

STILL ON TOUR

Still on tour

A Reflection of 6 Years of Prison Life In: HMP Wormwood Scrubs; HMP Brixton; HMP Coldingly; HMP Wandsworth; HMP Parkhurst; HMP Winson Green; HMP Long Lartin; HMP Durham; HMP Everthorpe; HMP Barlinnie; HMP Pentonville.

Prison life for someone coming in for the first time, can be a very harrowing experience. No-one expects jail to be a bed of roses, but in certain establishments it is nothing short of the obscene. Where in today's modern society does a person have to eat and sleep with a 2 gallon bucket in the corner for his toilet? This is not the only degradation one has to suffer. There is also the indignity of only having one change of clothing and one shower per week. It is true to say that if a person did not commit some offence, then they would not have to suffer these obscenities, but surely as in the words of the law masters, "when one commits a crime the punishment is to be incarcerated from society". Surely that means to be kept apart from public life, and not be kept penned up like a pig in its sty.

Then we come down to the people who run these establishments, ie Officers and Governors. It is true and fair to say that since 'Fresh Start', the strict regime of certain prisons has eased slightly. Examples being, it was once obligatory to wear only prison dress and also, only to speak when spoken to. Now when you come into these places, you are asked if you prefer to keep your own shoes or trainers. Also in some establishments you are also allowed to have such items as your own underwear and sports clothing, which has certainly helped to keep a person in touch with the outside world. Though I believe the most important factor in the prison society, is the installation of the telephone. You will find at least 3 in every 10 inmates have neither learned to read or write, but can express themselves more clearly orally, therefore for those individuals the telephone is a god-send. It is also true to say that these individuals have also the chance to learn basic reading and writing from the education departments, which each establishment has. It is only a skive for certain individuals. These are the people who think it is the in thing to be in

and out of prison all the time. Officers and Governors are people from all walks of life and, being sincere, most of them are approachable people who are put into this job as responsible carers towards inmates. There is of course now talk of privatising the prison service. In my view this could be a good thing in certain aspects of the job i.e. catering and the NHS side, but definitely not the discipline. A con respects the prison officer, but there is a very big doubt as to whether he would let a Group 4 security guard tell him what to do. The aspect that prison is a deterrent is ludicrous, even with all the bad points that have been made. I feel that the Government should take another look at the Woolf report and maybe then they will find that the system might just work, after all.

A is a serving prisoner in HMP Pentonville.



Peter Dailymple

Back from home leave

Cor blimey!! Here I am once again back in Pentonville. Have not long come back from my home leave and personally I think home leave is a wind up. OK it's nice in a way to be on the other side of this wall and do all the things you dream of whilst doing bird here. You probably won't 'Adam and Eve' it but I found love while I was out there for the 6 days I was allowed and I've now got pains and strains. I also learnt that there's definitely not enough hours in a day.

Being behind bars again just rubs salt into the wound but it makes you value your freedom a lot more I must say. Even when I'm on the 'dog and bone' to a girlfriend it seems funny because I was actually with her the other day. Prison is a mentally draining and nasty experience, compared to how people think it is. I feel sorry for the straight guy who has never been in prison before and can't imagine how he must be feeling. People say this and that about prison but you actually have to experience it yourself to know

what it is like.

I've been in prison twice before and I have been involved in crime since I was 20 years old. I'm not proud of it but I see it as a sign of the times and feel society will get a lot worse. Unemployment, mortgage rises, pay cuts, no jobs, homelessness, I mean what has society got for people who haven't got no education, no qualifications and no working experience etc. All this government seem intent on doing is piling people on to the dole and sticking them on schemes, knowing that there are no jobs available for the majority of people and besides that they want to cut the dole money as well. They are having a 'bubble bath' (laugh). How do people survive? Is everyone destined to visit a prison at some stage in their life? Judging by our juveniles it seems that way.

A small part, (and I mean a small part) of me will miss this place after being here for 15 months and getting to know people from all walks of life and the 'scams' they were up to or involved in. It's true when people say that you learn more in here about crime than you would do out there, listening to some politician or whoever. Still, it's up to us in the long run to decide what we want out of life.

I feel there isn't no racial attitude here. That's mainly down to drugs and the trouble they bring. I think the majority of convicts had had a puff (cannabis) and although it isn't allowed it keeps the place quiet. One thing I strongly disagree on is the use of Class 'A' drugs in prison. Outside of this place then it's up to the individual himself but in here a lot of people get involved through boredom or just to make the days go quicker. This I don't agree with. I see people come in every day and by just one look you can tell they are the dreaded 'Junkies' who look scruffy, always scratching and full of spots and scabs. How can those people allow themselves to get that low in life? It's their choice and theirs alone, I suppose.

17 days to go and I don't want to see this side of life again. What an experience it's been. When I eventually go from here there will be someone else to fill my place and there always will be for years to come.

B has just completed a sentence in HMP Pentonville.