

"IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?"¹

**Prison activism
and abolition in
Scotland
1972-1987**

Martha O'Carroll

CONTENTS

3	I. INTRODUCTION
4	METHODOLOGY: ARCHIVAL ACTIVIST MATERIALS
5	II. CONTEXT
6	PRISONER RIGHTS AND ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENTS
6	SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND UNREST OUTSIDE THE PRISON
6	CATEGORISATION, SEGREGATION AND PROTEST INSIDE SCOTTISH PRISONS
8	III. ACADEMIC LITERATURE
9	PRISONER RIGHTS AND ABOLITIONIST GROUPS IN THE LITERATURE
10	COUNTERING OFFICIAL NARRATIVES: THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY AND SUBSEQUENT LITERATURE
11	IV. ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS ACTIVE ON SCOTTISH PRISONS 1972-1987
12	PROP
13	RADICAL ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON
14	SCOTTISH PRISONER SUPPORT COMMITTEE
16	SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES
17	V. GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS ON SCOTTISH PRISONS 1972-87
18	SEGREGATION UNITS AT INVERNESS & PETERHEAD: 'CLOSE THE CAGES' 1978-1987
19	DEATHS IN CUSTODY: 'SMASH GLENOCHIL DEATH CAMP' 1984-85
21	PETERHEAD: 'IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?' 1972- 1986
23	VI. CONCLUSION: THEMES AND LEGACY OF PRISON ACTIVISM IN THE 1970S/80S
24	KEY FEATURES OF THE CAMPAIGNS
26	RESISTANCE TO PRISONS THEN AND NOW
27	REFERENCES

1 Quote from a 1984 letter from prisoners at Peterhead Prison following a riot in A hall (republished in Fight Racism Fight Imperialism, 1986)

I. INTRODUCTION



The global resurgence of abolitionism as a social movement and theoretical framework invites reflection on the history and potential of these ideas in Scotland.

This briefing reviews the work of organisations and groups engaged in radical and abolitionist campaigns for prisoner rights, and resistance to penal reforms in Scotland during a period of heightened anti-prison activism. Archival materials from 1972-1987 bring to light a number of grassroots groups and campaigns in Scotland not previously researched. The 1970/80s were undeniably a period of violence and trauma for prisoners, families, and staff, but this review indicates it was also a time of organised resistance and shifting perspectives.

The purpose of this briefing is threefold: Firstly, prisoner and grassroots resistance between 1972-

1987 is often omitted from Scottish penal history. By foregrounding activist materials this briefing offers a fresh vantage point on this period from the perspective of grassroots and political responses to developments as they happened, as opposed to official narratives or subsequent academic reflections.

Secondly, the mainstreaming of abolitionist ideas in recent years, galvanised in part by widening support for the Black Lives Matter movement and calls to defund the police, necessitates proper consideration of what resistance to carceral systems means in a country like Scotland. This briefing highlights that these issues and analyses are not new to Scotland. Contemporary movements can learn from this history of grassroots support for prisoner protests, campaigns to hold institutions to account and reporting to raise public awareness and challenge official narratives.

Finally, this briefing is a response to the despair that comes with decades of liberal penal reform and the persistence of the high imprisonment rate, prison expansion and poor conditions in Scottish prisons. Recent academic work has highlighted the necessity of abolitionist analysis to interrogate Scotland's 'progressive' penal reform (Malloch 2017; Armstrong 2018). Exploring the history of resistance to prisons in Scotland offers an alternative to continued support of seemingly benign cycles of penal reform that have proved expansive and harmful.

METHODOLOGY: ARCHIVAL ACTIVIST MATERIALS

In order to focus on a counter-perspective, this briefing foregrounds archival activist material from 1972-1987. 'Activist material' is used to refer to material produced by grassroots organisations and political groups to report on and respond to issues in Scottish prisons, aimed at their membership or a public audience. The materials with most relevance to Scotland were produced by five groups: the National Prisoners Movement (PROP), Radical Alternatives to Prison (RAP), Scottish Prisoner Support Committee (SPSC), Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) and the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties (SCCL). The materials include newspapers which contain manifestos, articles, interviews and prisoner letters; independent reports and briefings on issues in Scottish prisons; and other campaign materials such as pamphlets and posters. The proliferation of activist materials reflects the central role of print media in raising awareness and building support for social movements in the 1970s and 1980s. In an effort to convey the immediacy and grassroots tone of the publications, the briefing includes images and quotes from the material.

