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TAKING LIBERTIES

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FREE TO PRISONERS

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OF THE FUTURE

SUPPORTING CLASS STRUGGLE PRISONERS

INTRODUCTION

Hi there.

Welcome to *Taking Liberties* No 11, incorporating the merger between the old *Taking Liberties* and the *Anarchist Black Cross Bulletin*. Both these publications have up to now been produced by the ABC Network, the *ABC Bulletin* in London and *TL* in Sheffield.

Lack of resources, and money as well, adds a certain amount of the same stuff cropping up in both, and pressures on the small number of ABC activists; the network has decided to merge the two into one, keeping the name *Taking Liberties* but produced in London (we couldn't think of a better name).

Prisoners and supporters who previously wrote, sent material or helped in any way with either one of the two are welcome to carry on doing so. We especially want news, views, articles on prisoners, prisons, police, crime, justice, and capitalism generally, and for people to comment or reply to what we say, (or even write us polite letters telling us how cool we are - cheers to Squall). But we couldn't refuse offers of help in the form of money, organising benefits for us, or distributing copies of *TL*.

We now have a FAX number, which is : 071 326 0353 so you can send us any material via that, but please mark it for ABC as we share it with several other worthy causes.

One important point: with London ABC taking on the production of the only ABC publication, we will be put under a lot more pressure, faced with a bigger workload. Putting out the *ABC Bulletin* was work enough! If we are not going to just end up doing nothing but putting out this bulletin, we would appreciate help from anyone who can help with the physical work of production. We print it, collate it, staple it and mail it out ourselves, so anyone in the London area who is into giving a hand with this work, get in touch.

THE FACE OF THE FUTURE

Tough talking on law and order is an old favourite when governments need to drum up some support, and the apparently unending catalogue of blunders and disasters they have made over the last year or so no doubt added the rabid edge to this year's conservative conference speeches on law and order. After numerous vindictive little rants from party devotees, hero Howard of the Home Office triumphantly announced a long list of new measures against crime, due to come into force this year.

The Criminal Justice Bill

Despite the recommendations of its own Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, the 'right to silence' is to be abolished and together with this there are to be two new 'terrorist' offences: "**gathering information for terrorist purposes**" and "**possessing anything which gives rise to reasonable suspicion that it is to be used in terrorism**". The last two of these three imports from N Ireland are so vague that we could be fitted up for just about anything. And if you thought that the recent catalogue of frame-ups, from the Guildford 4 to Danny McNamee to.... showed that you already could be fitted up for just about anything, fear not. The Home Secretary is confident enough in the glory of british justice to leave out of the bill any mention of the promised independent review body to investigate alleged miscarriages of justice (not that this would make any difference). He has, however, extended the Court of Appeals' power to review sentences that are **too lenient**.

Included in the total of 27 new measures announced are new court orders to evict squatters within 24 hours and a new offence of disobeying police directions to trespassers, aimed at hunt saboteurs in particular, but no doubt useful for policing any demonstration. Added to these new offences we can look forward to four additional prisons on top of new ones already being built, a commitment that Mr Howard would "not flinch" from sending more people to prison, tougher bail conditions and a national DNA database for genetic fingerprinting data.

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TOWER HAMLETS NINE: UNITY IN ACTION

An angry demonstration in support of the Tower Hamlets Nine saw 100-150 people outside Thames magistrates courts on 1st February. The good news is that the riot charges were all dropped. However, 5 defendants are still up on charges of violent disorder and assaulting a police officer.

The background to the case should by now be familiar. A peaceful vigil outside the Whitechapel hospital, where Quddus Ali, the victim of a brutal racist attack, lay critically ill, was attacked by police in riot gear. Nine youths were charged with riot (which carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment).

Recent developments have added further twists to the predictable tale. In December campaigners were disgusted to learn that a white youth, arrested and charged with the attempted murder of Quddus, was immediately released on bail by magistrates. Lawyers for the Tower Hamlets 9, on the other hand, have had to fight tooth and nail for the lifting of restrictive bail conditions, including the conditions that the youths should not meet in groups of more than four (which prevented them from attending meetings on their own defence), or move outside a restricted area of Tower Hamlets, and a curfew. That the police are intent on criminalising the Tower Hamlets 9 was shown in October, when broadcasting organisations were ordered to hand over film and video of the events leading up

to the arrests.

At a meeting of 400 people at Stepney Green school in December, black youth of Tower Hamlets made clear what their own agenda for the TUC demonstration on 19 March would be: to stop the criminalisation of those who defend the community from the attacks that maim and kill. And they reiterated that the defence of the Tower Hamlets 9 is a continuation of the tradition of self-defence, a part of a culture of resistance.



The following statement from A Sivanandan says it all:

ON UNITY

Not a mechanical unity, a top-down unity, a tactical unity. Not the two-faced unity of political parties who will unite with anyone and anybody that brings them votes - as you have seen in Tower Hamlets.

Not the opportunistic unity of trade unions which take up black working class action when it enhances their reputation but abandon it when it can't - as the GMB has done recently over the year-long strike of Asian women at Brunsails in Smethick.

Not the subsume-your-anti-racist-struggle to our anti-fascist-

struggle unity of our anti-Nazi comrades.

Not the you join us, we won't join you unity of national black organisations.

Not a structural or mechanical unity.

But a unity that grows from a common service to a common cause and is therefore organic, dynamic, and provides the springboard for a movement.

BEYOND SELF-DEFENCE

It is around issues of self-defence that we begin to organise and cohere our community. It is the base from which we take off into our other fights against racism. It is the line of no retreat. But that is not enough any more. Racism is

becoming too acceptable, fascism is becoming too bold. It is time we pushed back the frontiers.

It is time we denied the fascists the freedom of speech that they deny other, the freedom of assembly that they deny others.

It is time we drove them out of our communities.

For beyond the freedom of as-

sembly and the freedom of speech there is another freedom - the first freedom, the freedom to life - and that is the freedom the fascists deny us.

It is vital that anti-racists and anti-fascists take the opportunity to build the kind of unity in action that has been lacking over the last few years.

There will be a mega-benefit on Friday, March 4th - **No Justice, No Peace**, at The Rocket, Holloway Road, N4, 10 pm - 6 am, Tickets are £10 - phone 081 548 0099 for details.

Support the Tower Hamlets 9!
Tower Hamlets 9 Defence Campaign, PO Box 273, London E7
Info taken from CARF no 18
BM Box 8784, London WC1N 3XX

STRANGeways ESCAPER IN COURT

David Bowen, sentenced to 9 years for his part in the Strangeways Prison uprising of 1990 is facing charges for his escape while on the way to Hull Prison in December 1992. He is pleading not guilty on grounds of duress, due to the treatment he received while in custody. While at Hull, on remand, during the second Strangeways trial, he was beaten and threatened by screws, so he chose to escape on his way to court. Due to his escape, his solicitor and barrister dropped his case, and he was convicted (mind you, any barrister who would act like that is probably piss-poor anyway). The case has now been postponed from 14th February. David is also charged with an attempt to nobble the jury, after letters to jury members were found at his house. Paul Taylor, jointly charged with this, has pleaded guilty, but David has pleaded not guilty as he says he knew nothing about it.

When the Strangeways uprising broke out, David was on remand in the prison, charged with stealing two pairs of curtains. He surrendered himself after 4 days (the protest went on for 25 days) and says he would have come down earlier but for the screws threats to break prisoners limbs in retribution. He is now serving 9 years for Conspiracy to Riot. As he says about the conviction :
"When you start a trial and get told you will be convicted because the judge will see to it, it is

hard to understand how they can do this with out evidence. I was in for shoplifting at the time of the riot. And I was on remand in the prison - the riot started on the convicted side of the jail and the two sides never meet. I found it hard to understand how the Crown could say I was involved in a conspiracy to riot when I didn't even know until my cell door was opened that any riot was to take place...After being attacked, like other defendants had been, I escaped and intend to plead not guilty to escape....It seems when they go out to get you, they do it big and now I'm looking at life in prison, as I got a 9-year sentence for the riot plus whatever I get for the other charges, and, if the last trial was anything to go by, they will have no problem convicting me, as innocence and guilt play no part when the system goes out to get you."

David Bowen needs support, as do all the others who fought back or have been given heavy sentences from the Strangeways uprising. People can help by distributing this information as widely as possible.

You can write to David :
David Bowen, DA0146, HM Prison Nottingham,
Perry Road, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 3AG.



SCREWBALLS

Over the weekend of the 22/23rd January the prison authorities at Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight ordered a shakedown of the cells in a search for booze. In the traditional manner an unhappy con decided to protest this action by setting fire to a blanket in the prison laundry. One prisoner picked up a fire extinguisher to douse the flames before everyone lost their underpants, but the foam from the fire extinguisher and the smoke got out of hand and filled the room..

Brave souls that they are, the screws panicked, and abandoned the whole wing. When they got up the courage to return, the Governor's deputy ordered the Wing locked down for 48 hours. (It seems the Governor was on holiday at the time.) We haven't heard what the prisoners got up to while the screws were absent, but we do hope that whatever it was justified the lockdown. It wouldn't be that the Deputy was covering up his merry men's strategic retreat in the face of a fire extinguisher with a show of muscles?

Paul Steele, a black framed prisoner from East London whose case we covered in the ABC Bulletin no 9, has written to us from Whitemoor Prison:

"Hello...Thanks for your letter and the bulletin. The article on me was EXCELLENT.

