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&
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THE PRISON WORKS

OCCASIONAL TEXTS ON THE ROLES OF PRISON AND PRISON LABOUR

JOE BLACK / BRA BROS

Revolutionary Solidarity

Just as prisoner support should be more than just first aid to fallen comrades, support for other class struggle prisoners should be a conscious act of revolutionary solidarity, of practical everyday anarchist politics. Prisoner support also cannot be reduced to just a form of charity, writing a few letters to a prisoner or bunging an ABC group some spare cash. Prisoner support should in fact be seen as part of a wider revolutionary solidarity, which anarchists of all flags should be actively engaged in. It should be an integral part of the anarchist struggle, both against the prison society and in support of the new society we wish to see built in the ruins of the old.

In the end the most important thing we all can do is to get out there and get active. It is only through struggle and building a revolutionary movement that we will help not just anarchist prisoners, but everyone in need of solidarity.

> "Prisoners are willing to make sacrifices for other prisoners... Solidarity is the worst thing a prison guard fears. They can understand a prisoner that fights for his or her own rights, but when a prisoner fights for the rights of another it has to be punished. But inevitably solidarity will endure."
>
> Mark Barnsley, *If It Was Easy, They Wouldn't Call It 'Struggle'*, (2005).

Practical Things You Can Do:
Write to prisoners – practical solidarity that entails a commitment to the prisoner we write to as well as a trip to the post office.
Financial support to prisoner support groups – we spend a lot of our time and effort fundraising, time and effort that could be better spent elsewhere.
Books to prisoners – instead of spending your 'hard-earned' on that next tome on anarchist history, give the money to Haven Distribution books to prisoners project.
Other letter/faxes/e-mail writing – prisoner support groups often fight campaigns at the behest of prisoners to get them better conditions/parole/even not being executed.
Organise – in the workplace and community. This is something we could all be doing. No excuses now!

You can download leaflets on 'Writing To Prisoners' and 'Social Prisoners' from:
http://www.brightonabc.org.uk/merchandise.html

Brighton ABC, PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ.
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THE PRISON WORKS

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"The confused mass of rules of conduct called law, which has been bequeathed to us by slavery, serfdom, feudalism, and royalty, has taken the place of those stone monsters, before whom human victims used to be immolated, and whom slavish savages dared not even touch lest they should be slain by the thunderbolts of heaven."

Peter Kropotkin, *Law and Authority: An Anarchist Essay*, 1886.

Designed and Printed by The Escape Committee, 2010.

"Anarchist theory presents a fundamentally different understanding of prisons and a vastly divergent view of our present reality. Anarchist theory conceives of prison within the context of the Anarchist understanding of the State, its relationship with the individual, the origins of crime, the failure of punishment, and an understanding of the forces that liberate the individual."

Sean Swain, *Applications of Anarchist Theory to the Modern-Day Prison Struggle*, (2007).

Prison has been much in the news recently (when is it not?), a product of the inevitable election-related penal arms race taking place between the usual ragbag of political parties as they seek to stake out a distinct identity that they hope will appeal to the poor long-serving punters. Needless to say, when quizzed on the subject the politicians are all convinced that they understand the true role of prison in society. They will also vehemently claim that they, and only they, know what works and what doesn't and that they can micromanage it all much better that the next bunch of charlatans – after all they've just returned from a hastily arranged guided tour of the local jail, have read all the latest party briefing papers drafted by their side's special bunch of half-baked think tank ideologues and special advisors, who all of course have no axe to grind what-so-ever. Surely they and the poor confused voters in their wake must know what they are talking about?

Yet ask the average punter in the street what all these politicians are going on about and you'll find that most of political nitpicking has passed them by. Their views are inevitably based on an even more limited knowledge of prison, one that tends to be derived from TV cop shows and absorbed, via a pernicious form of osmosis, from the constant stream of toxic tabloid sludge published on the subject – prisoners are scum and prisons are holiday camps, with flat-screen TVs in every cell, wall-to-wall carpeting and jacuzzis – rather than the more esoteric debates of politicians, even though those same politicians are always honing their policy positions with one eye on the same tabloid headlines. When asked what those convicted by the courts are sent to prison for, that same person is more than likely to give a one-word answer – punishment. Only rarely, very rarely, will one get an answer suggesting rehabilitation. Press them further as to what they mean by punishment, whether the offender is being sent to prison as punishment or for punishment and you're as likely to get a blank look as a coherent answer.

Ask the average anarchist the same question and you'll probably get a slightly more sophisticated and almost certainly rhetorical response, something along the lines of: prisons being factor-ies of repression, mechanisms that protect the privileged few from the oppressed masses. Poetic but sad to say they will appear no more informed than your average tabloid-consuming punter. Quiz them further about the reality of everyday prison life and they'll probably be as ill-informed as the politician, their knowledge based on something from the late C18th or C19th century like Kropotkin and Berkman [1] or possibly even a smattering of Foucault. [2] Informative though these classics on prison life are, they are somewhat out of date and this essay is an attempt to provide a short and more up-to-date analysis of the role and function of the prison system in the UK.

What Is Prison?

PRISON, n. A place of punishments and rewards. The poet assures us that – "Stone walls do not a prison make," but a combination of the stone wall, the political parasite and the moral instructor is no garden of sweets.

Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary,* (1911).

"Prison – those monuments of human hypocrisy and cowardice."

Peter Kropotkin, *Prisons and Their Moral Influence on Prisoners*, (1886).

Certainly Not Trivial

Writing letters too may seem a trivial method of showing support for individual prisoners but it is a concrete and practical starting point, and one that also very readily lets those on the 'inside' know that those on the 'outside' are thinking about them and showing them solidarity.

But there are so few anarchist prisoners I hear you say. Yes, it is true that the level of struggle in this country is very low and that is reflected in the level of struggle within the prisons too, but that is no reason for being complacent. Anarchists surely should be seeking out class struggle activities to support wherever they occur, both inside prisons and in the wider communities, in the UK and abroad.

Despite the poor showing in the international exchange rates of that last bastion of Empire 'the pound in your pocket', our filthy lucre still goes a long way in certain parts of the world, particularly in Eastern Europe and South America. So there's one area where practical solidarity is still valuable.

Another is taking your solidarity to the streets. A classic example of this is the Greek prisoners' hunger strike in November 2008, when most of the prisoners in Greece's 21 prisons went on an 18-day hunger strike in support of a comprehensive 45-point program of prison reform. Mass demonstrations and numerous solidarity actions outside the prisons in support of the hunger strike helped secure major concessions from the Greek state, concessions it could be argued that would not have been so easily won without such open displays of solidarity.

