wing.

In September 1978 in the vicinity of my cell two prisoners, both with long histories of violence and mental illness, had an altercation which later developed into a violent struggle which ended with one of the prisoners receiving injuries from which he later died.

When questioned I would not assist the authorities by giving them information regarding the incident. I could not do so for two basic reasons (a) if I did inform I would be endangering my own safety and (b) informing as such runs counter to my beliefs and principles. Because of this I was placed in solitary confinement on Rule 43. For the next three months I was continually questioned by the police, medical guards, prison guards and prison authorities concerning the incident but I refused to speak at any time to any of them about any aspect of the incident. No motivation nor proof could be established and the authorities were thus completely frustrated in all their attempts to unearth the facts of the matter. This frustration was finally vented on me. At the end of three months in isolation I was myself charged with an offence of murder.

One month after being charged, in January 1979, I was transferred without prior warning to Winchester Prison, where I was immediately placed in the strong box on Rule 43. I was stripped of all privileges and then was subjected to a repeat performance of the episode that I suffered at Leeds Prison when I was detained until my trial in the strong box of that prison for a total of 156 days. On this occasion I was again detained in the strong box for a period well in excess (86) of the two or three days that these cells are designed for. I was, in fact, detained in the strong box from 19th January 1979 until 15th April 1979, upon which date I was taken to court. Due to all the abnormal effects (as listed earlier) that result from such an extended confinement under such depraved and inhuman conditions, my psyche was such that I was all but willing to sell my very soul. I nevertheless did, through my point blank refusals to offer any information regarding the fatal incident, sacrifice much. It came about that during this 86 days, and all my refusals to co-operate, the prosecution counsel offered through my solicitor a deal which in effect meant that if I was willing to plead guilty to 'manslaughter', opening the way to a lower sentence, speedier trial and quicker return to normal prison life; with 'diminished responsibility' (therefore enabling it to go down on record that such a short sentence was passed because it was judged that I was exempt, if not exonerated, to a large degree from responsibility of the offence) then he, the prosecutor, would accept without question such a plea - such are the mechanisms of British justice. If, on the other hand, I did not accept this 'proposition', then I could stay in the strong box until they decided to bring me to court on a charge of murder. After some deliberation and after considering and contemplating my past experiences at the hands of the judiciary, I doubted, nay was convinced, that I would have

The strongbox at Walton Prison in which the dying George Wilkinson spent most of the last day of his life. He was removed to the prison hospital at 7 am on December 5, 1979 and died three hours later. The two photographs show the full extent of the windowless, featureless cell. It was in a similar cell at Leeds Prison that Doug Wakefield was kept for 156 consecutive days.



little, if any, chance standing alone in court against an army, no less, or prison authorities, police, state prosecutor and jury blind to reality, especially when it was revealed that I was already a prisoner and thus had a criminal record. My solicitor was showing no real interest in contesting a state institution and was generally apathetic in all aspects and I also felt a growing pressure or need to get out of that horrifying strong box which had done so very much to weaken and destroy my psyche, my will and my spirit during those 86 endless and agonising days.

How, I am given to feel, can the reader ever begin to understand the situation in real terms when I say that not only did I accept the prosecution's filthy deal but that I almost accepted it with thanks. What had specifically served to break my resistance to this point was the fact that the authorities had persistently fixed dates on which the trial would be heard and then when it came to within days of this trial I would be informed that the trial was now being put off indefinitely. Eventually, therefore, after many such disappointments, I accepted the deal. Firstly, because I would be taken out of the strong box. Secondly, because I would be transferred to another prison, and thirdly because the way the deal had been worded and phrased to me it gave me the impression that little would happen anyway. When I eventually arrived at court, I was asked unofficially if I had anything to say or had any information to divulge before stepping into the dock. I said that as on all previous occasions my answer was 'no'. After a 10 to 15 minute trial I was sentenced to 'life' imprisonment.

To describe my feelings at hearing this sentence would be literally impossible. In a dumbfounded and speechless state of shock I was hustled out of the court. The court itself had been so pre-arranged and the timing so organised that when I was actually taken into the court room there were present only the following people: Judge, prosecution and defence council and obviously unrequired court usher. There were no members of the press or other media present and no civilians, not a solitary soul was to be seen in the public gallery. The whole trial was thus effectively hushed up and no publicity regarding Parkhurst C Wing or its irresponsible staff was consequently leaked. All this in a murder case must be a precedent in British legal history and perhaps the whole process serves to illustrate as much as anything else the terrible way in which I have been so unrighteously dealt with by the prison authorities and the judiciary these past years since coming into prison. As I came from court I was handcuffed, bundled into a van and taken to another prison. This was Wormwood Scrubs Prison, London.

I was immediately placed in the segregation unit on 43. I was

detained this way and in the most oppressive and distressing conditions for two months and then again, and with no prior warning, I was bundled into a van and transferred to another prison which was Long Lartin Prison, Worcs. This was my 19th prison transfer in five years. I arrived at this prison in June 1979. As I entered the prison house, I was given a 'welcoming party' which consisted of 40 to 50 prison guards lined up against both sides of the landing which stretched from the entrance of the establishment to the cell I was placed in within the segregation unit. After being subjected to this terror tactic - commonplace in most prisons - I was informed that I was on Rule 43 for an indefinite period. No reason was given at the time. Any prisoner on Rule 43 is at all times led to believe that his case will be reviewed on a day to day basis and that any behaviour not conforming with the standard demanded will only result in this period of confinement being extended. Behaviour is assessed solely by prison guards. The overall affect of Rule 43 is similar to a state of mental suspended animation or a numbing or deadening of the senses. Rule 43 is infinitely worse than being on a period of punishment for in this case you are, at least, aware of a beginning and an end to the process. You also, on punishment, have knowledge of the reason for the process being incurred. The proposition, therefore, that the prisoner under punishment is infinitely better off than the prisoner on Rule 43 is a proposition of some substance.