I'm very pleased with it.....These last few months I've not wrote no-one concerning my case, not because I've given up the fight (THAT COULD NEVER HAPPEN) but because I've been told so many times that nothing can be done to help me unless the people that put me here come forward and tell the truth that they lied, in court and in the statements they made. To be honest with you, I don't know what to do

next....At the moment I've put in for a B Cat Jail, I half know they ain't gonna let me move down a grade because I'm protesting my innocence. I get the chance to put in for a B Cat every 3-4 years."

Paul Steele was framed for robbery and murder in 1990 after the death of Joseph Casali in the course of

a robbery. He was 'implicated' by 'friends' who claimed he'd confessed to them, and by a co-defendant who said Paul had planned the robbery. There was no forensic evidence, witnesses failed to pick out Paul at

an ID parade, and descriptions of the robber do not fit him. He lost his appeal, he believes due to the prejudice of the judges, in December 1992. As the above letter shows, Paul needs people to support him. It is easy for prisoners to become despairing if their case is knocked back and they seem to be getting nowhere. The sense of fighting a losing battle against a system that holds all the cards and is bent on keeping you down is

sometimes overwhelming. We can't let Paul rot in jail for the rest of his life for something he hasn't done. If you want more info on Paul, or want to offer him support, or to write a letter to show him he isn't forgotten, drop him a line:

Paul Steele, MT3097, C Wing, Whitemoor Prison, Longhill Rd, March, Cambs, PE15 0PR.

NERVES OF STEELE

The state's current 'blitz' on law and order means things are looking bad for us generally, but they're not getting it all their own way. Following on from 'serious riots' in Shotts prison in Scotland and Wymott in Lancashire last summer, this year has already seen 3 'disturbances' that we know of. On 5th Jan 22 prisoners at Scotland's Glenochil Young Offenders Institution took over and wrecked A-hall, holding a screw hostage for 15 hours before surrendering. The protest was sparked off by lack of treatment for HIV positive prisoners. On Jan 24th 113 prisoners at Acklington prison in Northumberland refused to return to their cells for 2 hours as a protest against plans to keep them banged up more. And most recently Highpoint jail in Suffolk, the scene of a riot in November '92 that caused £1 million damage, saw a siege on 6th February. Sixty prisoners barricaded themselves in a 'living area' overnight. 250 screws including 160 bussed in from other jails busted the barricades the next morning.

RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Small battles like this have always been part of life in some prisons; with prison numbers going up by 350 a week, sentences getting tougher, etc, it looks like they will increase. We don't cheer riots for the sake of it; *Taking Liberties* supports prisoners resisting the authorities and the screws in the face of brutality, provocation and abuse. We aren't 'justifying' everything that takes place in a prison riot, no one's pretending there isn't a negative side, like prisoner on prisoner violence. But it's heartening, at a time when resistance to the 'powers-that-be' is at a low, to see people refusing to knuckle under.



GRAHAM GALLOWAY

Graham Galloway, jailed for life in 1991 for the murder of Brian Barras, has been moved to Nottingham Prison. Graham has always maintained that he stabbed Barras in self-defence, after Barras attacked him, trying to prevent Graham helping a girl Barras had beaten up. Barras died from an injury he received, although if the doctors had spotted it he could have been treated. Graham wrote to us just after New Year:

"Thanks for your card....Its been a poxy Xmas here, the bastards even went so far as to give us sandwiches for our Xmas tea - and Boxing Day and now New Years Day! They can only get away with it because this is a 'nonces' nick, but it's a fucking liberty all the same. Two stale sandwiches, one thin slice of cheese, ditto corned beef. Bollocks. I complained to the Governor, and he says he has no authority over the kitchen staff. It turns out that the two senior arseholes there are addicted to gambling and want to spend their time at the racetrack rather than doing their bloody job. Oh well, this place will be closed down by

next year if this thing ain't settled....It would be useful if you could warn people against coming here, mate. It's being put about that this is a lifers jail, and a good place to come to; but in reality its a 'nonces' jail: 70% 'vulnerable prisoners' as they are now called; and a lot of ex-Rule 43 grasses and cell-thieves and debtors... What a shithole. We had a chap taken out of the wing by force last night. We were locked up of course, but it's a simple matter to push the door flap to one side. I can't get his name unfortunately, as he'd only been here a couple of weeks, the screws ain't going to say and the few cons I've asked don't want to know...They put plastic handcuffs on the chap, I don't know what these are like, but he was screaming out because they were cutting into him. I saw the screws getting in a few digs and heard them say they'd better get the medical staff down the block to see him.... I've had some good news about my appeal. I've now been granted full legal aid, and my solicitor has got a good pathologist to look at the cause of death again. Also I've got a

chap called Anson interested. He's the head pathologist for the Civil Aviation Authority who investigates deaths caused by air crashes. He wants to look at my case from a purely professional point of view, which is very good, because we want to show the bugger died from a sort of whiplash injury, and not from my knife. If we can show that, and it looks very much like we can, then the crown case of me just stabbing him out of revenge for his attack on the young girl will fail, and my claim of self-defence will stand up, because it would not be possible for me to cause such an injury unless he contributed towards it in some way, like running towards me. Yeah so things are looking good now, and if they get their fingers out I could be having a pint with you before the year is out....Love Rage and Solidarity, Graham.

We wish Graham all the best with his fight for liberty.

Graham is also an anarchist, and had been active in trying to spread his ideas inside, and through writing for ABC publications. Give him some support, drop him a line:

Graham Galloway, T67099, HM Prison Nottingham, Perry Rd, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 3AG.

ALGERIANS OUTWIT GROUP 4

Two algerian men deported as 'illegal immigrants' recently escaped from a Group 4 Detention Centre after returning to Britain by hiding in a van. The two men were put on a boat to France, but hid in the back of a van coming over to England and then jumped out. They were promptly nicked and put in the Centre in Portsmouth to await deportation again, but unscrewed a panel in the roof and legged it, and as far as we know are still on the run. If the private prisons Group 4 are bidding to run are as flimsy as their detention centres we can look forward to a few unauthorised home leaves in the future!



CLOSE DOWN CAMPSFIELD!

A month before 190 jamaicans were detained en mass on arrival in Britain, the first detainees arrived at the new immigration prison at Kidlington, Oxford, on 29th November '93. By the time the second minibus arrived, demonstrators were at the gates with placards bearing the slogans 'Refugees are not Criminals', 'Stop the Detentions' and 'Close Down Campsfield'.

Campsfield House Detention Centre is a high security unit bounded by 20 ft fences and a series of electronically operated gates. Keen to provide a favourable gloss on the opening, the Home Office invited local press, radio and TV to view the car-

peted visiting room, 'tuck shop' and prayer room. A briefing included the information that 'compasses will be provided so that Muslims will know they are facing Mecca'. How thoughtful.

Campsfield is being run for profit by Group 4. By mid-December there were over 50 prisoners, most of whom are refugees and black. The 200 places at Kidlington represent most of the 330 extra capacity for detentions which the government announced in '92.

Local opposition to the prison has built up; a network called 'The Campsfield Forum', aiming to provide support for detainees and provide information. They organised a demo in Oxford on 25th November '93.

Campaign Against Campsfield - 0865 724452
Campsfield Forum/Visitors Group - 0865 201867

Info from CARF

Over 200 people attended the first public meeting organised by 'Innocent', a campaign set up to support prisoners framed up by Greater Manchester Police. The meeting, held in Manchester on the 3rd November last year, was addressed by relatives of many of the men serving long sentences for crimes they did not carry out, some ex-prisoners, as well as by Michael Mansfield QC and Paddy Hill of the Birmingham 6. Relatives told of the widespread police practice of fitting people up in the Manchester area, as well as the 'malpractice' in courts and slack, indifferent or corrupt barristers and solicitors doing nothing for their clients. As reported by Conviction, however, the meeting could only touch the surface, not even able to detail on all the cases involved in the campaign.

The meeting is only a start - it could only be the beginning of a lot of hard work, linking up with prisoners and their families as yet isolated, investigating copshops, officers and solicitors involved in frame-ups, publicising and winning people's free-

'INNOCENT' CAMPAIGN TAKES OFF

dom. But the number of people who turned up to the meeting shows there is a feeling of anger over the actions of the cops, and that there is a good base for Innocent to work on. They do urgently need support from people in the Manchester area, in the form of volunteers to do campaigning work, attend actions and demos, write to the prisoners and send them donations.

Contact: **Innocent, Dept 54, 1 Newton Street, Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1HW.**

POLL TAX PRISONER COMMITS SUICIDE

Neil Kennedy, a labourer jailed for not paying his poll tax, killed himself early in November last year. Kennedy, who was 35 and from Horden in Durham, was found hanged in his cell in Holme House Prison, Cleveland, 3 weeks into a three-month sentence for non-payment of £250. He was revived but died 16 hours later. Angry relatives

say he was well known to be depressed and should never have been sent down. Kennedy even offered in court to pay off the debt at £2 a week - but the magistrates turned him down. So there you have it - the price of a life, £2 a week.

To our knowledge this is the third death attributable to the poll tax: in 1989 a man killed himself in Kent because his family was broke and he knew

he wouldn't be able to pay; and in 1990 police threw an anti-poll tax activist in his 50s down the steps of a court in Coventry, causing his death from a heart attack. The poll tax goes on killing people quietly, how many more have there been we don't know about? How many people will die from hypothermia due to the VAT on fuel bills to be imposed on us?

What price our lives?

CONTROL UNIT AT WHITEMOOR?