The Social Prisoner 'Problem'

Which brings us to the so-called 'social prisoner' issue, which has long been a problem within the anarchist movement, with the more liberal elements in the anarchist movement decrying any involvement with 'common criminals'. Fortunately, most anarchists involved in prisoner support see it in a somewhat different light.

If you are a long-term prisoner in any prison system, you have two options: either you do the 'bird', knuckle down and toe the line, making as little trouble for yourself as possible; or you stand up as an individual and fight for your dignity and the dignity of other prisoners against a system that is designed to squeeze that dignity out of everyone. Prison after all is still, despite what all the PR about rehabilitation and behaviour modification therapy would have us believe, designed to punish the individual prisoner, to make them not want to return and therefore not commit that next 'crime' that might earn them more time.

Therefore, when we come across prisoners who have become radicalised by their prison experiences, who are engaged in the class struggle against the system of social control that is prison, we should be supporting them in their struggle. After all, even the most cynical anarcho must see that we as a movement need to get the idea of a non-hierarchical decentralised class-free society more widely accepted and those at the sharp end of the state's system of social control and conditioning should be more receptive than most.

Also, from a purely selfish standpoint, when the few anarchist prisoners that do end up inside are looking around for comrades to engage with in resistance to the prison regime, history has taught us that it is these social prisoners that anarchists make common cause with in struggle. So logically we should be showing them solidarity now, not waiting till it becomes merely a reward for the mutual aid and solidarity that they have themselves shown our imprisoned anarchist comrades.

Clearly to establish a Prison Industrial Complex in Britain based on the American model, with such a large but potentially belligerent captive workforce, that workforce had to be subdued and coerced into a compliant state. Thus the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme, one of the state's more subtle and ingenious methods of subjugation, was instituted and the prison population is now ripe for exploitation by private capital. They have become modern day slaves in everything but name.

1] In SPS prisons the wage structure is based on 6-tier Status system, which awards a range of points at each level. A point is worth 30p and the top wage rate is equivalent to 1.5 points an hour. Prisoners who pick up 'litter' thrown from cell windows can earn a £2 supplement!

[Originally appeared in Independent Monitor, Issue 91, May 2007.]

WHY PRISONER SUPPORT?

Prisoner support should be an essential facet of any anarchist's political activities; yet our prisoner support groups attract so little actual support from our fellow anarchists. Why is this?

Of course, it is natural for us to support someone we are close to, friends and family or even a comrade from ones affinity group, when they are banged up. Yet why do so few anarchists support comrades from within the wider movement, let alone prisoners in general? Mutual aid and solidarity are surely a central tenet of the anarchist 'belief system', one brick that any anarchist society should be built upon, yet it is something that often doesn't extend beyond one's immediate environment (family/friends/affinity group).

Not Sexy Enough

We all know that prisoner support is not particularly glamorous or possibly rewarding in terms of apparent immediate effect: we don't see our circle A spray-painted on the wall, cashpoints superglued-up, disruption caused by a picket or the reality of an article appearing in our favourite organ of propaganda (though most of those can also be used as a weapon in any prisoner support campaign). Instead, prisoner support is largely invisible, the writing of letters, the sending of money and the giving of other practical support. Yes, we might go along to a gig raising funds for prisoner support but are we doing that to donate funds or because we want to see the bands?

We might read a call-out for support for a particular prisoners' campaign but are we really paying much attention? Or are we going along to prison pickets when they are called? This is in fact one really simple and effective way of showing solidarity and support for individual prisoners, as well as showing the managers of these factories of repression that we outside the prison walls know and care about what they are trying to do to our comrades, those we chose to support, on the inside. And prisoner support groups regularly get feedback on these events showing clearly that they work, that the prison authorities take notice and are much less likely to abuse the prisoners supported.

Without delving into the more cerebral theorists, the general academic view of the role of prison is that it is part of a range of sanctions, alongside financial penalties and different forms of community supervision, that are available to the State to help control crime. [3] Prison and the threat of imprisonment is held to act in three ways:

- Deterrence – through the fear of punishment;
- Incapacitation – being physically unable to commit crime;
- Rehabilitation – motivation to change one's 'offending behaviour' through something other than a deterrence effect.

However, because prison is a corollary of crime, we need to examine the various theories of crime and its causation or, more succinctly, why people commit or do not commit it, before we can examine the contribution each of these models of prevention contributes to a modern penal system.

A Little Criminological Theory

"The fruitful source of crimes consists in this circumstance, one man's possessing in abundance that of which another man is destitute."
William Godwin, *Of Property, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, (1793).

"The law does not pretend to punish everything that is dishonest. That would seriously interfere with business."
Clarence S. Darrow.

Fundamentally, a crime is an act that is proscribed by law i.e. the legal statutes of a particular State. The person committing such an act has no say in whether the act is either legitimate or not sanctionable; unless that is they are in a position of privilege or power. Beyond that simplistic definition things get rather complicated and whole areas of academia exist to study the intricacies of the subject. [4] Leaving aside what is probably the least sophisticated of the various theories extant, the Judeo-Christian concept of original sin i.e. people are basically evil and crime is equivalent to a sin against god and man, these theories can be broken down into:

- Classical theory – crime is a rational act born of individual free will, where the predicted pleasure/gain is greater than the perceived risk c.f. utilitarianism;
- Biological theory – people are born and/or bred to be criminals with genetic inheritance and environment (chemical, nutritional, physical trauma, etc.) contributing to their criminal behaviour;
- Sociological theory – 'society is to blame', (visions of the Dead Bishop sketch [5]) with education/family/religion failing to keep people on the 'straight and narrow';
- Interactionist theory – (a version of the above) moral contamination by criminals coupled with a failure of self-direction and a lack of appropriate role models.

And if you think that is not particularly illuminating, you should take a look at the sort of contradictory theories dreamed up by the various schools of criminological thought as to why people are supposedly driven to commit crime:

- Labelling theory – people become criminals when significant members of society label them as such and they accept those labels as a personal identity. The corollary of the way in which previously acceptable actions become proscribed as crimes;
- Rational choice theory – the utilitarian idea of the rational actor involved in a cost-benefit analysis of his/her actions;
- Social disorganisation theory – a person's physical and social environments are primarily responsible for his/her behavioural choices e.g. 'poor parenting', lack of economic advantage, peer group pressure, etc.;
- Social learning theory – the 'failing in with a bad lot' argument, learning criminality from other criminals (and surely a prime argument for not sending people to prison c.f. prison radicalisation and 'schools of crime' concept);

- Social control theory – we are all criminals at heart and it is only the existence of the State/church/schools/family that prevents us from murder, rape and pillage;
- Biological theories – poor diet, bad brain chemistry, mental illness and/or one's genetic inheritance can all affect one's criminological behaviour and, it has been argued, should to an extent excuse certain people's criminality;
- Strain theory – all things not being equal (e.g. opportunities or abilities), many people are unable to achieve the life of luxury sold to them via the media, therefore they resort to crime rather than approved means such as hard work and delayed gratification.