My conditions of imprisonment on Rule 43 now at Long Lartin are as follows: I am detained within the confines of my cell for 24 hours a day. When weather permits then I am allowed one hour's exercise per day which I have to take on a very roughly gravelled and small rectangular yard. This yard lies directly outside my cell window and thus offers me no real change of surroundings. The yard is walled in at all sides making a view of the outside of the segregation unit impossible. The view from my cell window is of the opposite cell that lies across the exercise yard. There are a set of thick steel bars, a steel window frame and a large steel grill attached to the area of my cell window and all these serve not only to block out any view onto the exercise yard but also prevents any natural light from entering the cell. When I exercise I have to do so completely on my own at all times. There are no facilities that allow for exercise to take place indoors on wet, windy days or cold days and on these occasions I must remain in my cell the whole day. Due to the structural design of the segregation unit the amount of sunlight that enters the cell is restricted to a minimum and is insufficient. It is therefore necessary to have the cell light on at all times and because of the sub-standard efficiency of the bulbs in use, there is a general tendency over a given period under such ill lit conditions

for the eyesight to deteriorate and fail.

As a consequence of the body tissues not being fed the quota of natural sunlight that they demand, the body gradually loses its colour especially around the facial area where the tendency is to turn a sickly wan. The cell that I am detained in measures a bare 7' x 6' and when room is allowed for the bed, table, chair, cupboard, sink unit and toilet then there is little left for manoeuvrability, in fact there is a mere 7' strip of floor space about 20 inches wide. It is impossible to carry out physical exercises within such a small space and as a result of prolonged lack of bodily exercise my body is constantly wracked by a nagging ache and any activity calls for a great exertion and strain. At no time am I permitted to associate with any other prisoner and my whole life is thus spent in total isolation. I cannot watch television nor can I attend the weekly prison film. I am handed on average one newspaper per week and this is my only real way of keeping in touch with events. Since my radio was broken by the prison guards at Wormwood Scrubs in 1977 I have been unable to afford another one. I am not allowed possession of my record player which I applied for in order for me to study a language course yet another prisoner has his record player for the same reason within the segregation unit. I cannot use the education classrooms or facilities and cannot use the gymnasium which is available to all other prisoners both on Rule 43 and on punishment and there is no work for me to do during the day. My mind is therefore at all times kept in an idle state by such unnecessary restrictions.

My wage payment is the lowest prison wage possible (90 pence a week) but when I am paid this sum I am not allowed to go to the prison canteen to spend it. Instead I am told to make up a list of items required but I have no way of knowing either the goods that are available or their prices. Attending weekly church service is normally regarded as an inviolable right in any prison - as is the case at this prison - even for prisoners on punishment or 43, yet on applying to attend the Sunday service I am told that if I wish to have a church service then they will bring the chaplain down to my cell where he will therein perform and carry out a complete service and hymnal for me. Apart from this procedure approaching the ridiculous, I would also have to bear the company of 4 to 6 prison guards stood only 5 feet away from me watching the whole process. Each prisoner is issued with a safety razor and this applies to all prisoners whether on punishment or otherwise. This is quite simply because being a safety razor it is harmless and is considered in no way as a means of weaponry yet in my case I have, when wishing to shave, to ring my cell buzzer and apply to have the use of one of

these razors. Whilst I am shaving I am watched closely by a minimum of 4 prison guards. After each meal, each prisoner is allowed to use the large washtank that is provided for the washing of plates and utensils etc., yet in all instances I am not allowed either to wash my plates or utensils etc. (which are plastic and which I was only recently and after seeing the prison governor allowed to keep in my cell) or to dispose of any waste foodstuffs. I am told that the reason for this is that there 'isn't enough staff' (for one man?). Due to the time lapse between bringing the meals from the kitchen and the opening of the cell doors; each one is opened individually, of which mine is invariably the last, the meals are cold and consequently tasteless and unpleasant to eat. Meals are at all times eaten in the cell alone and in view of the fact that there is a toilet in the cell for which no cover is provided this is not only unhygienic but also very disturbing.

Letters which other prisoners are given in the morning I am given at night, usually as late as 7 p.m. and occasionally I am even handed mail on a Sunday from post delivered to the prison the previous day. Despite the fact that I am never allowed to come into physical contact with any other prisoner at any time, I am constantly and regularly given cell searches in which not only is all the cell furniture left topsy-turvy but, more important, my own personal property and letters are scrutinized and re-scrutinized on each recurring search. I am never allowed to supervise these searches and remain outside of the cell whilst it takes place. Before I leave the cell I am given a body search and this most embarrassing procedure involves the most demoralizing experience of having to lower my underpants "to the knees" whilst the prison guards look down at the parts where it would be possible to conceal any contraband properties, assuming of course, that I were able to acquire it in the first place. In the wall within the cell is fitted a steel button which when pressed activates a buzzing mechanism in the guards office in the segregation unit. Whenever I press this buzzer I am constantly either ignored altogether or made to wait for some time before anyone comes to my cell to answer my call and this is a source of much frustration as it is the only means, short of battering the door down, of attracting the guards' attention. Another cause for concern is the manner in which the prison guards keep rattling and jingling their chain full of keys directly outside my door as if to make me think that they are about to come in my cell. They also bang all doors very loudly and whistle tuneless sounds in a very high and-deliberately loud and annoying manner not only during the day but during the night. This excess banging of doors and loud noises is designed not only to aggravate the prisoner but also to wear down

his resolve by attacking his nervous system. It all works very well indeed.