On the 20th December the authorities at Whitemoor Prison launched a search of the cells on C and D wings: all the prisoners were locked down for two and a half hours while they looked for illicit alcohol. It being just before Xmas - surprise, surprise they found gallons of home made hooch. The shakedown was quite a surprise; as a Whitemoor prisoner says: "Normally it is accepted that if they close prison down for a search, they don't do it within at least two or three weeks before Xmas. It's a depressing enough time for everybody and even more so when you'd rather be with your family than stuck in a claustrophobic cell with no hope of release."

There had been a lot of tension at the prison between cons and the screws, and the lockdown and seizures created more resentment. On the evening of the 20th two roughly simultaneous protests started on C and D Wings. On D Wing a group of prisoners who'd had a bit to drink (they clearly didn't find all the booze, ha!) verbalised screws, set fire to furniture in the recreation room. By 10.40 all the prisoners were back in their cells. On C Wing, cons refused to go back to their cells at 8.30, demanding extra time for association to make up for the lock up earlier in the day. Some furniture was smashed and burned and some cons locked themselves out of cells to prevent damage to their stuff. 'Control and Restraint' squads arrived and came onto the wing, "returning everyone to their cells", as the Governor put it. As one prisoner said, "It wasn't a riot, because they would not have been able to contain us if we'd really gone for it. It was just an expression of displeasure, and as predictable as a swarm of angry hornets."

The next day 8 prisoners were sent down to the Segregation Unit, and 12 shipped out to other prisons. At least one of these has been charged in connection with the events of the 20th.

BLUE SPUR

The most alarming development however came with the segregating of 27 prisoners alleged to be 'ringleaders' of the protests onto 'Blue Spur'. Previously C and D Wings were divided into 3 'spurs'. After the events of the 20th these spurs were all made self contained, C Wing's Blue Spur becoming an improvised segregation unit. The 27 are not on GOAD or punishment officially (they are on a strict 23-hour bang-up and they've been treated like shit by the screws - more than normal), but they have lost, among other things not being allowed to have baths or work in the kitchen. Some prisoners put on Blue Spur who weren't involved in the protests have been told they are there because their "presence on 'normal' location wouldn't be conducive with the smooth running of the prison." But they can be relocated onto other spurs as a reward for 'good behaviour' - accepting the regime without question, and being identifiably not a 'trouble-maker'. This despite the fact that most of the 'trouble' is usually engineered by the authorities or the screws.

The implications of the segregation of the 27 prisoners onto C Wing are that it follows the American pattern seen in the establishment of the notorious 'Control Units' such as the federal prison at Marion. A minor disturbance provoked by the authorities has been used to segregate prisoners seen as troublesome or subversive, into one wing where they are isolated from the rest of the population, from where they can only get out by knuckling under. The governor of Whitemoor has denied that Blue Spur is now a Control Unit. We'll see: when will they start on the heavy duty psychological control and deprivation techniques that have been used to try and break prisoners at Marion.

THE CUTTING EDGE

Since Whitemoor opened in November 1991, it has been a dumping ground for prisoners labelled disruptive or political, and has seen protests in the form of work strikes, sitdowns, constant petty warfare between screws and cons, as well as revenge from the prison authorities in all its forms. If it has been chosen for an experiment in control units, it would not be totally surprising; as John Bowden, who was shipped out of Whitemoor after the March 1992 work strike, said at the time: "Whitemoor illustrates that it is the American 'New Generation' ideas that are influencing the Home Office. Whitemoor is designed for maximum control. It incorporates the principle of constant observation and surveillance, it uses the

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NEW GENERATION REPRESSION by John Bowden

Three years ago the state unveiled its most repressive maximum security prison to date when it opened Whitemoor as a model experiment in US-type 'New Generation' ideas and techniques for behaviour modification of long-term prisoners. Constructed at a cost of £89 million and incorporating all the architectural features of a huge control unit, Whitemoor came on stream with a regime shrouded in official secrecy and a management given absolute power to 'hold the line' against attempts by prisoners to organise and campaign for rights won elsewhere throughout the long-term prison system over the last 20 years.

The concept of Whitemoor was conceived by prison department officials in 1983 after prisoners at Albany revolted and staged a well-publicised and highly politicised rooftop demonstration. The revolt at Albany was approximately the sixth 'major disturbance' to shake the long-term dispersal system since its creation in the early 1970s, and in its wake, the prison authorities claimed new 'tougher' methods were required to destroy the solidarity and capacity for organi-

sation of long-term prisoners. The balance of power was to be shifted once again totally in favour of the jailers. The results of that process are being felt now, as rights established by long-term prisoners come under attack.

The overall social and political climate of increased repression that has prevailed since the early 1980s encouraged and proved favourable to the implementation of ideas and concepts that recognised neither the human rights of prisoners nor any limits on the power of the state to do with prisoners as it pleased.

The most immediate expression of the new 'get tough' approach was the permanent locking down of Albany and the total caging in of its inmates; the second was the forming of a committee of prison system bureaucrats 'The Long Term Control Review Committee' to explore and oversee the creation of prison designs and regimes based totally on control and repression. US and West German ideas on New Generation' prisons and control units were clearly favoured by the Committee, whose clear terms of reference were the eradication of dissent and political

organisation among long-term prisoners.

Whitemoor as an institution symbolises and embodies one singular purpose and function; the complete suppression of protest within the prison. The management and staff at Whitemoor operate on the basis that negotiations with or any appeasement of prisoners are now completely off the agenda, and have arbitrarily used riot squads and lockdowns to enforce a regime based on isolation, control and brutality.

Fortunately such methods have neither broken the will of Whitemoor prisoners to complain and protest, nor destroyed the ability to organise; indeed from day one Whitemoor, despite all the paraphernalia of control and repression, has experienced protests, strikes and an almost complete lack of co-operation on the part of its prisoners. The recent smashing up of parts of the prison was the latest stage in a process of struggle that has raged on at Whitemoor for the last 3 years.

From the perspective of prisoners and their supporters, the regime at Whitemoor must not be permitted to function unhindered or unchallenged. The state must be made aware that such fascistic methods of dealing with prisoners will be resisted and eventually rendered counter-productive and obsolete.

The crackdown on crime has reached middle class England, with the jailing of a character in *The Archers*, the long-running soap opera on Radio 4. 'Susan Carter', from the fictional village of Ambridge, was sent to prison for 6 months for sheltering her armed robber brother who was on the run. Unbelievably, 'Archers' fans are up in arms about the case, and some people have even set up a campaign to have 'Susan' freed. Despite the fact that it was 'Susan's' first offence, she was told by the judge that "any attempt to undermine the justice system is a serious criminal act". An advisor to the program defended the verdict as "harsh but quite feasible" - unfortunately true. An 'Archers' addict has said that it reflects 'real life'.

Sadly, the connection to reality is lost on the 'campaigners', who have written to Home Secretary Michael Howard asking him to intervene (fat chance, given his fetish for locking people away!); some are talking about a Royal Pardon. For a fictional character. It has to be said that it is a lot easier for these idiots to worry about the fate of a woman who does not exist than to try and deal with the reality of our 'Criminal Justice system'. No doubt they wouldn't spend too much time or sympathy on a real working class woman who harboured a 'dangerous criminal'. The case has certainly got more space in the newspapers than most prisoners can expect. What next for Ambridge though? A new prison being built down the road? A drunken farmer dies in police custody?

FREE THE AMBRIDGE ONE?

AN UNPARALLELLED EVIL? THE JAMIE BULGER MURDER CASE

Two year-old Jamie Bulger disappeared in a Liverpool Shopping Centre in February 1993. His body was later found - he'd been brutally beaten and killed. In one of the most heartrending and disturbing murder cases in a very long time, two ten year old boys were convicted of abducting and killing Jamie in October 1993.

This article is an attempt to look at the feeling the case aroused in Britain, to guess at the motives behind the killing, to try and deal with the implications for us as a class. We have included it in *Taking Liberties* because it involves asking questions about why people are violent towards each other, questions of making our own justice and dealing with people who are very dangerous. The ABC has always taken a stand against prisons, identifying them as part of the weapons of our enemies: but in a society where this murder can happen, the first question people ask is - what about murderers and rapists, etc? We have to start to answer the question; this article looks at some of what we have to face. It is a hard 'issue' to write about, because of the fierce emotions involved. It's not easy to explore all the shit the case has brought to the surface, and in some places guesses and assumptions are all that can be offered. Like most things in life, there is no black and white, no simple conclusions or solutions. It may be that some people will read it and not like what is being said - all I can ask is that you read it with an open mind. If the politics of this bulletin, the belief in ourselves changing the world for the better, are going to mean anything, we have to face the reality of the brutality we live with, and start working out how to deal with it.

"THEY'RE BABIES BUT THEY'RE EVIL"

No-one who read, heard about, or watched the case on TV could not be stunned and shocked by it. In passing sentence on the two boys, the trial judge called the murder "an unparalleled evil." Certainly it's hard to remember a case similar to this in terms of the media coverage and public 'outrage' it aroused. When the two boys were first taken to court, crowds of local people gathered to shout abuse at them, and several blokes tried to storm the police van, threatening to kill the boys. The press coverage added

*Accusing violence in
videos or TV misses the
point that violence is a
part of life in societies
run by hierarchy, force,
inequality...*

and heightened a sense of fear that already existed - parents afraid to let kids go out on the street, etc. When the kids were convicted there was widespread reporting of 'public reaction', which could be summed up by some young parent seen on the news saying: "they're babies, but they're evil," "they should be shot. I mean what use are they to anyone?" Ten year-old boys, remember.