Or to put it all more succinctly, the reasons people commit crime are: convenience, societal pressures, environmental influences, 'contamination' by a 'bad apple', psychopathology, emotional/stress, necessity, plus one reason that rarely gets mentioned and which is never a useful defence under law, ignorance of the law.

Of more pertinence to a study of the role and function of prisons is an understanding of why people do not commit crimes, and here we have to look to Social Control theory for the applicable model. The theory (or at least one version of it) posits four types of control (in roughly descending order of causative value):

- Control through needs satisfaction – people do not commit crime because they have no need to do so;
- Internal – based on learnt societal aversion to crime (conscience/sense of guilt/etc.);
- Indirect – based upon those one has a social contract with e.g. family, friends and where one stands to lose something of value (e.g. parental disapproval, one's job);
- Direct – punishment by the State, society and family coupled with the reward of compliance by the same groupings.

Another element involved in the prevention of crime, one that is not covered by Social Control theory but that is currently playing an increasingly important role in prison theory and practice, is the idea of incapacitation – being physically prevented from being able to commit crime, either via increased security provision (car locks, etc.) or via the act of imprisonment itself.

Which brings us back to the main subject: prison itself and the three models for the role that it in theory plays in preventing you and I from committing crime. In fact there are four routes, as deterrence takes two separate forms – general deterrence, where the existence of custodial penalties are held to discourage people from committing crime, and specific deterrence, where a sentence has had an effect on the prisoner sufficient to prevent them 're-offending'. [6] The third way prison is held to control crime is via incapacitation, the 'If you are in prison you are unable to commit crime in the community' argument. [7] Fourthly, during a period of imprisonment the offender may take part in programmes to, in current criminological jargon, 'address offending behaviour' via education and training or the myriad of pseudo-scientific compulsory psychology courses a prisoner must take before they are considered for release. And these four rationales have been used in various combinations down the years to justify the use of prison.

A Long History

"The degree of civilisation in a society can be judged by entering the prisons."
Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The House of the Dead*, (1862).

"Prison, a social protection? What monstrous mind ever conceived such an idea? Just as well say that health can be promoted by a widespread contagion."
Emma Goldman, *Prisons: A Social Crime and Failure*, (1911).

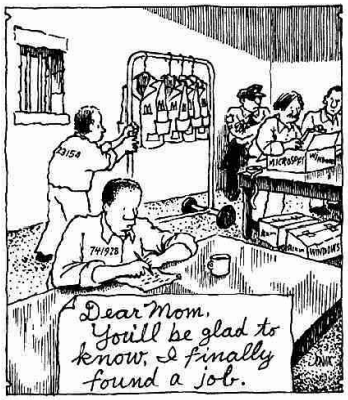
Prison as an institution has been around in one form or another for millennia, yet it was not until relatively recent times, with the ending of transportation to the colonies as a

The scheme operates on three tiers: basic, standard and enhanced, [1] and which tier the prisoner is placed on depends on how well she or he toes the line – "If the prisoner's behaviour or lack of progress demonstrates that he or she cannot sustain his/her current privilege level, he or she may be downgraded to the level below (as an administrative measure, not as a punishment imposed at adjudication)."

Among the things that are linked to the IEP scheme are a set of Key Earnable Privileges:

- extra and improved visits
- eligibility to earn higher rates of pay
- access to in-cell television
- opportunity to wear own clothes
- access to private cash
- time out of cell for association
- the right to buy items from the prison shop;

earnable rewards for active participation in everything from sentence planning and Offending Behaviour Programmes to prison work and education. Even the right to possess tobacco and to smoke is now an earned privilege under Rule 8. And these privileges can also be taken away for the breaking of any of the myriad of prison rules listed in the Prison Discipline Manual.



The Prison Rules 1999

With the introduction of the IEP scheme in 1995, the existing regulatory framework of the Prison Rules (established under the Prison Act 1952) had to be revised to integrate this new system of rewards and punishment into it. Amongst the many Offences Against Discipline that a prisoner can now commit, is if s/he "…intentionally fails to work properly or, being required to work, refuses to do so." These offences against discipline carry the threat of a number of Governor's Punishments, which can include:

- loss of privileges under Rule 8 up to 42 days (21 days for a young offender)
- up to 21 days cellular confinement
- stoppage of earnings for up to 84 days or deduction from earnings of an amount not exceeding 42 days earnings
- young offenders can even be sentenced to periods of extra work as a punishment.

So, not only is it compulsory to work to a standard set by prison staff, it is also possible for a prisoner to find themselves working for a prolonged period for nothing at all if they fall below that standard or get out of line in any other way.

Thus participation in work, education, exercise and association, attendance at offending behaviour and treatment programmes and even religious service are all seen integral to the maintenance of order in the modern prison regime. Therefore basic 'rights' under the IEP scheme such as access to a radio, newspapers and "*attendance at educational classes…should not normally be forfeited.*" However, prisoners have been denied access to education when refusing to work as they were held to be disruptive to 'the maintenance of good order and discipline' and placed in segregation.

Yet the government and prison authorities maintain that the British prison system exists not only to protect the public and maintain civil order, but to also genuinely rehabilitate offenders through education and training, How can some mind-numbing activity such as packing plastic spoons for Sainbury's or untangling and repacking in-flight entertainment headphone for Virgin Airways for up to 10 hours a day for a few pence an hour, week in week out, ever be constituted as holding any skills training value?

ARE PRISONERS SLAVES?

This year sees the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery with a collective bout of mutual backslapping. However there are voices off reminding the celebrants that there are still millions of men, women and children around the world today forced to lead lives as slaves: the sex-trafficked women and children who are bought and sold like objects; the ‘sans-papiers’ fleeing persecution from around the world end up in this country and, having been denied asylum, working in shitty jobs for a pittance, constantly in fear of arrest and deportation.

The New Slave Class?

Another group of people that are increasingly being treated as modern day slaves are prisoners. Under international treaties, such as those on Human Rights and, for example, the 1930 Forced Labour Convention, there are exemptions that specifically allow for the enslavement of individuals within any state’s prison systems, where they often provide cheap (if not free) labour for corporations – all legal by the laws of almost all states.

In the US prisoners has long been a source of free labour, everyone recognises the image of the chain gang, but prisoners and the institutions that house them are also big business. Many large American corporations have grown increasingly fat on the cheap labour provided by the sprawling US prison-industrial-complex.