Despite these conditions there is yet another one that vexes me much more and causes me much suffering and hardship. This regards the visiting conditions which I alone am being subjected to. Within this prison there is both a large communal visiting room and a number of small individually visiting rooms. The smaller rooms are used only in exceptional cases for individual prisoners who are seen as a very high risk to security or as a possible danger to other visiting parties. I am not permitted the use of either of these visiting facilities. In spite of the fact that I have never attempted a prison escape the governor has informed me that I cannot use either of the visiting rooms because he is "worried about the distance". That is to say that he is worried about my traversing the distance between the segregation unit and the visiting unit which is a distance of a mere 50 to 60 yards. This ludicrous and desperate excuse is seen for what it is when realisation is made of the fact that Long Lartin Prison is one of the most secure prisons in Europe and has the following security checks at its service: An outer wall of some considerable height that is surmounted by an anti-grappling device; an inner fence of an equal height to the wall which is surmounted by large rolls of barbed wire and has an electronic trembling device running throughout its entirety which is set off at the slightest disturbance; an underground electronic device that lays between the wire fence and the outer wall which is set off at the contact of foot and ground within this area; a vast number of closed circuit television cameras that can record the prisoner's every move in any part of the prison grounds or house; a vast number of walkie-talkie radios; up to 300 prison guards immediately available and a large number of guard dogs. The guards are also armed with staves and truncheons and I would, of course, be given a thorough strip-search before leaving the segregation unit and crossing to the visiting unit which would take approximately ONE minute to reach. Yet in spite of these security checks I, who have never tried to escape before, am considered too high a risk and am not allowed the use of the visiting unit at any time.

I am ordered instead to have any visit within the actual confines of the segregation unit, thus requiring my visitors to enter the prison grounds and the prison itself. Such areas are always strictly out of bounds to civilians - a basic security precaution in today's conditions where determined prisoners might use hostages to draw attention to their situation. Yet the governor of this prison has absolutely no qualms it seems about setting the precedent for me and thereby subjecting my visitors to these obvious risks. Once the

visitor is within the confines of the segregation unit, he or she is escorted under guard to a small adjudication room where the visit shall take place. This room is none other than the very room which is used 6 days a week (Monday-Saturday) as the room in which to deal with prisoners that have been charged with offences against prison discipline. It is the prison court house. I have had one visit in this court room and it would be nigh on impossible for me to relate the reader to the experience. How could it be possible to enjoy a visit whilst sitting in the very room that is used to mete out such injustice and punishment 6 days a week and in which even the air hangs heavy with injustice.

On the visit that I had in this room, in which my visitor was extremely tense and put out, I was obstructed from my visitor by a long heavy table measuring about 8 foot long by about 3 foot across. This table is used both for resting all the prisoners' records on and for writing the punishment on. We were made to use plain wooden chairs and while we sat facing each other across the 3 foot table there was a number of prison guards sitting directly behind me and looking straight into my visitor's face, they remained in total silence throughout the visit which, under the circumstances, both myself and my visitor decided to cut short. The atmosphere present throughout the visit was one of considerable tension, nervousness and acute embarrassment and consequently it was impossible to engage in a prolonged, meaningful or interesting conversation for any length of time. Directly outside the windows of this makeshift visiting room was a considerable amount of activity involving prison guards and prisoners. It was impossible, under the circumstances, not to be fully aware of the activity and its accompanying language which was peppered with curses and expletives. The visit was a total disaster and as a result I have since been forced, by means of protest, to inform the governor of the prison that I will be refusing to have any further visits under such atrocious conditions and I have urged him to review the whole situation. When I put this to him he simply said he would "think about it", meaning that he certainly wasn't going to, he then walked away from me. There seems to be no immediate prospect of this situation changing for the better and I cannot even begin to describe the utter hopelessness, frustration, distress and anxiety that it causes me. It seems, in the face of their refusal to better the conditions, as opposed to my refusal to have any visits, that they are quite prepared to take my visits away from me. Resultant on this was a tremendous strain and pressure on the relationships between me and my visitors.

I should now perhaps give details regarding the type of category that, as a prisoner, I have been accorded. For the first 4½ years of

imprisonment I was classified as a Category 'B' prisoner. This meant that although I was a long term prisoner and as such must be allocated to a top security prison, I nevertheless could within such a prison be trusted to the extent of being accorded only a minimum number of prison guards as escort when moving around within the prison grounds. The usual procedure when being escorted about the prison whilst on Category 'B' is to be accompanied by only one guard, this has not always applied in my case, however. In contrast to this, there are a small number of prisoners that are classified on Category 'A'. This is the highest type of category for prisoners that are deemed, in the unlikely event of their escaping custody, as a risk of the highest magnitude to the police, to the state and to the public body. As a means of preventing any such escape by any of these prisoners, the category 'A' prisoner has a life that is centred around a whole complex security system geared to maintaining the highest degree of security possible.

I was reclassified category 'A' only after I refused to give information to the prison authorities at Parkhurst Prison in 1978 regarding the incident I was later charged with. No reason was given me as to why after 4½ years I was of a sudden considered a danger to the police, the state and the public. After all, all I had done was to keep my mouth shut. On category 'A' I was to have various photographs taken in various positions and these were placed in my record, general files, medical sheet and also within a small hardbound book that was to be a register of every single move I made through night and day, and the time that such a movement was made. This book was to be carried by any prison guard that escorts me anywhere, even to the toilet. Anyone who wishes to visit me at the prison must make an application to the governor which is then forwarded to the Home Office. A local police officer is then directed by the Home Office to go around to both interview the potential visitor as to their general personal details and to find out the details of our relationship. If the visitor satisfies the interviewer and is later approved by the Home Office, he or she then has to send various photographs to the Home Office who in turn then issues the visitor with a 'Passport' in which is inserted their photographs and personal details. This 'Passport' has to be produced to the prison on each visit. Other consequences of being classified as a category 'A' prisoner are: All my mail, both incoming and outgoing, instead of being handled by the prison censor, is now re-channelled to a special security guard and because of this my mail is regularly held up and suppressed 'for security reasons'; wherever I go in the prison, be it to exercise, to collect meals, to take a bath or even to the toilet, I am now subject to a high-powered security screening

and I am to be escorted everywhere by a minimum of 4 prison guards, in fact I am always escorted everywhere by at least 6 guards; on and throughout each night my cell light is flicked on and off each half hour and my door handle tried at the same time. This makes it impossible to ever enjoy an uninterrupted night's sleep.