This media-promoted outrage came just in time for the tory government to announce its crack-down on crime, the thrust of which was that young (working class) people are out of control and need to be taught proper values, morality, respect for authority. For this purpose we are to be treated to more secure units for young people, increased sentences, etc.

WHY?

It's hard to understand why two ten year old boys would kill a toddler. Leaving aside the real possibility that they might not have done it. It would not be the first or likely the last time that someone was framed for murder. If grown men and women like the Birmingham 6, the Guildford 4, etc, can be beaten into admitting to things they have not done, it's not hard for the cops to 'persuade' two 10 year olds into confessing. But assuming that the 36 or so witnesses who claimed to have seen the two boys leading Jamie away to his death got the right people, why on earth did they abduct, torture, and kill a two-year old child? We are told that they must be 'evil', as they had both been taught and seemingly understood 'Right And Wrong', but went ahead with this brutal act anyway. Is that all there is to it? They are evil and like all other evil people must be locked away from the rest of us? 'Evil' is routine language for *The Sun*, etc, and can include anyone from childkillers to striking miners. Also put forward is the fact that both came from 'broken homes' (fitting in nicely with the moral campaign against single mothers, who are now to blame for just about everything); and that one, 'watched a lot of video nasties'.

THE AGE OF INNOCENCE?

Kids can be cruel. From cutting up worms to bullying and abusing people weaker than themselves. In other words just like us adults. No-one is born a killer, or violent, or cruel - the cruelty comes on the one hand from not knowing what is acceptable - a kernel of truth to the moralists' words, they do have to learn how to treat people. And what great teachers

they've got! Young kids are given a good example of how to treat each other like shit from 'grown-ups'. Violence is widespread in everyday life, whether institutionalised as from teachers, the cops, etc, or widely practiced as in rape, child abuse, 'wife-battering', most of which goes on in the family and goes 'unpunished'. Ironically, the morality of 'parental control', back to the family, etc, has always meant the power and the threat of the fist against the children. Accusing violence in videos or TV misses the point that violence is a part of life and always has been, in societies run by hierarchy, force, inequality. LIFE IS CHEAP: this is as true as ever, when a man can kill himself in prison over a £250 unpaid poll tax bill. The glorified violence of *Rambo/Child's Play*² or whatever, reflect life, or the vision of life that makes big bucks for movie companies, not the cause on their own (no doubt they don't help). The gap between the wealth we can see - in films, ads, the tabloids, and so on - and the miserable reality of so many working class lives, full of boredom, frustration, control; the pressure for lads to play the hard man - when I was at school, violence was a casual daily business. It isn't any surprise that two ten year olds can rough about, torment, bully a younger child - it happens all the time. Maybe they did not intend to kill him but hit too hard. It is easy for adults to dehumanise other people, numb ourselves to suffering; we have to do it to survive, so that starvation, war, etc, do not cause us to kill ourselves. So now maybe the ability to see someone not as a real person anymore is just getting learned younger.

BLAME THE FAMILY?

Pressurising the family to take the responsibility for bringing kids up right, protecting them, and making sure they're not up to no good, is an easy and cheap solution for the state in times of recession. It's a common enough chorus from some rightwing elements: it's not the vicious competition of a society that values profit and power over life that causes us to go robbing, it's our mam and dad's fault!



Another set of scapegoats for the misery of our lives. But of course, blaming it all on the parents goes hand in hand with cutting the pitiful day care and communal support for people with kids, pushing the burden onto individuals. Extended families, friends, and so on can help but this is not there for everyone...The middle class and the establishment can afford private nurseries or even 'nannies', taking the pressure off them. The fact that this often goes against the nuclear family structure that many of them preach at us doesn't occur to them, but then their morality has always been for us not them. So the stress and aggro of the kids adding to the normal problem of staying alive, causes many young parents to snap, break up, get heavy with the children, etc - breeding more anger and passing on the spiral of brutality. And with

the media telling you the abusers are everywhere, you get suspicious, distrustful, and can retreat even more into the isolation so often a part of bringing up the next generation in this sweet society. Both the two boys in this case came from families that had severe problems, with both sets of parents split up. In one case they were still seeing each other, and in this same case the lad had a 'disturbed' brother and sister that put great strain on the family: the difficulty of caring for 'retarded' kids, the stress of separation and seemingly a good deal of isolation from other kids. It's hard to tell in this case how much trauma the boys got from the instability of their surroundings. Probably, as with a lot of people who suffer stress and breakdowns, everything adds up, you can't always see or feel the anger and depression as it

works on you more and more.

HIERARCHY OF VIOLENCE

The fierce reaction provoked by the two 'boy-killers', with the attacks on the police van taking them to court, calls for them to be shot or whatever, is the other disturbing side to the case. There seemed to be a sense of collective guilt or responsibility for the whole business - hinted at by the reported anguish in the statements of people who said they'd seen the boys walking Jamie away, but hadn't stopped them, and felt guilty. Were the hard men who attacked the police van trying to wipe out that feeling that they were somehow to blame? So would everyone have felt better if they had caught the two boys and ripped them apart? If there is a feeling of guilt, it is likely because we are

Feature

An Unparalleled Evil? (cont/d)

constantly being told we are guilty (see the passage on blaming the family above). But the sight of grown men trying to get at children and destroy them is frightening to see.

Children are emotionally very powerful symbols - supposedly innocent sometimes, pure, to be protected. They are vulnerable, physically weak, dependent on adults to survive. The urge to violently punish someone who abuses that dependence, who harms, attacks, kills a child is a powerful and understandable feeling. When the abusers and killers are two other children, the emotions become confused. I mean, how many of the hard men attacking the van have taken out the frustration of their lives by knocking their own kids around for little enough reason? Plenty, I would guess. There's a sneaking suspicion that two young boys are a hell of a lot easier to 'punish' than a grown man because the feeling of power and authority over children, the right to belt them, already exists for so many parents. THIS RELATIONSHIP, the spiral of people with little power over their lives using it against those under them, goes on and on, from boss to supervisor, to foreman to worker to wife to kids to younger kids.... This hierarchy of violence and power has to be broken, turned on its head, if we are ever going to change our lives permanently. These power systems staying in place are the teeth of the trap that holds us to this rotten society.

COMMUNITY JUSTICE?

If we do want to see the police, the justice system removed, their power to control our lives destroyed, then we need to develop genuine community alternatives to their 'class justice'. We do not just want to see the hard men as a new set of cops: we have to go beyond vigilanteism. As it stands vigilanteism has the potential to develop into a frightening rightwing vicious gut reaction that attacks

without thinking and learns its mistakes long after it ever. Action to 'clean up our areas' can as well be used against lesbians/gays, personal enemies, oddballs, drug addicts trapped by their habit, or in a racist way, or likely against the 'wrong person'. Maybe the kind of community we are talking about that can deal with its problems squarely does not exist except in a few isolated places. But we have to create them, through change, trial and error, and yes, making mistakes. Educating ourselves and each other along the way to overcome racism, sexism, anti-gay prejudice, and to help the

...while we live under this social system this sort of thing will continue to happen. We cannot rely on the state to sort it out for us - they don't have our interests at heart and never have.

people who need and can be helped, is a vital part of creating any real 'community justice'.

Any new system of dealing with murder, rape, 'muggers', dealers, etc, has to be on a level where the community concerned knows the people involved and can find out/ weigh up/try to understand/judge them without blindly attacking.

We cannot always understand.

There are a lot of sick and fucked up people out there who maybe should not be allowed to walk around. So we may well be faced with a choice: lock them up, kill them, kick them out of the community. None of these is without serious problems.

THROW AWAY THE KEY?

In the case of these two boys - they may well be very sick and need a lot of help. They will not get it in secure units and prison. More likely they will face abuse from screws and other cons, the frustration of being locked up, the abuse of daily life. In the end they will probably be more brutalised,

more twisted than they are now. If they have killed Jamie Bulger they need help to understand that act, feel the wrong of it, and pass beyond the motives and the harm to change - prison will not allow this.

These two boys are pre-puberty, in two or three years they will change greatly from the people they are now, but they will live under what they have done for the rest of their lives. The system does not allow change in high profile cases like this, they will always be the ten year old murderers even when they are fifty.

"Good", some may say, "let them rot. Jamie Bulger's mother has lost a son, a child's life has been taken away for no reason. The killers should suffer for it." It is true that we cannot bring Jamie back by trying to talk about the causes of his death. But destroying these two boys won't bring him back, and the only way to make an effort to stop murders like this going on and on is to try and face the reality of the life we are growing up into. 'Bourgeois' (for want of a better word) class justice punishes the powerless individual for the society we live in.

What is clear though is that while we live under this social system this sort of thing will continue to happen. We cannot rely on the state to sort it out for us - they don't have our interests at heart and never have. Our bosses care about this case as much as they need to have a monopoly of, or at least the power to regulate, violence, the education of our kids, our work, our values, so that we remain good workers and good consumers. They don't want us sorting our problems out for ourselves. That can be seen time and time again when communities have tried to deal with anti-social crime on their own terms, the state has come down harder on them than on the 'criminals', eg Concerned Parents Against Drugs in Dublin, where the police backed the dealers the community tried to evict, (against the community), or women fighting back against violent partners, or self-defence against racist

THE BIG CON

by
John Bowden

On 21 October 1993 Carlton TV screened a half-hour documentary called 'Killer at Large' produced by Twenty-Two Television, an independent company producing 'current affairs' programmes for a series called 'The Big Story'. The programme purported to be an examination of the prison home leave system, but in fact amounted to little more than a piece of cheap sensationalist rubbish designed to whip up hostility against 'criminal misfits' and their temporary release into the community under any circumstances.