Prison Privatisation

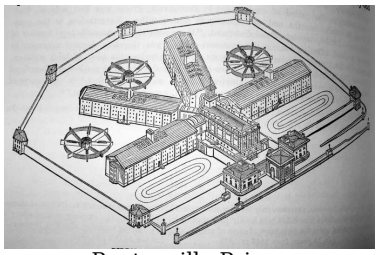
In de-industrialised post-Thatcher Britain, ‘New Labour’ has sought to follow the American model. They have introduced the Private-Finance Initiative prison-building programme and pursued a wholesale liquidisation of Prison Service assets, handing large sectors over to private companies, many of them American (such as Aramark now running large sections of the prison canteen system). The ever-increasing British prison population has not escaped their attentions either and is now seen as a bountiful source of cheap captive labour that can help maintain British competitiveness against countries like China.

The source of a key component of this was prison rebellions and riots of the late 70’s and 80’s, which necessitated a radical reorganisation of the prison control and discipline system. This resulted in the introduction in 1995 of the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) Scheme, which has proved an essential tool in the putative industrialisation of British prison labour.

Incentives And Earned Privileges Scheme

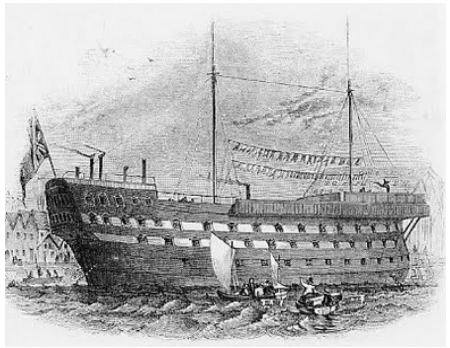
The objectives of the IEP scheme are “to encourage hard work and other constructive activity” [*all quotes from the relevant documents*] by introducing a system of privileges that are “earned by prisoners through good behaviour and performance and are removed if they fail to maintain acceptable standards”. At the core of this scheme is the concept of paying prisoners "to encourage and reward their constructive participation in the regime of the establishment". Rates of pay vary depending on resources, the amount and type of work available at each prison, and the level reached on the IEP scheme. At present the minimum ‘wage’ in EPS prisons is set at £4 per week and if you are willing to work but are unemployed because no work is available, the basic rate is £2.50 per week. Most of the work available itself, by the regime's own admission, "provides little training, qualifications or resettlement activities for prisoners."

form of punishment [8] that prison as a form of mass incarceration came about. Before that time, prison had been used sparingly, in no small part because it would have been an inefficient form of punishment when compared to the ease of use of the stocks, whipping, branding or hanging. Instead, it was largely reserved for pre-trial confinement, the extraction of confessions under torture and for holding debtors until they had repaid what they owed (including fees for board and lodging plus any extra bribes paid to the jailor). Almost all of these forms of gaol were privately owned and run for profit by the local nobility and gentry. [9]


Pentonville Prison

At the other end of the spectrum was the local parish House of Correction and it successors, first established under the Elizabethan Poor Law for the rehabilitation of the idle poor and itinerant beggars. These institutions were increasingly used from the 18th century onwards to hold petty criminals sentenced by the courts to short periods of hard labour, but the increasing pressure of migration of the rural poor to the cities during the Industrial Revolution forced the adoption of transportation as a punishment for even the most minor of crimes.

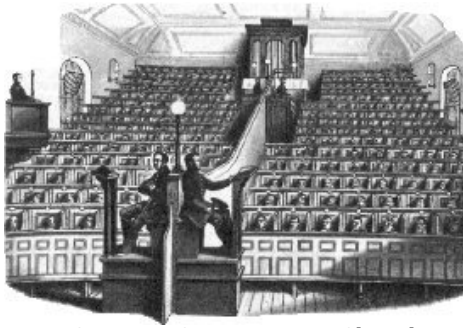
By the latter half of the century a number of social and political factors saw the rapid adoption of imprisonment as the main method of punishment. Primary amongst these was the American Revolution, which brought about a temporary halt to transportation. However, it still remained the main sentencing option and prisoners handed down this punishment were confined to hard labour in the prison hulks, the laid-up transportation ships, as a temporary expedient. [10] Public opposition to capital punishment was also on the increase at this time and both of these factors led to the passing of the 1779 Penitentiary Act, which promoted the use of imprisonment as an alternative sentence to death and transportation, triggering the building of new local prisons or gaols across the country. [11] These operated with so-called ‘regimes of silence’, where prisoners were housed in single cells and allowed no contact with each other in order to force them to ‘reflect on their sins’ and so to reform themselves. They were also required to work all day carrying out simple tasks such as picking 'coir' (tarred rope) and weaving, and this regime of discipline and hard labour was meant to reform the prisoners by teaching them to be industrious, as well as promoting a general deterrent effect. [12]


A Prison Hulk

> “Prison continues, on those who are entrusted to it, a work begun elsewhere, which the whole of society pursues on each individual through innumerable mechanisms of discipline.”
>
> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (1975).

This also marked the beginning of the era of the penal reformer and of the notion that punishment could be both more scientific and humane, though exactly how much influence these largely well-to-do liberals actually had on changes in the prison system, and to what degree their commitment was to reforming prisons rather than the prisoners, is a moot point. [13] What is clear however is that it was rather more the reluctance of juries to convict in capital cases than the efforts of any Abolitionists that brought about

progressively more restrictions on the number of crimes where the death penalty could be imposed for and ultimately removed hangings as a spectator sport in 1868. [14] Alongside these changes, transportation to the colonies had finally been abolished in 1857 in favour of penal servitude, a straightforward punishment of 3 years to life (often with added hard labour), with prison now seen to be acting on a deterrence basis, both general and individual.


A Separate System Prison Chapel

At that time the prison regime had mutated into the 'separate system' as pioneered in Pentonville prison, [15] which quickly became the preferred model for British prisons across the Empire. The 'separate system' was a furtherance of the silent regimes with prisoners stripped of their identities and confined to their cells in what was effectively solitary confinement. There they slept, ate and often exercised as well as carrying out the tasks required under hard labour, such as having to turn a crank for 8 hours a day in order to earn one's food. [16] Even where they were allowed out of their cell they had to wear special caps that allowed them only to see the floor in front of them so they could exercise communally or work the treadmill without being able to see each other. Whilst this work itself was often totally non-productive – labour for labour's sake, it did fulfil the role of keeping the prisoners occupied and helped maintain discipline and prevent unrest. It also signalled the beginning of the true industrialised prison.