All of these most unnecessary security measures cause much hardship and contribute along with Rule 43 to the effects that I shall list in this statement. Firstly, I would like to document the attitudes and habits of the prison guards.⁽⁷⁾ It may, at first, appear inappropriate to state that some prison guards may just possibly be originally motivated into joining the prison service through a desire to help others but what is certainly appropriate to state here is the rather cold and most unfortunate fact that any of these freshly contracted guards who are motivated by such humanitarian ideals are, after a very short period of being subjected to an intense barrage of anti-prisoner propaganda which is disseminated by the POA, the Home Office and the older, occupationally senile prison guards, very quickly swallowed up into the 'system'. Their original views are efficiently reshaped and transformed into an end product that has as its primary characteristic the ability to be totally insensible to the suffering that the prisoner is made to endure. This is to say that although the prison guard sees the suffering which he inflicts he is, nevertheless, totally incapable of both preventing himself from inflicting it and of perceiving its real effects. The inflicting initially becomes an attitude, then a habit and later graduates into a disease. The longer that he remains in the service the worse the disease becomes and the senility with it, this is a very dangerous situation. Most guards dress and act in a manner that suits the occasion, the occasion in prison is always an oppressive one. They have a tendency to dress in a bulky manner which has the effect of giving them along with their hats and boots a large frame and an authoritative appearance. The boots or shoes which they wear are mostly studded and steel tipped on the heels and toes and this enables them, when walking, to purposely make an overly loud clattering noise that creates an authoritative impression. They also have walkie-talkie radios and always have these on at a very high and loudly pitched volume. All these factors and more tend to make the prisoner feel very small, very irrelevant and most insignificant. It seems that everything is geared and designed towards getting the prisoner to feel that he is totally alone in a hopeless situation in which he would be very wise and much better served by surrendering his spirit and his psyche unto those who know best how to care for it, i.e. the prison guards, the prison governor and the Home Office.

From the moment that a prisoner is detached from his normal

prison routine, cell, property, personal effects, friends, familiar surroundings and other associations of everyday prison life and is thrust into isolated solitary confinement, then his state of mind becomes a very distressed, disturbed and disorientated one and the sickness he would feel when told that he is to be isolated under Rule 43 for an indefinite period would be a sickness that springs from the deepest part of his stomach. It is, as I well know, an indescribable, nauseating effect, a gut reaction which takes much time to subside. The utter and monstrous boredom that becomes so obvious after a short period of Rule 43 isolation is an all-powering one and if the victim is of a weak character, he would find himself eventually controlled by inertia and apathy. This is to say that in order to fight off the tendency to complete idleness that Rule 43 breeds and to retain a hold on the senses, it is necessary to make great exertions. I have attempted to strengthen my mind and will by occupying myself in many ways. Yet no matter how successful a prisoner may be in staving off the effects of Rule 43 isolation conditions, it is only a matter of time before it catches up with him for, after all, deprivation of sensual stimulation is not a natural affair. I have on occasions when I have received the odd newspaper read and re-read it simply to have something to do, yet after a period of isolation and sensual deprivation it becomes so that no matter how hard you try to concentrate on whatever you are reading, you can hardly recall afterwards any details of the article. The powers to retain knowledge become impaired and in some instance paralysed. Fantasising and day-dreaming become prevalent pastimes and the obvious danger here is that this activity could become a permanent feature of the mind with the consequent disadvantage of not knowing at times whether you are in reality or fantasy. It becomes, with time, common to sleep for periods of up to 14 or even 16 hours a day simply as a means of passing the time and the remaining hours are spent in relative idleness also. When I am out of bed I spend most of the time walking up and down the cell floor like a caged animal. It is, under such depraved conditions literally impossible for the mind not to deteriorate and a gradual erosion or dissipation of the idiosyncracies and senses can only be regarded as a natural reaction.

The price for holding on to reality and sanity is a taxing and costly one and sometimes I have been caused to wonder whether it wouldn't be a whole lot easier simply to abandon myself to insanity, to suicide or to the doctor and his drug experiments. Drugs can be a means of escaping from the utter frustration and depression but although I have taken drugs on a few occasions I have mainly in my most anguished moments chosen to register a protest at my

conditions rather than a resignation and I have as a means of protest usually engaged in a hunger strike. Apart from being a form of protest the hunger strikes that I have suffered have been also motivated by my finding it increasingly difficult to keep my food down after eating it and this has caused wild fluctuations in my weight which has wavered between 11 stone and 15 stone since I came into prison. In the past 5 months alone my weight has shot up from 12 st. 7lb to 13st. 9 lb. Most of these hunger strikes have been over periods of 10 to 28 days. On the very few occasions I have resorted to drugs I have only ever been prescribed the type of drug that makes you feel quite senseless and oblivious to the real world and consequently which serves to confuse the senses more and thus plummet you into even deeper spasms of depression: The general policy between prison doctors as regards drugs prescribed is to exclude the prescription of anti-depressive drugs that would lift the prisoner. This is done because it is feared that they would consequently be swamped by patients. The result of this is that at the expense of this policy many prisoners much in need of such treatment are left to suffer unduly and to deteriorate further and here the prisoner on rule 43 is particularly vulnerable because of the increased stress and strains resultant from isolation conditions.