Completely unaware of this agenda, I was contacted by Emma Whitlock, a researcher I had met while in Maidstone Prison when she was conducting research for another programme. She asked if it would be possible to meet and interview me for a programme on home leave and sentencing policy, "issues which I know you feel strongly about". I met her and her colleague, Mark Lewis, and discussed with them at length both my views on the topics and how they were to be portrayed in the programme. I was assured that my contribution would be used to balance the contributions of reactionary system spokespeople and the accounts from victims of crimes committed by prisoners on home leave. They would attack home leave, I would defend it and put it in the context of the regime's overall failure to rehabilitate.

Following the meeting which lasted about two hours, we went to another location where I was interviewed on film. The interview lasted over two

hours and dealt at length with home leave, prison conditions and prisoners rights. I was asked very briefly about my original conviction for murder, my taking hostage a governor at Parkhurst and my escape, though only, I was assured, to put my contribution 'in context'. In fact the only material actually used from the interview dealt with these three matters and was used as a sort of voice-over to a tacky and often wildly inaccurate 'reconstruction' of these events.

Far from my contribution being used to present the alternative or prisoner's perspective on home leave, it was in fact used, after massive 'editing', to support the exact opposite perspective and the only one presented in the programme - that home leave and any other form of compassionate leave constituted a danger to the public and should therefore be strenuously clamped down upon, if not abolished altogether. I had been cynically duped into co-operating with a programme that sought simply to whip up public hysteria and assist in the creation of a public opinion favourable to increased repression and increased denial of prisoners rights.

My mistake lay in believing, or hoping, that journalists of Emma Whitlock's ilk might possibly possess some modicum of integrity. I was, of course, wrong. I understand that Whitlock and her colleagues intend to produce more anti-prisoner programmes; prisoners and their supporters should be warned of the consequences of trusting these people and have nothing to do with Emma Whitlock, Twenty-Two Television or 'The Big Story'.

An Unparalleled Evil? (cont/d)

attacks....Organising for ourselves, trying to take control of our lives **we are their worst nightmare**. So of course we get Neighbourhood Watch, police controlled co-opting of 'community self defence'. No doubt vigilanteism could be manipulated and co-opted in the same way; unofficial rightwing hit squads can be very useful to the state.

* * * * *

The Jamie Bulger case is a terrible reminder: our kids are the fu-

ture. In a society getting more and more polarised and divided, they are not only the victims but increasingly learning violence to survive and to use against others. The only hope, if there is one, lies in all of us learning to turn our anger and hatred away from each other, because it is this that allows us to be ruled and controlled. It is not enough to accuse 'the bosses' of all the evils of the world, we do their job for them by turning on each other, through our prejudices, the frustrations we push onto each other. We should not be blindly blaming each other for the mess we are in, but we do have to see

where we must take responsibility for allowing it all to carry on... the solution can only come from us, the power to make change, end class and other divisions and bring about a new world where we can try to undo the mess they have made of our heads. The process will be long and hard and brutal if it ever happens, but unless we want to see the fate of Jamie Bulger repeating endlessly to all our kids for ever, our future lies that way.

1. We aren't going to name them.
2. Film watched by one of the two boys.

JAMAICAN RESISTANCE

Four prisoners on Jamaican death row were shot dead in early November last year, in a week that saw violent resistance erupt in prisons across the country. The killings occurred in St Catherine's prison, Spanish Town, 15 miles east of Kingston, when warders were attacked as they were going to feed the prisoners, and two were held hostage. The screws replied with gunfire, killing four prisoners. The two warders who were being held hostage were then seriously hurt, one had his throat cut, whilst the other's arm was slashed.

The riot came just weeks after staff prison officers had warned the government that prisoners were stock-piling weapons in readiness for an attack. The prisoners strongly denied this and went on a three-day hunger strike in protest.

The murders are being investigated, but it is unlikely that any real action will be taken against the screws responsible, and it certainly won't change the conditions that cause the riot in the first place.

In other incidents that week altogether 18 people escaped from their cells. Six men held at a police station in Ocho Rios St Anne escaped by cutting through cell bars with a smuggled-in hacksaw. At a remand centre in West Kingston six women prisoners escaped also by sawing through bars with smuggled-in tools. Four prisoners in a police station also in West Kingston did a runner after beating up their guards. St Catherine's prison itself saw two prisoners breaking out by sawing through cell bars and scaling a perimeter walls only days after the riot.

In the wake of the escapes three top policemen have had to leave the force and another eight have been suspended from duty. Altogether there was at least 68 prison escapes in Jamaica last year.

Jamaican hardware stores have noticed a sudden increase in sales recently, especially in the turnover of hacksaws....

FRENCH DAY OF ACTION AGAINST SOLITARY CONFINEMENT:

On Wednesday 10th November 1993, six years after the revolt which shook the prison of Saint-Maur (in Indre, central France) on the 12th November 1987, prisoners from a number of jails in France participated in a day of action.

They were demanding the "definitive and irrevocable closure" of the isolation blocks in french prisons, which are generally used to repress prisoners who refuse to knuckle under to the prison authorities. People are usually stuck in the blocks on the pretext of "risk of trouble for order and discipline" (like the GOAD in british jails), or as escape risks - they then rot there for months or years. Inmates' mental and physical health is usually severely damaged by spells in the isolation blocks.

On the Day of Action the prisoners, together with ex-cons, supporters, family and friends outside, determined to make it clear that they won't accept this treatment any longer. They were issuing a warning. They were also remembering the death of Christian Bethmont, who was shot down as he tried to escape from Saint-Maur Prison in September 1992, as friends tried to rescue him using a helicopter.

Some of the actions carried out on the day included:

4-5 am: the access doors to various institutions were chained shut, including the Hauts-de-Seine prison

TEAR DOWN THE PRISON WALLS!

at Nanterre, the headquarters of the Prison Administration, rue Saint Honore, Paris, and the respective seats of the ruling councils of medicine and architects, also in Paris.

7 am: a banner was hung from the Saint-Michel fountain in the Paris Latin quarter.

8.30 am: at the Glacihre Metro station, on the second pass of La Santi prison, an effigy symbolising a prisoner was thrown into the street, interrupting the traffic. Meanwhile, a group of people stuck up posters and distributed some leaflets to passers-by.

9 am: An effigy of 'homo incarceratus' and a banner were suspended from the replica of the Statue of Liberty, near Bir-Hakeim bridge on the Seine.

10.30 am: a petition was presented to

the president of the Commission on Constitutional Laws, Legislation and General Administration of the Republic. Signed by several hundred people, including prisoners, it called for the commission to examine the possibility that the isolation blocks were "unconstitutional" (?).

1 pm: a banner was displayed in the forum of Les Halles while leaflets are distributed to the population.

2 pm: a new 'homo incarceratus' effigy, demanding the closure of the isolation blocks, joined the wax figure of Louis XVII in his cell in the Grivin museum, boulevard Montmartre.

5 pm: at the Pompidou Centre, Beaubourg district, on the main wall of the edifice an immense banner: "No quarter for solitary confinement!"

7 pm: about a hundred people gathered in the square of the Paris Opera to demand the closure of the isolation blocks, making use of a banner and smoke bombs. A puppet 'homo incarceratus' was left in a cage.

Some actions also took place in various prisons around France, such as the MAF of Fleury and Fresnes...

This report was derived from a translation of a statement issued on the day of action, apologies for any mistake.

On the second of November seven lawlords ruled in favour of the appeals by Jamaican death row prisoners Earl Pratt and Ivan Morgan. They said "the agony of mind these men must have suffered as they have alternated between hope and despair in the 14 years that they had been in prison facing the gallows" was an "wholly unacceptable delay" and "to execute these men now after holding them in an agony of suspense for so many years would be an inhuman punishment" and contrary to the Jamaican constitution. Their sentences were commuted to life.

The two men have always maintained their innocence. They were convicted in 1979 of murdering Antony Missick following an internal feud amongst Jamaican Labour Party members. Key witnesses failed to appear in court during their trial and the judge didn't force them to appear. When another witness told the jury that he had seen Pratt kill someone else, a crime for which he had neither been arrested or charged for, the judge failed to declare a mistrial as he should have done.

Pratt and Morgan appealed, but lost, and they then had to wait four and a half years to find out why because of red tape. There followed a catalogue of bureaucratic ineptitude that helped keep the pair behind bars for the next ten years. They then took their case to the United

Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC), claiming there had been a violation of their human rights because they were denied a fair trial, and that the delays they had

endured amounted to cruel and inhuman treatment. While the UNHRC were dealing with their case the governor general of

Jamaica twice signed their death warrants. Each time the men were taken to the condemned cells behind the gallows and held in solitary confinement until the statutory two Sundays had passed before the date of execution. Each time people from all over the world lobbied the governor general and a stay of execution was granted. A third death warrant was issued in defiance of a UNHRC ruling that the two men's fundamental human rights had been violated and that their sentences should be commuted to life.

On March 6th, the day before they were due to hang, Pratt and Morgan were granted a stay of execution in order to appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London. The lawlords' ruling means that any person on death row for five years or more should now have their sentence commuted to life. At present there are 23 people who have been on death row for more than 10 years and 82 for more than five years.

The government has only just started to sort this out, and it is likely to be a slow process.

FROM DEATH...

...TO 'LIFE'

In October - November '92, Jamaica's mandatory death sentence for murder was re-categorised, making some non-capital punishment crimes. This was applicable to prisoners already convicted, and because of this 30 prisoners were taken off death row and given life sentences. This left about 170 men still on death row, although about 105 of these prisoners should have their sentences commuted to life eventually, due to the privy council ruling (see elsewhere in this issue).