> "Prison work is slavish work; and slavish work cannot inspire a human being with the best inspiration of man – the need to work and to create. The prisoner may learn a handicraft, but he will never learn to love his work. In most instances he will learn to hate it."
>
> Peter Kropotkin, *Prisons and Their Moral Influence on Prisoners*, (1887).

By the end of the 19th century, the influence of the reformers had become more prominent in the formulating of prison policy and with the 1898 Prison Act all local prisons were taken under the control of the State and rehabilitation was reinstated as the major focus of imprisonment. Hard labour was abolished and prison work was now once again meant to be productive and reformative. The turn of the century also saw the introduction of borstals for juveniles, which replaced the old reformatories or industrial schools and operated a regime of discipline, hard physical labour and education with a system of graded privileges similar to today's Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) Scheme. [17]


The Crank

The gradual rise of this so-called penal welfare system, one focusing on rehabilitation but still operating alongside a regime of penal servitude, saw further piecemeal liberalisations of the prison regime. Yet it wasn't until 1922, separate confinement was ended and, with the advent of the Criminal Justice Act in 1948 that penal servitude, hard labour and flogging were finally abolished under British law. That Act also established a graduated system of

Yet ETE provision continues to be woefully patchy and inconsistent with workshop employment being promoted over education and training. In EPS prisons in 2007, prisoners were still getting on average 50p less in wages for being on educational course than for working. This in workshops where much of the work experience available does not relate to the outside job market, the focus being mainly on traditional skills. Some prisoners feel that they might as well still be sewing mailbags

Example 3: Work and training in private prisons.

One privately run prison internet media company pays their prisoners £9.50 a week during their training course. The prisoners often deal with 3 corporate clients a day, where each client is being charged £200 a hour for the work the prisoners do in on-line marketing, SWOT analysis & strategy, etc. These prisoners are largely Category C, taking at least 4 years to work through lower categories before their release and most of their skills will be obsolete by release.

Short-term prisoners are one of the most disadvantaged groups here. "Two thirds of prisoners are sentenced to prison for less than a year. Over half of these will be re-convicted within two years. The fact that serving a short sentence is one of the most common reasons given for excluding inmates from programmes is a source of concern." [9]

Prison Work Dosen't Work

Too many prisoners continue to suffer under the inequities of the present regime. It is time for the Government to make its mind up about the Prison Service. Is it to be a modern industrialised gulag, paying third world wages, or is its role to be to modify and control offending behaviour? If it is the latter, then it can only continue to function as a sticking plaster over the ills of society at large, the same role IEP has played since 1995 within the Prison service itself.

Footnotes:

1] *Rehabilitation Of Prisoners: First Report Of Session 2004-05. Vol. 2: Oral And Written Evidence*, House Of Commons Papers 2004-05, HC193-II, TO, London.
2] Ibid.
3] PSO4000, *Incentives and Earned Privileges*, 18/10/2006, HMPS.
4] David Hanson, Prisons Minister, Hansard, Column 87WS, 10 July 2008.
5] Aug. 2008. Currently (Sept. 2010) more than 85,000 prisoners in England and Wales.
6] *Bromley Briefing* Dec 2008 / *Rehabilitation of Prisoners, First Report of Session 2004–05*, Volume I, HoC 21 December 2004.
7] *Costing And Pricing Guidelines For Prison Industries* [Internal HMPS Intranet Document].
8] Harper G. and Chitty C. (Eds.), *The Impact Of Corrections On Re-Offending: A Review Of 'What Works'* [3rd edn.], Home Office Research Study 291, 2005, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, TSO, London.
9] Webster R, Hedderman C, Turnbull P.J. & May T., *Building Bridges To Employment For Prisoners*, Home Office Research Study 226, 2001, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, TSO, London.

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further education courses have even been refused access to educational materials as punishment, despite the Prison Service's mantra in recent years of "education, education, education".

Exploitable Resource

It is no coincidence that the introduction of IEP also coincided with the beginnings of the Prison Industrial Complex in the UK. Prisoners were now seen as a valuable resource to be exploited through the new concept of Contract Services. Previously, the poor quality of prison-produced goods meant that they were only fit for internal consumption but, with IEP, a system now existed to ensure that the 'workers' were forced to maintain higher quality standards.

This also meant that this valuable resource could be exploited directly by the private sector. Contrary to Article 2.2c of the ILO Forced Labour Convention No. 29, 10% of all UK prisoners have been handed over to private prisons to be exploited as these multi-nationals see fit. In turn, these prisoners are sub-contracted out to secondary companies, who run evening & even weekend work sessions to help maximise their profits, all without the need for sick or holiday pay or employment laws.

Purposeful Activity?

Despite the push to exploit the potential of the prison workforce, only a third of the prison population is engaged in work activities at any one time. This affects statistics for the average time spent out of cells and for purposeful activity of prisoners. The current average time outside of cell during the core day is 10 hours (11.5 hrs in private prisons), down 10% from 10 years ago. Prisoners in local prisons fare worst, with 30-40%, and sometimes over 50%, spending 20-22 hours a day in their cells. This in turn is a result of the uneven distribution of non-Administrative Task jobs across the prison estate, the majority being in training prisons.

Example 2: Additional time on your sentence for refusing to work.

One Campaign Against Prison Slavery source has told of how, within 1 year of his release, he refused to fold pieces of paper for mail shots 7.5 hours a day, 5 days a week "because he found it degrading and an insult to the prisoners' intelligence". His stand resulted in a move back to closed conditions and ultimately cost him 2 years on his sentence.

Prisoners' purposeful activity now averages only 3.6 hours a day, down as a direct result of the effect prison overcrowding has had on the relative availability of prison work. This was before the 'standard core week' was cut to its lowest level for nearly 40 years in May, with prisoners now being banged-up on Friday afternoons in order to save £60M a year from prison budgets.

Education & Training vs. Employment?

The lack of education, training and employment has been identified by the Home Office as the single greatest factor behind offending, exceeding all other factors, including housing, relationships, drug and alcohol abuse. [8] Prisoners released without a job are twice as likely to reoffend as those released with an ETE placement. 76 per cent of prisoners leave prison without a job, in part due to the fact that 60% of employers refuse to recruit ex-prisoners, or educational placement. Of the third that have an ETE placement, only 15% arranged it through the prison.

imprisonment, depending on the seriousness of the crime and the offender's criminal record, and set out the model for the modern prison system, with its longer periods of imprisonment ostensibly designed to allow for the training and rehabilitation of prisoners together with the active participation of a trained prison staff in the process.