Early stages of Rule 43 solitary confinement produce a diffident and irritable prisoner that develops into an irresponsible, apathetic, broody and mercurial one. He becomes totally dejected, pessimistic and very moody and has a sense of feeling alienated and disorientated from his surrounds. He feels a useless entity that has no direction and life seems to become increasingly less worthwhile and acceptable. It becomes difficult to find a relation between anything; you see and hear but it doesn't seem to hang together and nothing seems to mean anything or carry importance anymore. It is very much like viewing a life through a clouded veil and groping in a state of semi-consciousness, everything seems dreary and unreal. Severe headaches becomes a frequent pain. The ability to retain knowledge is seriously impaired and an intense feeling of frustration and apathy results. It is very difficult to maintain a concentration on anything for any length of time and normally simplest of tasks becomes the most laborious and tedious one. It is extremely difficult to hold a process of thought coordination, much time being used in a preoccupation with rambling, incoherent thoughts, with things unrelated tending to fuse and overlap thus causing a high degree of disorientation in both space and time. I know of all these effects personally because I have, and still do, experience them. Occasions occur when upon being informed as to the time of day or even the day or date itself the mind has to struggle in order to

comprehend and accept the information, when being disorientated the information contradicts what one has thought or felt. After extraordinary long periods of Rule 43 isolation such as I have served, hallucinations occur usually in the form of spiders and insects crawling over the floor, the bed and walls, and at such times as this it is common to hear voices and strange noises. The strange things about such instances is that sometimes when you see and hear these things and sense that they cannot be real, you wish them on to be real and the obvious danger here is that the prisoner could, through the sense of sheer inhumane deprivation willingly let himself slip over into insanity.

A regular occurrence when in isolation is to wake up throughout the night sweating and terrified without actually knowing why, disorientation is particularly manifest in these instances. The nervous system becomes very difficult to control and the least noise magnifies itself into an explosive sound that nearly makes you jump from your skin. My nerves have been made hypersensitive as a result of the long periods of isolation I have been made to endure. My character and personality have undergone many negative changes and I am now a very paranoid and suspicious person. The paranoia has become so extensive that I find it impossible to trust anyone anymore and I have developed a tendency to hate people for no apparent reason. I feel that I am being watched, talked about in a derogative manner and laughed at, all of which I sincerely feel is true anyway. At times when things get too unbearable I even refuse to come out of my cell or take exercise because of the fear that they, the prison guards, will be leering at me each step I take. At all times I feel I am under their microscope and I have only to see someone speak and I become convinced that I am the topic of discussion and that my downfall is being plotted. I feel convinced that people are being 'planted' around me as spies in order to dig out and unearth all my deepest and innermost thoughts. I must emphasise that such characteristics were absent from my make-up before imprisonment and have only developed in the time that I have been detained in solitary confinement. It also becomes even more difficult to talk to anyone because I simply find stringing meaningful sentences or conversation together, too much of a strain on my mind, I have had to abandon long made plans to engage Open University Studies because it takes me too long to grasp fundamentals which at one time I could have managed with relative ease.

As a result, since the Hull prison riot of 1976, of my tea being constantly interfered with I have been unable to take this fluid anymore as it has become a vile repulsion to my constitution and I

have since taken only cold water with all meals. I constantly suffer a giddiness and lightheadedness and also suffer a frequent sickness of the stomach with occasional violent spasms of vomiting occurring. Physical defects that have resulted from all the periods that I have been forced to spend in isolation are periodical loss of hair, a permanent blackening and sagging skin around the eyes, flaky skin, an occasional bleeding of the gums, regular constipation, persistent aching of the body in all areas, deteriorating sight (I now have to wear glasses) and a total loss of natural complexion. Before imprisonment my health was perfect. As a consequence of all the aforementioned inhumane conditions and their subsequent effects I have suffered the loss of all my family ties without exception. This has come about as a result of the general state of apathy and an inability to get things together on my part and a total lack of understanding and an inability to relate to the real situation on theirs. This case also applies to all my friends and associates whom previously I was on excellent terms with. Because I have lost contact with all these people and now receive no letters or visits from them this in turn enables the prison authorities to turn on the pressure without worry for, as all my channels of communication have been severed, this leaves them, in effect, holding a carte blanche to do as they wish without any fear of complaint or pressure to review the situation from outside civilian parties which is the only thing that they respect. If I ever write a letter to anyone else complaining or even referring to my situation and the conditions that I am forced to live under, then my letter is suppressed and taken from me. Sometimes, mainly, it is suppressed without my knowledge.

The utter state of desperation that this whole situation leaves me in has brought me, on occasions, to contemplate suicide as a means of terminating the whole miserable and wretched existence and I can only presume that the only reason I have never attempted this end is that basically I am a fighter. Even so, it is a solution that grows more appealing and inviting daily whilst I am ever on Rule 43. Due to my long periods of isolation, I have long ago had to give up smoking and because I have often been without any payment of wages I have at times found myself in the position where I could not afford to buy any soap, toothpaste and other toiletries and necessities and on those occasions I have had to rely on the goodwill and charity of other prisoners, though normally the guards prevent this. After being on Rule 43 for a year, I felt so confused and mixed up mentally that I felt incapable of even caring for my budgie and in order to remedy this I sent it to be kept in the prison aviary but after only a few days I was handed a note saying that the

budgie had "mysteriously died". This poor budgie, who was the only friend I had, was in excellent health and was still a relative youngster and its death caused me much grief. Yet whilst I understand that it is a fact of life that we all have to die one day, I do sincerely believe that this instance should be seen in the light of the hateful attitude of the prison guards towards my person and the general oppressive regime that I am subjected to. If any reader doubts that a prison guard would kill a defenceless budgie as a means of hitting at the prisoner, I will remind you that after the Hull Prison riot in 1976 the prison guards were reprimanded for throwing live budgies into the prison furnace in retaliation to the prison riot.

I have complained of my conditions and treatment through all the proper channels. I have petitioned the Home Office, also, for permission to be examined by an independent doctor but the reply was negative. This makes the situation even more desperate for prison doctors are notoriously bad and sub-standard and no faith can be placed in them whatsoever. They are simply an extension of Home Office authorities and rather than act in a manner that would accord with the real purpose of their profession they simply choose instead to deal only in numbers as opposed to people and the general trend of their policies is towards a controlling and a discouragement of application for treatment rather than a policy of giving proper medical attention. Since coming to Long Lartin Prison, I have found two experiences that prove this point. The first instance was when I applied at 8.30 p.m. one evening for treatment against a painful headache. I was informed that at Long Lartin Prison no medical treatment was given after 8 p.m. The second instance was when, in a very confused and depressed state of mind, I asked for a drug to relieve the ills and help me cope a little better. When I was later being given the drug I enquired as to its name. I was instructed to "just take it". When I pressed for the name of the drug I was asked if I was refusing to take it, to which I replied that if I was not going to be given the name of the drug then yes, I was refusing it. In answer to this I was then informed that at Long Lartin Prison "we don't tell inmates the names of drugs given to them".