The re-categorisation law itself is being challenged in the Jamaican high court, due to the sloppy way it was done. If it fails there it will go to the privy council. This all buys time for the prisoners involved.

Three prisoners who were featured in the last issue were affected by the re-categorisation. They are: Gilbert Hyde - 15 years, Ancel Williams - 20 years, Dudley Smith - 20 years.

Although the shadow of death no longer hangs over them, conditions in Jamaican prisons are terrible. In fact an inquiry last year into the criminal justice system found that there was gross overcrowding and poor and unsanitary conditions, although the inquiry was more worried that this undermined prison security than the effect on prisoners' health. For those prisoners with children under sixteen there is an extra punishment, because they are prohibited from visiting. These men still need support.



International

Lloyd Reece, poet and songwriter, occupies a cell 10 foot long, 6 foot wide and 10 foot high. He has been there for 10 years. He writes:

"The lack of proper sanitation, lighting, ventilation, the maddening noise, idleness, fear and violence, and the absence of education and physical exercise created an environment here, in St Catherine District Prison, where debilitation is inevitable, and which is unfit for human habitation and shocking to the conscience of a civilised person. Leaking and inadequate plumbing, filth, cockroaches and rodents, and an inadequate maintenance programme makes the prison stink, especially when it rains. This often makes me sick, and there's neither a doctor nor a dentist attached to the

prison. I've seen a doctor only twice in the ten years I have been here.

The food is very poor and the quantity is far less than required.....the resultant hunger pains constitute a dull, prolonged punishment. Sometimes I have to do

trial, who would have shown this evidence to be false. Nor could he afford them for his appeal. His attorney has now sent me copies of the original 'confession' and specimens of his signature. As a first step, we can try to help Lloyd by obtaining an opinion on the authenticity of the 'confession', which will cost £206 - we are appealing urgently for contributions towards this.

Death Row Diary

physical exercise, and bathe, inside the cell. Visitors come to a little half-lit room with five cubicles. It's very noisy. We are given five to ten minutes for each visit."

Lloyd Reece writes that, because he is poor, he could not have a fair trial. He says that a 'confession' to murder that the police claim was signed by him, is in fact a forgery. But he could not afford the experts for his

Send donations for handwriting expert to:

Andrew Green,
Conviction, PO Box 522
Sheffield S1 3FF

Send letters of support to Lloyd Reece.

District Prison, Spanish Town,
P.O., St. Catherine, Jamaica.

Article reprinted from Caribbean Times,
Sept '93.

VENEZUELAN PRISON RIOTS

122 prisoners were killed in ethnic riots in Venezuela's Sabaneta Prison in Maracaibo, on the 3th/4th January. Sadly enough it seems rival gangs, based around ethnic background, ie 'indians' against 'whites', fought each other with homemade knives and firearms in a bloody feud over control of the prison. While some cons set fire to the jail, others tried to dig their way out. 26 prisoners had died and 72 had been injured in Sabaneta in the previous 6 months. Meanwhile, 40 prisoners in Torocan Prison used the diversion of security forces to Sabaneta to fight their way to freedom on the 4th Jan: 9 other prisoners died in the attempt.

This fighting between rival gangs, especially racially-based gangs, if this is in fact what happened (it is very hard to get the real truth out of prisons here, never mind in somewhere like Venezuela), is

In Trinidad & Tobago the court of appeal spent the last three months of '93 hearing only murder cases, all other criminal and civil cases were put on hold to try and clear the backlog. This is because they intend to resume hanging after a 14 year break, but the prisoners can still appeal to the privy council and there are various constitutional motions that still have to be sorted. All this buys time for the over 100 men on death row. It is also probable that the lawlords decision mentioned across the page will affect their cases.

a common part of prison life in many countries. If the situation is anything like US prisons, the prison authorities were probably following the well-worn tactic of backing one faction against the other or exploiting their divisions to prevent any unity or common front among prisoners.

Control Unit at Whitemoor? (cont/d)

idea of small manageable groups of prisoners that are allowed no contact or interaction as groups." The truth of this has been shown repeatedly, if anything the prison has moved more in the direction of 'absolute' control. The price of this move towards con-

trol units in the US, though, has been the increased politicisation and resistance from the prisoners and their communities. If this is the way they are planning to go with Whitemoor and other high security jails, we will need to step up the fightback here as well.

For more info on past events of Whitemoor, see ABC Bulletins no. 3, 6 and 9, all available from London ABC. We have also received an article putting the events of Whitemoor into context, from John Bowden, former lifer and prison organiser, currently on the run.

International **PRISONERS JUSTICE DAY**

BULLETIN

We recently received issue no 2 of the *Prisoners Justice Day Bulletin* from Toronto, Canada, which details the actions on

around August 10th commemorating prisoners who have died inside. The ABC in England has been holding demos for Prisoners Justice Day for the last two years: in Canada there have been annual protests, marches, gigs and other events since 1976, after Canadian prisoner Eddie Nalon died in isolation in 1975 after slashing his wrists - the call bell to alert screws of his condition was not working and he bled to death. Many prisoners fast and refuse to work to remember their friends and comrades who have been murdered, killed themselves or died from the brutality and neglect that prison life is all about.

The *Prisoners Justice Day Bulletin* has reports of the events of August 1993, together with poems, writings and drawings by prisoners and ex-prisoners. Large numbers of cons in several Canadian prisons refused to work or eat, in solidarity with Prisoners Justice Day. In some places this led to punishment, including segregation, and lockdowns. On the outside demos were held by Resistance Against Psychiatry in protest against 'psycho-prisons'; by the Prisoners With Aids Support Action Network's action highlighting the treatment given to HIV positive prisoners, whose lives are

threatened by the refusal to give them proper medical care; and by CATWACS, a women's group campaigning

against abuse in women's prisons. Many local community radio stations carried news on the actions and prisoners struggle and there were two Rock Against Prisons gigs. Included in the round-up are short reports on the three demos held at British prisons by the ABC here.

The bulletin also reports on a protest by the Prisoners Rights Group in October 1993, over the killing of black prisoner Robert Gentles a few days before. He was dragged from his cell by screws and thrown downstairs, after being 'maced'. Despite all the strong solidarity and common purpose shown in the actions around Prisoners Justice Day, there is still a long way to go before we can make actively stopping deaths in prison a reality. The *PJD bulletin* is a real contribution to that struggle though, helping to forge greater unity and spreading the news about the way prisoners and their supporters are fighting back, as well as ideas on how to go forward with our struggles.

The *Prisoners Justice Day Bulletin* can be obtained from London ABC for a donation, or contact them at Box 238, Stn. B, Toronto, Ontario M5T 2W1, Canada. Send 'em some readies.

Prisoners Justice Day is about SOLIDARITY

George Jackson, a primary figure of the prison liberation movement, was assassinated by guards at San Quentin on August 21st 1971. He had been a Field Marshall of the Black Panther Party when he wrote of unitarian conduct in his published prison letters, *Soledad Brother*: 'Towards a United Front' speaks of the urgency in finding something common in the struggle to reject hierarchy and calls for a physical response to the systemic violence of the state which uses prisons as one of its means of repression. The common resistance of prisoners

on Prisoners Justice Day is symbolic of unitarian conduct that Jackson wrote about. While PJD has come to mean many different things to many different people, it is always a general show of solidarity among prisoners in resistance. It gives a tremendous boost to people engaged in acts of resistance that others are aware of their struggles. This allows others to also act out in solidarity and others' presence means a support for their resistance. Isolated resistance or resistance in small groups is simply not the same as when you know that

there is a large group backing and sustaining you. It doesn't matter that you can not see each other or communicate. It is enough to know that they are there, in the same prison, or another one, or among the groups of people in the community holding demonstrations, vigils and services. It is as though you have sent out roots and were connected underground in an act of solidarity. It gives life, spirit and energy to those involved in prisoners struggles both inside and outside prisons. Each act, whether isolated or in the public eye, adds to our common struggle in breaking down the prison walls and systemic oppression.

ZOLTAN LUGOSI (reprinted from
Prisoners Justice Day Bulletin No 2)

International

In 1990 Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) warden Terry Morris was replaced by Arthur Tate Jr. Tate instituted a series of repressive actions at Lucasville. He promoted informing on guards and prisoners. Prisoners were fitted with 'wires' (recording instruments) and sent at guards to entrap them in criminal activities. Flyers were printed up instituting a 'snitch line', where prisoners and visitors could write to inform on criminal activities inside Lucasville. Guards and employees were fired or quit en masse due to being entrapped or accused of dealing dope or other activities. Prisoners were separated by security classifications - Max 4, Max 3 and Class 3 security, and had to have guard escorts to go anywhere outside of the cells. Max 4's were locked in the cells after 6 pm. Metal detectors were placed outside the day rooms, gym, hallways. 'Wrong Rules' were made up on a daily basis and not put into writing or issued to prisoners, violating their right of due process, which requires forewarning of any implemented rules and regulations. Guards implementing these rules often abused their authority, causing more conflict. This led to a series of physical attacks on guards who harassed and demeaned prisoners. These same guards were involved in turn in the beating of prisoners - such is the way of life inside Lucasville. Warden Tate declared that all of the above implementations were to make Lucasville 'safer' for those confined there. However, the stabbings and murders continued. Due to the violent atmosphere prisoners often joined together by neighbourhoods, beliefs or common interests. Power plays abounded.