Strangeways 1990

Yet despite this official acknowledgment that criminals should now be sent to prison solely as punishment rather than for the imposition of punishment, prisons remained brutal places with warders and prisoners in a constant war of attrition. And a rapidly increasing post-war crime rate and prison population further exacerbated this situation. The inevitable result was the prison rebellions of the '70s, '80s and '90s that prompted the government to commission the Woolf report and resulted in the subsequent reforms that established the prisons regime that we largely know today, one operating under the IEP Scheme and the 1999 Prison Rules [18]. Yet running counter to this was the rise of a new 'culture of control', [19] one based on the sort of actuarial processes used in the insurance industry. This new criminology of social control (viewing 'crime as risk' rather than the act of individuals) originated in the mid-1970s in the United States alongside the burgeoning War on Drugs, and was also instrumental in the widespread adoption of the 'three strikes' legislation in subsequent decades, ultimately promoted incapacitation as the major, if not sole, role of imprisonment.

This new ideology was enthusiastically embraced by the likes of Michael Howard, with his 'Prison Works' rhetoric, and Tony Blair, in his 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' repost. [20] Thus people we're locked up not just for the crimes they had been found guilty of but for the ones they were presumed to have carried out but had not been caught for and for the ones they might commit in the future. Mandatory minimum sentences and enhanced and indeterminate sentences for persistent or serious offenders became the rule rather than the exception. [21] This, coupled with the closing of mental hospitals, the increasing widespread availability of Class A drugs and other changes wrought in the social fabric during the Thatcher era, resulted in a massive increase in the prison population through the warehousing of the mentally ill and of habitual substance abusers.

> "Don't do drugs because if you do drugs you'll go to prison, and drugs are really expensive in prison."
>
> John Hardwick.

These same Class A narcotics (mainly heroin) became the drug of choice in prisons with the adoption of the Mandatory Drug Testing regime, [22] a situation that was largely welcomed by prison officers as it helped keep a lid on prisoner-staff tensions whilst focusing any potential violence onto the in-prison drug trade itself. It also opened up a lucrative smuggling trade that helped supplement a number of screws' wage packets alongside their smuggling of mobile phones into their prisons. [23]

Inevitably the new 'culture of control' spread to the outside world resulting in the institutionalisation of an all-pervasive crime-consciousness within the wider population, one fed by the tabloids and increasingly incarcerophilic politicians. So much so that society now appears to be governed by a fear of 'pre-crime', focusing on nebulous concepts such as anti-social behaviour, the wider use of conspiracy (thought crime), a desire for

ubiquitous CCTV surveillance and an apparent priority of mending something called broken Britain'. We also see it manifested in the Coalition plans to cut the number of short-term prisoners in favour of extensive 'post-crime' supervision, with private companies and 'social enterprises' being paid on the basis of their ability to police offenders post-release and keep them on the straight and narrow for the following two years.

This also illustrates another facet of this cost-based mindset within the justice and penal systems, the minimising of costs and the maximisation of profit, and it was the American Prison Industrial Complex that again provided the model. [24] Having successfully created a massive new industrial sector through widespread lobbying of the U.S. government, the creation of industry think tanks and the patronage of pet academics, these private security companies sought to expand across the Atlantic in the late 1980s and were enthusiastically embraced by the Thatcher government. As a result all new prisons since the '90s have either been managed by private companies or built and managed via PFI contracts. Not only do these companies make profits from the building and running of these prisons, they also profit from the labour of the prisoners themselves, hiring them out to private companies. The rationale is ostensibly the same as that of the Victorian reformists: rehabilitation through hard constructive labour, but the ever-growing prison population that increasingly consists of prisoners on indeterminate sentences certainly helps provide a steady and compliant workforce – no need to pay holiday pay or medical insurance, the workers are there 364 days a year [25] and they are certainly not going to walk out on strike.

In contrast, the publicly run prisons have been slow to catch on to this potentially profitable sideline but they have certainly made sure they use their captive workforce to keep their overheads down, with most of the day-to-day maintenance of the institution done by prisoners. This includes everything from the cleaning, cooking and laundry for one's fellow prisoners (known as Administrative Services) to making almost everything a prison consumes internally (from prisoner's socks to the cell furniture and prison bars) [26] in the prison workshops. A small section of these workshops, known as Contract Services, are run for profit however (making and packing products for private companies) and plans are afoot to expand this area by apparently inviting private companies to set up businesses within prisons paying the minimum wage. Quite how this will work and where these workshops will be set up has yet to be revealed but it looks likely that it will be the long-term prisoners that again will make up the workforce and the potential for conflict with other prisoners in the same prison but stuck observing the petty rules of the IEP scheme is significant.

Today's Prison Regime

"There is only one answer to the question, "What can be done to better this penal system?" Nothing. A prison cannot be improved. With the exception of a few unimportant little improvements, there is absolutely nothing to do but demolish it."

Peter Kropotkin, *Prisons and Their Moral Influence on Prisoners*, (1886).

Such is the reality of life in British prisons today: constantly having to observe masses of petty rules that appear to be solely aimed at making the life of the screws easier; constant pointless pat-downs whenever one is going or returning from somewhere; coping

Of the 92,000 in UK prisons, approximately 10% of prisoners are currently on remand, and therefore do not have to work. Additionally, using all the available sources, [6] the best estimates are that less than a third of prisoners (approx. 26,500) being in employment at any one time. Roughly 15,500 (17%) of these are in Administrative Tasks (cleaning, food production & serving, etc.) and 11,500 (12.5%) employed in workshops (the Ministry of Justice have admitted to about 10,000 in England and Wales in a recent FOI answer).

Example 1: An example of a typical low-skill Contract Services job.

Packing units of 8 screws, 4 brass picture plates and a label in 600 blister packs. The job is priced at £7.20, 50% goes to the prison, £2.40 goes to the packer for roughly 6 hours work and the rest is split between the final bulk packers, the stores person, workshop cleaner, etc.

The latter have a turnover of more than £30M at market prices, but the majority of products are consumed within the prison system itself. 40% [4,700] of these prisoners however are employed producing goods for private sector companies in so-called Contract Services, which had an annual turnover of £6.1M in England and Wales in 2007-08. [SPS Industries, whose income from sales has plummeted in the past 5 years, had an income of £1.095M for the same period. NIPS has no prison industries sector.] Many of these tasks are mundane, the equivalent of home piecework e.g. packing and sealing birthday cards in cellophane slips or assembling pendant light fittings, providing "little training, qualifications or resettlement activities for prisoners." [7] Some though require higher skill levels and can provide much more on-the-job training including double glazing manufacture through to on-line marketing and website design.