As information about my situation began to filter through the prison, other prisoners expressed their concern at my health and general welfare. In December 1979, a prisoner called Barney Heywood, after hearing the details of my case, was so touched that he organised a petition on my behalf that was aimed at pressurizing the prison authorities to release me from Rule 43. There are 5 wings in use at the prison. Mr. Heywood had approached 2 of these wings

seeking signatures to the petition when he was suddenly placed in the segregation unit and an hour later was bundled into a van and taken to an unknown destination. He was able to tell me before leaving that every single prisoner on both of these 2 wings had willingly and eagerly signed the petition. This amounted to some 120 to 140 signatures. The petition can only be presumed to have been taken from Mr. Heywood upon reaching his destination. I am not aware of Mr. Heywood's state of health but I do know that any prisoner engaging such actions as he undertook on my behalf never escapes great deal of persecution from the prison authorities and the Home Office.

I have on occasions written to Dennis Healey, my Member of Parliament, pleading that he takes up my case but no satisfaction whatsoever has been forthcoming from this direction. In fact, he has made it known to me that he does not look upon my soliciting his help in a very good light at all. I have since given up all hope of securing any assistance from this direction. What has finally brought me to draw up this statement documenting all the conditions and effects that have been a consequence of an enforced series of periods of total isolation under Rule 43 has been two main factors. Firstly, I have been inspired to write the above because of the concern that has been shown to me from other prisoners. They have taught me to believe that people learning of such cases as mine outside a prison would not let them go unchallenged. Secondly, I was jolted into action since learning of the recent death of a prisoner called George Wilkinson. The conditions that Mr. Wilkinson was subjected to in prison before he died have a remarkable similarity to those that I am now subjected to. Mr. Wilkinson, like me, had taken a prison guard hostage (Parkhurst Prison 1976) and again, like me, had been taken to an outside court for it. He received a 10 year sentence. When he was returned to prison he was, again like me, placed in total isolation for an indefinite period and with no reason given under Rule 43. He was then harassed in every conceivable way and was, like me, shifted around from prison to prison, without any prior warning being given to him. Finally after two years of this kind of treatment, this prisoner's mind was broken and rather than take any more he chose to put an end to it in the only ways he could. He refused to eat or drink fluids. Mr. Wilkinson died after 18 days. His family were not informed of any of the above, or his health, until he was dead. I can relate to Mr. Wilkinson's situation and plight in so many ways and it is very frightening to think that I may reach the same end. Without a doubt I badly need an outside influence if my present situation is to be changed at all. I herein ask the reader for any support that he or

she can lend to my case in whatever form they think may be useful.

Some may say what I have written cannot possibly be the case and others may say that I have been too merciful. What I do know is that this is a true statement from beginning to end. It has taken me some two months to draw together and it would not be in my interest to tell untruths for to do so would, when found out, damage my whole case. Indeed, I have left out many incidents and experiences, including the facts that I have been informed that as part of a general conspiracy against me, the guards have made totally false entries in my prison record that state for example, I was supposedly sexually assaulted by my father at the age of 9, and also that I supposedly support the Red Brigades terrorist group ideology, they have also made an entry stating that I am suicidal. On occasions prison guards have told me that they could after the Hull riot now hang me and get away with it. What I know for certain is that I have now spent over 1,200 days in total isolation and if this statement fails to draw support, I'm as good as dead.

Doug Wakefield,
May 1980

Appendix 1. Doug Wakefield: Days in Segregation and Isolation

From	To	Days in Normal Prison Routine	Days in Segregation (S) Total Isolation (I)
May 20 1974	Nov 1974	15 Leeds	170 S
Nov 1974	Apr 1975	145 Liverpool	8 I
Apr 1975	Apr 1975	Manchester	1 S
Apr 1975	Apr 1975	5 Wandsworth	
Apr 1975	Apr 1975	Birmingham	1 S
Apr 1975	Jun 1975	35* Long Lartin	20 I
Jun 1975	Jun 1975	Birmingham	10 S
Jun 1975	Aug 1975	30* Long Lartin	20 I
Aug 1975	Aug 1975	Birmingham	15 S
Aug 1975	Nov 1975	Wakefield	65 I
Nov 1975	Apr 1976	Leeds	160 I**
Apr 1976	Aug 1976	Liverpool	125 I
Aug 1976	Sep 1976	8* Hull	20 I
Sep 1976	Oct 1976	Manchester	30 I
Oct 1976	Apr 1977	Durham	185 I
Apr 1977	Sep 1977	60* Wormwood Scrubs	60 I
Sep 1977	Jan 1979	Parkhurst	384 Seg on C Wing and 125 I
Jan 1979	Apr 1979	Winchester	90 I
Apr 1979	Jun 1979	Wormwood Scrubs	70 I
Jun 1979	May 1980	Long Lartin	335 I

* Denotes actual time on Long Term Prison Wings (133 days). This is important in that all the judgements made of Doug's character are or were formed in this time.

** Includes 156 days in strong box.

Appendix 2. A Control Unit Regime 4 Years After Their 'Closure'

In May 1979 George Wilkinson, the prisoner who died after a parallel experience to Doug Wakefield's and whose case is quoted in the introduction, was 'offered' a planned regime which reproduces most of the objectionable features of the Control Units - officially closed down 4 years earlier after widespread public protest. Like the Control Units themselves, the plan, with its 180 days 'reversion' programme, is in blatant disregard of Prison Rules and the statutory duties of the Board of Visitors (see 'Control Units' in the introduction). At how many other prisons are such regimes 'offered'?