In 1993 an outbreak of tuberculosis hit prisons in New York. TB is rapidly spread in closed environments such as prisons, where large groups of people are warehoused together in close proximity. Due to the inadequate standard of medical care in prisons, common diseases become deadly. A prisoner with active TB, rather than being housed in a medical facility, was transferred

LUCASVILLE

by John Perotti

UPRISING

from one prison to another. The department of health called for mandatory TB testing of all prisoners. The Muslims at Lucasville protested that the planned way of TB testing of all prisoners violated their religious tenets. The state planned to inject the TB virus by syringe. The Muslims asked for chest X ray or alternative testing. Warden Tate refused and began a plan to lockdown SOCF and institute TB testing using force. Since Tate had become warden at SOCF, he had acted like a dictator - it was his way or no way at all. He left no room for any of the prisoners legitimate complaints; he would talk to them, but always with the knowledge that at the end of the day it would be done his way.

There had already been tension between the Chapel and the Muslims. Lucasville is located in Southern Ohio, the administration and guards are mostly rural Appalachians who are not accustomed to different races or religions. Lucasville employed a Chaplain Lewis, a baptist, who had control of the Chapel and religious groups. Chaplain Lewis had openly, and with the approval of the administration, discriminated against and harassed the Muslims. Christians were permitted organised religious programs, but Muslims were not. Chaplain Lewis often put Muslims in the hole for minor infractions. This type of continuing discrimination and harassment created a dangerous tension. When word leaked out that within a week Warden Tate planned to lockdown the prison to carry out forced TB testing, it turned out to be the straw that broke the camel's back. Plans were made to rebel.

On Easter Sunday, April 11 '93, a fight was staged, the goon squad ran in to stop it and the take-over began. As the prisoners attacked the goon squad they took control of the L side hallway and its keys, and also the guards working the cell

blocks. Prisoners accused of or suspected of informing were stabbed and beaten, seven were killed at the onset, over 48 were injured. Prisons state wide were locked down. At the onset, those who were due to appear before the parole board, or for other reasons didn't wish to participate, went out into the yard and stayed out of the way. Cells were looted as were the Unit Manager's offices, where files of all prisoners in that unit were stored. Prisoners' files were pulled and read by the rebels, and those labelled as informants were singled out for beatings and stabbings. Some prisoners were placed under 'house arrest' for protection from further harm or due to being thought liable to attack those maintaining control.

The majority of the prisoners were placed out in the hallways, while squads of six to ten were placed inside the cell blocks to watch for SWAT team invasions. Toilets, sinks, light fixtures, cell doors, plumbing and electronic consoles were totally destroyed on L side, as well as windows. Some prisoners in K8 destroyed their cells. The state cut off all water and electricity. During the day the electricity was put on, to be cut off at night. After prisoners had dismantled the large speakers in the gym, and made tape recorded broadcasts to the media through them, the media was forced to the opposite end of the prison so as not to hear what was being said. This was after the state had tried to drown out the broadcasts by flying low over the prison in helicopters. When this had happened the prisoners had merely waited until the helicopters had passed, then started the tape over, which detailed the oppression they were subjected to inside the prison.

A medical MASH unit was set up inside the gym where those with injuries were treated; minor surgery, including stitches, was administered

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by a prisoner paramedic. Electricians wired up emergency lighting while the electricity was cut off, and holes were knocked through the foundations to obtain entrance to the tunnels (which were manned by Lucasville guards) and chaseways to gain access to the plumbing in an attempt to obtain water while it was cut off. There was a faucet with a small leak in the gym that was used to obtain small rations of water during the siege. At night, prisoners would don masks and hoods to protect their identities, and assaults and rapes occurred until order was restored by factions inside.

Everyone involved in the riot all argue that it was the iron fist rule of Warden Tate's reign that caused such a drastic measure. And all agree that the riot was long over due. Those not involved are angry for being punished by being locked down now, even though they did not participate. A lot of the whites are angry at the so-called 'Aryan Brotherhood' for not protecting the whites beaten and killed by the blacks during the riot. After the initial outburst of violence, most of the acts committed were done by individuals not associated with any organised groups, who kept order during the siege. Dehydration and hunger were the main antagonists during the siege. The state thought they could flush the rioters out by slow motion - but they starved the hostages too.

At their surrender, the last groups to come out were identified as Muslims, Aryan Brotherhood and Black Gangster Disciples - these last 129 men were taken straight to Mansfield Correctional Institution (MANCI) and placed in the Segregation Unit - unit S. They were classified as Security Control - Investigation Status. The cells were segregated and men were harassed by MANCI guards in ways

they are so good at. Tiny portions of food on their trays, no access to hygiene articles, pencils, pens, paper, law books or legal materials, visits were denied, they were/are double-celled, allowed only two hours of recreation a week, mail is censored, withheld, and often destroyed, they are denied sick call, seeing a physician or a psychiatrist or a psychologist. They were summarily given Administrative Control (AC) level 3 status for the reason..."you have been self-identified as a member of a gang who sometime during the riot had control of the hostages." This justifies keep-

house, often unjustly, then treated like animals by guards and officials who break society's laws with impunity, what resource do they have left? Liberals are quick to parrot that prisoners should redress injustices through the courts, but when this avenue is utilised they find themselves subjected to intense retaliation. In addition to this, the courts take years to rule on prisoner petitions, and do so through the same injustice system that placed them in prison; this isn't a very logical response in the eyes of many prisoners. For many who have lived with violence out on the streets all their lives,

and are subjected to the same violence perpetuated upon them by their keepers, seizing control of the situation is the most logical step, since all other avenues seem futile.

The state must not be permitted to criminalise the situation, as they are now trying to do. Rather than focusing on the factors that led up to the takeover, the state and media is focusing on the 'crimes' committed during the siege, and calling for more security and money to build a Super Max prison.



ing them on long term isolation - but still doesn't justify double-celling them, denying them access to medical treatment, to legal resources or the hundreds of other harassments they are being subjected to.

The guards kept harassing the Muslims to the point where they couldn't get the food they were supposed to so they started beating on their doors. As a show of force, goon squad teams with shotguns came in, gassed the Pod, then beat some of the Muslims after they had been handcuffed and shackled. Four were transferred back to Lucasville and Lebanon.

When, in the name of law and order, men are placed into state ware-

Where is the left and the prison abolition movement now? We hear no voices out there speaking on behalf of those involved. The brothers at Lucasville held the prison longer than any like situation in history. Where is all the support for them? They put their lives on the line and deserve and require your support.

Indictments will be out soon, anyone interested in volunteering for legal support committees, as well as defence committees, contact:

Nikki Schwartz, Attorney at Law,
1500 Leader Building, Cleveland
Ohio 44114, USA

OR

John Perotti, POB 1368, # 167712,
Mansfield, Ohio 44901, USA

'DOWN TO THE WIRE'

**History and Writings of
a Prison Activist and
Jailhouse Lawyer
by John Perotti**

For many of our regular readers John Perotti needs little introduction, and the abuse and victimisation he's sustained over his many years inside US prisons are almost as well known as his activism and strength of spirit.

Down to the Wire details many of the events in John's prison life; from his attempts at organising a branch of the International Workers of the World in the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) in Lucasville, to the many frame-ups and beatings that such activism has brought down on him. It also documents some of the background and daily brutality of the US prison system. Though Lucasville, where John spent much of his sentence, is portrayed by 'prisoncrats' as a last stop for Ohio's most incorrigible prisoners - the worst of the worst - the reality is that most prisoners are sent there for filing 'too many' law suits against The Department of Corrections. The regime is routinely inhuman and any vocal prisoners get the added treatment of a regular spraying with chemical mace, fire extinguishers and high power fire hoses.

The booklet includes some of John's writings on the use of prison labour, nepotism (favouritism in giving jobs to family members), and the rottenness of the whole system, where in many areas, prisons are the only source of employment. We are also taken into the personal world of the prisoner: what it's like to face isolation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for months, sometimes years on end...

"Isolation also fosters paranoia, hallucination - the walls seem to vibrate. It induces claustrophobia, depression and rage."