The average weekly wage across the UK for an employed prisoner is £8.00, slightly less than the average British child receives a week in pocket money according to a 2007 Halifax Building Society survey. The minimum pay rate is £4.00 and for those willing to work but without a job or those classed as short-term sick the rate is £2.50 a week. At the top end of the scale, a few prisoners in privately run prisons and those on day release from open prison may earn over £30. These basic pay rates are exactly the same as they were when the IEP scheme was introduced in 1995

'Gis A Job'

Under IEP it can be argued that it is prison officers (POs) rather than the prisoners themselves that have benefited the most from its introduction. Home Office research commissioned in 1999 showed "an increase in staff confidence and control" but a "reductions in favourable perceptions of staff fairness, relations with staff, regime fairness", both due to POs having greater discretionary powers under IEP than before. This continues to be the case across the system.

One particular ongoing bone of contention is that jobs are largely in the gift of POs and, as such, they can be used as a basis for punishment and reward. The system is seen to operate in an arbitrary and often vindictive manner. Cross a PO and you could find yourself given the worst job available or with no job at all as an alternative to being up on a charge before the Governor. Or maybe you'll just find your pay at the end of the week is mysteriously 'short'.

Prison work is also not a thing of choice. You have no right to refuse work and if you do you will be punished. Initially it will be loss of privileges already earned, such as access to the canteen or extra visits. Then comes downgrading of IEP level or 50% loss of earnings. Worse still are segregation and extra days on your sentence. Prisoners pursuing

PRISON WORKS?

It is a commonly held view, one certainly held by the Government and most prison reformers, that the primary function of prison labour is to provide training and work experience to aid a prisoner to find a post-release job. This is certainly not backed up by the everyday experiences of many prisoners and by the history and statistics of prison labour itself.

The primary function of prison work is in fact the control of the prison population – give them something to do to keep them occupied and out of trouble. Even the Prison Service reluctantly acknowledges this "The aim of Prison Industries is to occupy prisoners in out-of-cell activity {*and wherever possible*} to help them gain skills, qualifications and work experience to improve their employment prospects upon release." [my emphasis] [1]
Even more bluntly "The desired outcomes from prison industries are:
(i) to ensure dynamic security by providing purposeful activity at relatively low cost; and
(ii) to support education, training, and employment (ETE) outcomes on release. [2]
The order of priority is no accident.

IEP And The Woolf Report

The backbone of the system that ensures this "dynamic security" is the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme (IEP). IEP was designed to ensure prisoners good behaviour and participation in purposeful activity, by offering as carrots a series of earnable privileges such as extra personal visits, time out of cell for association and even, nowadays, the right to smoke. In a wonderful piece of sophistry, the Prison Service claim there are no sticks in the system – a prisoner who fails to behave correctly or maintain progress "may be downgraded to the level below (*as an administrative measure, not as a punishment* imposed at adjudication)." [my emphasis] [3]

IEP was first introduced in 1995 in response to the Woolf Report into events at Strangeways prison in 1990 and a whole host of other prison rebellions in the 1980's and early 1990's. Crudely put, the Government wished to re-establish control within the prison system and put an end to the power of the 'old lags code' and working class solidarity amongst prisoners. Competition for privileges and the limited number of jobs available in prisons were to be the tools of that repression. As far as the present government is concerned, IEP has worked – "This has been a valuable policy which has played an important part in securing order and control in prisons". [4]

The Bare Bones

At the time of the Woolf Report, the prison population stood at 45,000. It has nearly doubled since then, more than 25,000 of that in the last 10 years, mainly without a concomitant increase in the prison estate. As a result, the availability of prison jobs has significantly decreased.

The fact that there are three separate UK Prison Services, all responsible to different sets of governmental organisations with different standards for the reporting of operational statistics, makes it difficult to draw an accurate picture of current job avail-ability in the UK. For example, we do not even know the exact figures for the current prison population. In England and Wales (HMPS) the figures are released on a weekly basic, whereas in Scotland (SPS) and Northern Ireland (NIPS) the figures appear to only be released on a yearly basis. Currently there are around 92,000 prisoners in the UK [some 83,000 in E&W, ~7,400 in Scotland & 1,500 in N.I.], [5] excluding the 500 or so held in Secure Children's Homes (STCs) and approximately 15,000 people detained under the Mental Health Act or up to 3,000 in Immigration detention.

with prison officers that range from the ex-army or cops who constantly strut around with an exaggerated military demeanour (or the wannabees who wear their caps like a guardsman), to time-servers who are constantly hiding themselves away doing the sudoku or quick crossword all day, to the social worker types who genuinely want to help or even be your friend; or the increasing number of female screws who are far less testosterone-fuelled and thankfully tend to seek to defuse tensions. Food and a prison uniform are provided for you (though you might be able to earn the privilege of wearing your own clothes if you are a good boy or girl) and most other things like toothpaste, toilet rolls, extra food, writing paper and envelopes you can buy from the canteen – the prison shop, as long as you are willing to wait for the orders to be processed, as it is run more like a mail order service than a corner shop.

On Basic IEP you are allowed a personal radio, 2 one-hour visits every 28 days, to send 2 free letters a week (in addition to those funded by the prisoners themselves) and to receive a 'reasonable' amount of post, plus limited access to the PIN phone system and personal cash. Everything else including more IEP pay, own clothes, extra and improved visits, in-cell TV, extra time out of cell (association) and even potentially the right to smoke are all extra earned privileges. The 'core week', the time allocated for work, education and the various 'offender behaviour programmes' (OBPs – cod psychology courses run by trainee psychologists – the so-called 'psychobabes', that are based on little or no empirical research and that most prisoners think are a joke), is 32 hours. The rest of the time you'll spend on association if you are fortunate and banged up if you are not. Association only happens if the screws are available and recent cuts have meant that the average time spent out of cell is on the decrease.

As a general rule of thumb, if you end up in a high security Category A prison you are either considered to be a danger to society or you are a real troublemaker. This is where the least compliant and those diagnosed with the latest prison psychopathy – Dangerous Severe Personality Disorder (DSPD) – are sent. Your time here will be long and unpleasant. Category B and C training prisons are where all the Prison Industries jobs are and almost all the prison's population either work and/or take education and OBP courses. It obviously takes longer to progress from the Cat B than the Cat C, but this is the one area of prison life where there are no hard and fast rules. Local prisons house short-term and remand prisoners and have regimes largely based on enforced boredom as the available prison jobs are in Administrative Service and little else. You can (and many do) spend up to 23 hours a day banged up but the boredom is often broken up by yet another enforced move, at little or no notice, to another prison half way across the country. Category D open prisons are the end of the line for long-term prisoners and are meant to get them used to life outside jail by going on day release, etc. But the pointless petty rules are still enforced and you still have to suffer your fair share of pat-downs. Such is the ordered pointlessness of life at Her Madge's Pleasure and when you do eventually get out beware, because half of all prisoners are reconvicted within a year! [27]

So, in looking at the long and ever-changing history of the prison system in Britain the obvious conclusion that we have to draw is that our political masters have become increasingly disillusioned with the Victorian penal welfare model of rehabilitation and have instead turned to one of wholesale incapacitation in order to deal with what appears to be an on-going failure of general and, in

particular, of individual deterrence. Yet those same powers-that-be have not abandoned the utility of prison labour altogether. Instead they have sought to turn their factories of repression, those monuments of human hypocrisy and cowardice that they call prison into an altogether different and far more productive type of factory – one that has turned a previously unproductive socially marginalised underclass into a valuable and readily exploitable economic resource. An altogether different role for prison.