The following is a copy of the plan offered to Wilkinson:

WILKINSON

It is your declared intention that you wish to return to normal location and activities. In order to do this we have fully considered your past record and your overall behaviour from reception on this present offence and since you arrived back at Durham.

In order to secure location in C wing, enjoying the facilities that exist there, it is considered that you have to convince staff of your sincerity. To this end it is proposed that the following objectives and time scale must be adhered to.

1. To work in cell - 3 months.
- Add: 2. Exercise in special exercise yard - 3 months.
- Add: 3. Visits to (a) canteen, (b) library, (c) church - 3 months.
4. To C wing: work in cell with alternate evening association - 3 months.
5. To normal workshop, full association, normal exercise.

These are specific objectives. Minor infringements will bring a return to a previous stage or stages. A major infringement could bring a return to the situation which exists, or a transfer.

(Signed) Driscoll
Governor
1 May 1979.

Appendix 3. Doug Wakefield's Testimony Throws New Light On Wormwood Scrubs and the Mufti Squad.

On 31 August 1979 prisoners on the long term D wing at Wormwood Scrubs staged a peaceful sitdown protest at the erosion, indeed the wholesale abandonment, of their customary privileges. These included such fundamental 'privileges' as educational facilities. The Scrubs had for many years offered a range of O level, A level, HND and Open University courses for its long term prisoners. In February 1979 these came to an abrupt halt because of 'staffing difficulties' - in other words prison officers' refusal to escort prisoners to classrooms or to oversee them.

Similar action cut down work periods, the amount of evening association between prisoners and, most provocatively of all, the time allowed for family visits. Even the weekly bathtime was restricted and sometimes missed out altogether. Prisoners - and we are talking about men serving very long periods of imprisonment - were being kept behind their cell doors for 23 hours a day, for day after day. The provocations were aggravated by other restrictions on privileges stemming directly from Home Office instructions.

As most people now know, the D wing protest was broken up by a violent assault from the hitherto secret MUFTI (Minimum Use of Force Tactical Intervention) squad - a 300 strong force of prison officers modelled on SPG Lines and drawn from different prisons in the area.

After the assault, which left many prisoners injured and is now the subject of police investigations, a tight cordon was thrown around the wing by the Wormwood Scrubs POA (Prison Officers' Association) and for a fortnight all prisoners' visits were stopped and access denied even to prison ancillary staff - probation officers, psychologists, chaplains, etc. The Governor's loss of control of Wormwood Scrubs to its prison officers, so evident in that defiant attitude towards other workers in the prison, was implicit in many of the events leading up to the protest.

Now, Doug Wakefield's testimony enables us to trace back Governor Honey's abandonment of control to the prison officers to autumn 1977 - a full 18 months before the closure of 'College' and 2 years before the MUFTI attack. It is clear that the Governor's decision NOT to place Wakefield in solitary confinement was overruled by prison officers' direct action in rushing his cell and frog-marching him to the segregation unit along landings lined by menacing prison officers, 40 to 50 strong.

Far from supporting its governor, the Home Office a few weeks later transferred Wakefield from the one prison that was prepared,

even if its POA wasn't, to keep him on normal wing location.

Honey has now, as we go to press (June 1980), been posted to a Home Office staff appointment. The new governor of the Scrubs has been promoted from Governor (Grade III) of Swansea prison.

Appendix 4. The Barlinnie Special Unit

It is impossible to discuss the 'cage' in Durham prison without reference to its namesake across the border, the 'cages' of Portersfield prison, Inverness - similarly designed to break the spirit of prisoners. Jimmy Boyle's account ⁽⁸⁾ of his time in Scottish jails, culminating in 14 months in the 'cages', is an unbroken record of the brutalisation, of prison officers as well as prisoners, inherent in every repressive prison system.

Yet, arising out of the recognition of the inevitable impasse reached by such escalation of violence, there was born a remarkable experiment - the Barlinnie Special Unit, the one progressive venture in the entire UK prison system. It was to that unit that Jimmy Boyle was sent, straight from the 'cages', and in which he has developed talents that have since won him wide recognition as a sculptor.

The Special Unit, with the responsibility it demands of everyone within it, is not an easy option for its small group of prisoners or for prison officers. Its success has depended upon their mutual support and cooperation. But in prison terms it has worked, and in the 7 years of its existence there have been no violent incidents between prisoners and staff. One would like to add that it works for prisoners as well, but there is an obvious contradiction in Jimmy Boyle's development and undoubted influence on the unit and the fact that he is, nevertheless, still on the inside of it.

The Barlinnie Unit has no equivalent in England where the contemporary response to the same situation was the setting up of the Control Units (see introduction). The recent NCCL court case, in which Home Office departmental papers were produced as evidence, demonstrated that a Barlinnie approach was envisaged by some who took part in the long discussion of the type of regime to be adopted for the new units at Wakefield and Wormwood Scrubs.

We expect that sufficient delving into Scottish records would show a similar divergence of views on how Barlinnie was intended to operate. In other words, a different balance of departmental forces during the planning of both Barlinnie and the Control Units could have led to either developing into the other.

Troublemakers, by definition, include those prisoners whose

presence amongst the general prison population is the best assurance that prison officers' brutality and abuse, usually of the most vulnerable members of that population, do not go unheeded or unchecked. Amidst penal reformers' enthusiasm for the Barlinnie Special Unit, it is important to recognise that it was designed for the same purpose as other methods of segregation.

If that was all that Barlinnie meant - and that, we would say, is all that it was intended to mean - then we would be wrong to share the enthusiasm. The significance of Barlinnie, in fact, lies elsewhere and needs to be understood if we are to make head or tail of the attitude of the prison authorities, ranging from hostile to lukewarm, towards the one success story in their midst.

Barlinnie shows up, not just the prison system, but some of the most fundamental assumptions of the society of which that system is a part - indeed a cornerstone. Foremost is the argument thrown at all who advocate a different society based on popular control and on production for need rather than for profit, with the people themselves deciding what those needs are. That argument is that "you can't change human nature".