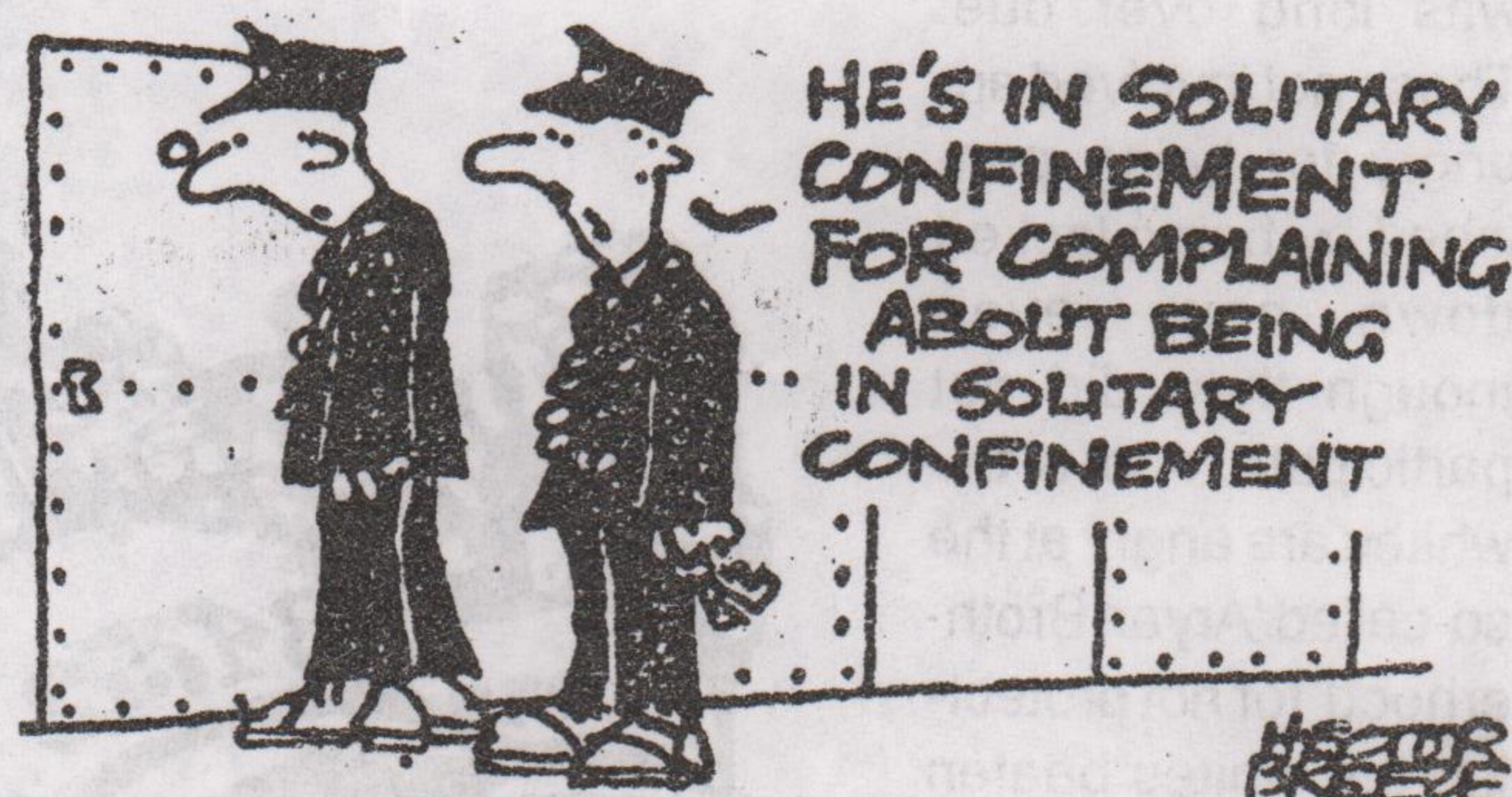
Often the only contact is with the pathetic but sadistic guards:

"You notice that all guards are over six feet tall and all are overweight from gorging on free state food. All are sarcastic, abusive and view prisoners as scum...they have gotten used to doing very little work and anything that causes them to have to break away from their card game or easy chair causes explosive outbursts".

Reading *Down to the Wire* you can't help but be impressed by John's strength of character and how he manages to succeed in "maintaining a sense of normality within the madness". He stresses the importance of "not succumbing to taking your aggression out upon your fellow prisoners" and also emphasises

the role of contact with the outside supporters, crucial in protecting against the effects of the behaviour modification techniques used against him.

John is still fighting the 12-15 years added to his sentence for the stabbing of a prisoner (although we have had unofficial confirmation that he has actually won the appeal), while John was in isolation at the time, and the booklet deals with this case, showing how ludicrous the whole affair has been. Of the thousands of stabbings in SOCF since its opening in '73, prior to John's case none had ever led to indictments - besides, prisoner on prisoner violence is normally of no concern or too useful to the 'prisoncrats' for them to want to stop it. This case is clearly about victimising John. The criminal thing is that despite being in a blatant fit-up, unless John can raise the cash for an appeal - to 'retain counsel' costs about \$1,000 - he is likely to get the maximum 12-15 years added to his sentence. John has now spent more of his life in prison than out.



Extracts from correspondence with a supporter at the John Perotti Defence Fund show some of John the person as well as prisoner; his lack of any self-pity - he's the first to say that there are people experiencing greater pressure than him in prison, and his courage....

"I'm often asked why? 'Why do you go through this, why not just do your time, play the game. Why?' This is a complex question, but one of the best reasons - for the children, for the ones who must follow in our footsteps, and for justice, something most of us never obtain".

Down to the Wire, as you can see, an excellent if harrowing read, costs £3.50 (that includes P&P) but if you want one for a solidarity price of £5 or £10. The URGENT APPEAL made in the last bulletin still stands: anything at all that anyone can afford - it all counts.

Write letters of support to John Perotti, POB 1368, #167712, Mansfield, Ohio, USA

Donations for the appeal and for latest news write to John Perotti Defence Fund, 45a Bedford Ave, Powis, Aberdeen, Scotland.

EVIL CAPITALIST MERCHANDISE PAGE

**If you live in the South East
join London ABC Support
Network - same rates.**

One Off. Written by prisoners Paul Ross and Andy Jacobczyk, this booklet is a detailed account of brutality and suicides in the British prison system.
£2 plus 50p P&P

For a small extra donation we'll shove in a bundle of leaflets on prisoners and prison issues.

Send cheques/postal orders with
your name and address to:
Larkin Publications, BCM Box
5909, London WC1N 3XX

For international contacts, get in touch with your nearest group.

I Wanna Lock Up Yoo Hoo

Words by Sara

Music by Disney

Sara Thornton, serving life for the killing of her violent husband in self-defence, wrote these words for a song performed at a benefit for her and Emma Humphries. Write to Sara: HM Prison Bullwood Hall, High St, Hockley, Essex, SS5 4TE.

Well, I'm the King
of the Cabinet,
The Penal VIP,
I'll imprison people
everywhere,
If they don't think
like me.

I stand for Law and
Order,
'Cause I'm a tory
man,
If you don't pay
your VAT
I'll slam you in the
can!

Chorus

Oh do be do
I wanna lock up you hoo hoo,
Throw away the key
Deny your liberty
Do be dodo do be do.



You'll see it's true,
I must support the boys in blue,
I'll make the judges say
You've got to pay
Society it's due.

If the old can't
pay their fuel
bills,
I'll throw them
all in jail,
Bring back the
birch and
hanging,
And then I'll
abolish bail

With prisons all
over the coun-
try,
Law and order
will reign,
I'll put John
Major in Rampton,
'Cause he's
criminally insane.

Chorus.

Repeat chorus.

Face of the Future (cont/d)

Heard it all before?

The themes and arguments heard at the conference and in the news since are not new and neither are the proposed solutions embodied in the criminal justice bill. In fact, if we look back a hundred years to what many people see as a Golden Age, we see there was a very similar chorus of disapproval, for family breakdown, undisciplined youth and 'premissive rot'. As early as the 1860's there was panic about a frighteningly 'new' kind of crime sweeping the cities: 'garotting', as it was called then, was virtually indistinguishable from 'mugging' today (which was also seen as a 'new' breed of crime in the early '70s). And if the concerns around crime were similar, so were the solutions trotted out by press and politicians: harsher, longer sentences, more prisons, stricter family and morals. We see the same tactics to persuade the public that prisons were too 'soft'.

Then, the 'luxury' was turtle soup and dance classes; today it's sweets and TVs in cells. The same rantings of the right against 'soft' intellectuals and liberals and philanthropists on the one side stressing reform and rehabilitation, and the staunch authoritarians on the other wanting punishment and retribution.

In many ways this reflects the dual character of modern 'liberal democracies'; the government ideally wants a kind of 'willing obedience' and 'rule by consent', and here the liberals can stress the importance of reform and a more human persuasive approach. But when things aren't running so smoothly, and the last few years of government crisis are a current example, the gloves come off and we get a further clampdown of authoritarian legislation and policing.

In fact, the last 15 years have seen the steady introduction of more and more repressive legislations, and this is just the latest phase. Remarkably, not one study has ever shown that prisons 'work', in the sense that they might reduce crime. Many 'experts' from within the justice system have recently argued that more and longer prison sentences won't 'work'. They point to some of the car-projects for young 'offenders' which in Europe and Britain have 'worked' by giving kids something to do and reducing levels of 're-offending'. It also saves money, one thing the government might be expected to care about. But no, these are 'soft' and 'out of touch' theorists'. The government must be seen to PUNISH. And besides, with prison privatisation a growth industry, who wants to depress the market for prison places?

The Real Agenda?

So what do prisons really do if they don't reduce crime? Well, they break up families, isolate and brutalise many of those inside, stigmatize and divide criminals from the rest of society and make sure they can't get a job once they come out. Basically, they produce crime, by turning out people with few options. And as more of our daily lives are criminalised (fiddling the dole, the lecky, co-habiting on the quiet, not paying bills) the whole 'justice system' feeds off this as justification for its existence. More expensive gadgets for the police, a whole layer of legal leeches in the courts, prisons, private security (now bigger in numbers than the official police) - with so many small fortunes to be made, why on earth would they want to reduce crime?

Sources of graphic and historical detail:
'Hooligan: a history of respectable fears'.

HOW MUCH LONGER?

How many more times are we going to print pictures of fists, bars and fists through bars? Is it getting ON YOUR WICK? Well, send us your graphics, then - anything on prisons, police, judges, crime, handcuffs, chains, studded necklaces....oooooh err (sorry, got carried away).



CORRECTIONS:

Page 20, first paragraph, second column:

In fact, John Perotti has not actually won his appeal. What's happened is, his supporters have collected enough money for him to pay his attorney to carry on with the appeal. John says THANKS to everyone who sent in dosh to his defence fund.

YES, WE'RE TOTALLY STUPID ...we forgot to put our address in, so HERE IT IS:

Taking Liberties,

c/o 121 Railton Road London SE24 0LR

Tel 071 274 6655 (Ansaphone)