Footnotes:

1] Peter Kropotkin, *In Russian and French Prisons*, London: Ward and Downey; 1887 and Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*. New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association. 1912.

2] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.

3] Since the abolition of hanging with the passing of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

4] Christian Parenti*, Crime As Social Control.*, from Social Justice Vol. 27, No. 3, 2000.

5] Monty Python's Matching Tie and Handkerchief:

Klaus: It's a fair cop, but society's to blame.

Detective: Agreed. We'll be charging them too.

6] The concept of the ‘offender’ has become all-pervasive in criminology with the adoption of the preventative sentencing mode. No longer is someone who has been released from prison simply an ex-criminal i.e. a regular citizen who just happens to have a criminal record (which may even be ‘spent’) but s/he now remains labelled by his/her previous behaviour for the rest of his/her life as the ex-offender. The modern equivalent of the mark of Cain.

7] Conveniently ignoring the fact that murder, rape and pillage can and do occur within prison walls.

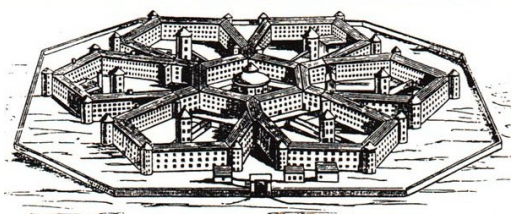
8] Though there was some talk of transportation giving a criminal the chance to reform through the inevitable sentence of hard labour and to make a new life for themselves in the colonies, it was largely designed to rid the country of an unwanted criminal under class and few if any of those transported were expected to actually make their way back to England as free and reformed men or women.

9] The rich and powerful could of course expect to be locked away in a dungeon or maybe accommodated in exile in a well-appointed castle tower somewhere if they were not already destined to face the gibbet or one of the other more inventive medieval forms of execution.

10] Those sentenced in London for example ended up dredging the Thames or carrying out work on shore in the Naval dockyards at Chatham, returning to their ship at night. Transportation resumed in 1787 with a new destination: Australia, and because of the distance, it was considered an even more severe punishment than transportation to the American colonies.

11] One adverse effect of the temporary ending of transportation and the increasing ‘loss of faith’ in hanging was a dramatic increase in the numbers of public floggings.

12] This largely Utilitarian approach reached its nadir in 1799 with Jeremy Bentham’s 'panopticon' prison design. He never lived to see the opening in 1816 of Millbank, the first national i.e. State penitentiary in Britain and the only panopticon prison ever to be built in the country. Tate Modern now stands on the site.



Millbank Prison

13] Foucault argues that this retreat from what he termed the ‘culture of spectacle' i.e. punishment of the body in public to the origin of the ‘carceral society’, one where punishment is internalised, both physically and psychologically, as discipline coupled with the 'moral' reform of the prisoner. The design and operation of Bentham's Panopticon became emblematic in Foucault's eyes of this change and its subsequent spread to other social institutions such as schools and the workplace i.e. prisons are not industrial in form, industry is seen as carceral. All play a role in the internalisation of rules and regulations (the mechanisms of power).

14] To a degree the ruling elite also wished to spare their own sensibilities and hide the act behind prison walls, whilst still continuing to require the threat of the ‘ultimate sanction’ in order to maintain order and their positions of privilege. In contrast, in mainland Europe the motive for abolition was the fear amongst the ruling classes of widespread unrest, with the crowds attending executions mocking authority and celebrating the person to be killed.

15] Opened in 1842 and built by prisoners awaiting transportation to the colonies.

16] It was estimated that 10,000 cranks would take up to eight hours and twenty minutes.

17] For a discussion of IEP see pp. 8, 15-16.

18] See: PSO4000, *Incentives and Earned Privileges*, 2006, HMPS and PSO 0100, *The Prison Rules*, 1999, HMPS.

19] See: David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*, OUP, 2001.

20] The ultimate irony of this phrase is that it is exactly the same principle the old welfarists criminology was based upon: tackling social deprivation as well as reforming the individual. Blair clearly did not mean the same thing when he coined the term as he was clearly focusing on individual deterrence and his understanding of the ‘causes of crime’ was very much along the lines of today’s Tory ‘broken society’ rhetoric.

21] This type of sentence had already been tried in Britain with the 1908 Prevention of Crimes Act, which allowed for judges to sentence habitual criminals, i.e. those convicted of at least three crimes since the age of sixteen, to penal servitude followed by an open-ended period of imprisonment at hard labour. Judges however largely refused to use the provision.

22] Cannabis, which used to be the drug of choice in prisons, remains in the system for prolonged periods and can be detected up to 30 days after use, whereas heroin is cleared from the system in less than 7 days.

23] “[T]he majority of drug-dealing within prison is highly-organised and involves the collusion of around 1,000 corrupt members of staff – around seven prison officers per prison... A prison officer bringing a gram of heroin into prison every week (about the size of two paracetamol tablets) could expect to more than double his basic salary." – Max Chambers, *Coming Clean: Combating Drug Misuse In Prisons*, Policy Exchange, 2010.

24] In the States long-term maximum-security prisons often operate call centres where prisoners work booking flights for the major airlines. Other prisons have workshops where prisoners assemble and repair circuit boards for the big computer companies like IBM and Dell, make license plates, and all the US army’s helmets or uniforms for McDonalds.

25] Even prisoners don’t have to work on Christmas day.

26] One of the few things (apart from the prisons locks for obvious reasons) that are consumed within prisons but are not made by the prisoners themselves are the screws’ uniforms. This practice stopped many decades ago because of constant complaints by officers about the quality. They are now sourced from China, most probably made in the Laogai prison labour camps. It should also be noted that Contract Service prisoners are not above a little bit of sabotage on their products as a number of companies have found out to their cost.

27] Ministry of Justice, *Reoffending Of Adults: Results From The 2008 Cohort*, London: MoJ, 2010.