On the contrary, we see human nature as infinitely variable. The idea that man, "red in tooth and claw", is by nature violent is no more sensible than saying that man is by nature gentle. He is all of these things and it is very much a question of what chords are struck by the society in which he lives. It is no denial of the freedom of choice and responsibility which we all have as individuals to say that a competitive, greedy and exploiting society will breed competitive, greedy and exploiting people, just as a society which economically and selectively exploits women will breed men who sexually abuse them.

Barlinnie, by demonstrating that there is nothing innate about even the most violent behaviour, challenges the concept of an immutable human nature. On a more direct level, it is also, by its very success, an indictment of everything else that the prison system is doing. Why did Jimmy Boyle, the prisoner, need to be violent to be treated humanely? Why, come to that, did Jimmy Boyle need to be in prison to find the support, encouragement and horizons that were never his as a youngster in the Gorbals?

It is these, unsought for, lessons that explain the hostility that the Barlinnie Special Unit has aroused.

Clearly a Barlinnie Special Unit is preferable to a cage at Durham or Inverness, or to the Control Units. But penal reform pressure for more Barlinnie units misses the point. The prison contradiction is not between Barlinnie and a control unit but between the Barlinnie regime and the repressive regime operated throughout every other

section of the penal system.

Given the necessity for removing some, but many fewer people from society, for some, but much shorter periods, the common sense course is to then do something sensible with and for them. But our record - the biggest prison population in Europe, the longest sentences, the most life sentence prisoners, the most young people imprisoned - precludes sensible policies even if any were forthcoming.

That is why a drastic reduction in the length of sentences, which in turn will bring a substantial fall in the average daily prison population (a 75% reduction would break no new ground: it would merely bring us into line with Holland), is a prerequisite for the introduction of any common sense penal policy. Meanwhile Barlinnie, contradicting all the repressive developments of recent years, points a way forward.

Notes

1. The figures of deaths are published annually in the official Prison Statistics handbook, recorded as natural/non-natural and suicide. According to these figures, of the 559 prison deaths in the 10 years from January 1969 to December 1978, 362 are listed as from natural causes. Of the remaining 197, 134 are recorded as suicide. The Home Office handbook has a special section for a detailed prison by prison breakdown of offences committed by prisoners and the numbers brought before Boards of Visitors. The section covers 11 pages. Deaths take up less space, being recorded as total figures included in "Miscellaneous Tables".

Parliamentary Questions, from Mr Robert Kilroy-Silk and others, have periodically lifted the veil obscuring these annual statistics. Now, amidst the public concern over deaths in police custody, a prison breakdown of the deaths for the whole 10 year period has become available through a Parliamentary Question by Mr Stan Newens.

In 8 out of the 20 years, Brixton prison is amongst the top three with the highest number of recorded deaths. Brixton is a Remand Prison, the men (and sometimes women) within its walls, like those in police custody, are unconvicted prisoners. In 1976 seven deaths occurred at Brixton, all due to non-natural causes. (The list supplied by Mr Brittan, Home Office Minister of State, does not list suicides).

In 1977, the average daily population of Britain's prisons had reached the highest this century. It is particularly interesting to note, therefore, that the total number of deaths that year was the lowest of any during the whole 10 year period.

1977 was the year in which Det Supt Sagar of Humberside Police was trying to interview former Hull prisoners, then scattered throughout Britain's other jails, about their allegations of systematic brutality after their surrender, with guarantees of no victimisation, from the rooftop protest at the prison the previous autumn. At the subsequent trial of prison officers and an assistant governor, when 8 officers were convicted of conspiring to beat prisoners, the Supt drew attention to the obstruction of his inquiries by the prison authorities.

In 1970, media attention was also focused on prison. That was the year in which some Parkhurst prisoners were on trial for assaults on prison officers during what is now known as the riot of 1969, reported in the press at the time as the worst prison disturbance since the Dartmoor mutiny in 1936. The judge at the trial commented on the prison officers' "excessive use of riot sticks". 1970 records the second lowest total of prison deaths in the 10 year period.

2/3. Prison Rule 43: Removal from association.

43 (1) Where it appears desirable, for the maintenance of good order or discipline or in his own interests, that a prisoner should not associate with other prisoners, the governor may arrange for the prisoner's removal from association accordingly.

(2) A prisoner shall not be removed under this Rule for a period of more than 24 hours without the authority of a member of the visiting committee or board of visitors, or of the Secretary of State. An authority given under this paragraph shall be for a period not exceeding one month, but may be renewed from month to month.

(3) The governor may arrange at his discretion for such a prisoner as aforesaid to resume association with other prisoners, and shall do so if in any case the medical officer so advises on medical grounds.

4. Such notes would be picked up by the censor when the box was cleared. Prison officers frequently plant messages purporting to come from prisoner informers, for example alleging the hatching of plans for escapes or demonstrations. This is a regular occurrence before Christmas when the prison officers wish to boost their wages by the additional overtime that would be involved by special surveillance and searches.

5. See page 1 of the Introduction.

6. Wormwood Scrubs is, in effect, four separate prisons with their own quite independent regimes. D wing is the long term top security prison, embracing also one of the country's two allocation units for life sentence prisoners. As a 'dispersal' prison it has the same status as Parkhurst, Albany, Gartree, Long Lartin, Hull and Wakefield. An eighth is now being built at Low Newton in county Durham. Under normal location, Category A prisoners are dispersed amongst Category B prisoners at one or other of these prisons.
(See also Introduction and Appendix 3)

7. This insight into the brutalising effects of our prisons on the staff manning them is in marked contrast to the views of many campaigning critics of the system, who are far too ready to see prison officers' brutality, truculence or industrial militancy as the major cause of what is wrong with the prison system, rather than a result of it.

8. *A Sense of Freedom* by Jimmy Boyle (Canongate).