The activist materials were sourced from library archives and directly from individuals² as I searched for examples of resistance to prisons and penal reform in Scottish history. Scottish social movement archives were searched for references to prison and prisoners and English materials on prisoner rights and abolition searched for references to Scotland. This briefing includes material produced by grassroots organisations and political groups and excludes material produced by liberal penal reform groups and officials. The scope of the briefing reflects the material available and key groups and campaigns have been selected based on their recurrence across publications.

With regards to language used to refer to the violence and unrest during this period, different terms used in the official discourse and activist accounts play a key part in the ideological debate about prisoner protest. Whilst

this debate cannot be adequately discussed here, it is important to note that the violence of prisons is both physical and institutional, and shaped by the power dynamics inherent to a prison environment. Similarly, the language used to refer to unrest in prisons plays an important part in how events are understood, for instance 'riot' indicates violence, 'incident' often used in official accounts depoliticises events and 'protest' emphasises the agency and demands of prisoners. For the purposes of this review the term 'unrest' and 'protest' are used to reflect how events were described by prisoners and activists in the materials.

The briefing starts with an overview of the prison 'crisis' and political climate in Scotland during the 1970s and 1980s. This is followed by a selective review of the academic literature with a focus on how the groups and campaigns feature in the literature and the overarching theme of countering official narratives through prisoner voices. Drawing almost exclusively from the activist materials, the main body of the briefing profiles each of the groups involved and then summarises three of the campaigns in this period. To conclude, the key features of the groups and campaigns are drawn out in order to reflect on the similarities, differences and resonance for contemporary Scotland.

Based on the material that could be obtained, this is a partial review, but it is the first time this material has been brought together to map grassroots prisoner-rights and abolitionist movements in Scotland. It is also a selective overview with the aim of being a resource for a wide audience to inform, and inspire, contemporary movements challenging cycles of penal reform in Scotland.

The themes will be developed further in ongoing doctoral research exploring connections with contemporary community justice reform and resistance to penal reform in Scotland.


² Material was accessed at the National Library of Scotland, Spirit of Revolt Archive and Caledonian University Library archive, in addition to materials provided by John Moore and Sarah Armstrong

II. CONTEXT



The protest and activism that took place in and around Scottish prisons between 1972 and 1987 was a response to longstanding issues regarding the conditions, violence, and brutality of the Scottish prison system.

But this resistance must also be located within the prisoner rights movements across the UK and Europe and in relation to wider social movements and mass industrial action taking place in Scotland. This section briefly sketches each of these contexts in turn.



PRISONER RIGHTS AND ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENTS

The history of organised resistance to Scottish prisons stretches back further than 1972, for instance at the start of the twentieth century Suffragette women imprisoned for their political protest resisted through hunger-strikes and pickets of solidarity at Perth prison (Leneman, 1993). But the 1970-80s was a distinct period of mobilisation in and around Scottish prisons which connected with a broader movement against the prison system. This briefing highlights the connections between Scottish prisons and British prisoner and abolitionist groups which also coincided with the development of critical criminology and abolitionist scholarship in Europe (Cohen 1985; Hulsman 1986; Carlen 1990). In particular, the foundational work of Thomas Mathiesen (1974) and Michel Foucault (1975) which influenced, and was influenced by, movements actively campaigning for prisoner rights – the Norwegian Prison Movement (KROM) and the Group d'Information sur les prisons (GIP) in France.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND UNREST OUTSIDE THE PRISON

Outside of the prison the 1970s and 1980s saw further unrest across Scottish society, with mass industrial action and the emergence of liberatory social movements. As a result of large-scale deindustrialisation Scotland faced huge rises in unemployment and poverty. In response to the closure of mines, factories and shipyards, and cutbacks to workers' rights and working conditions the period was dominated by labour disputes and industrial action, most notably the 'winter of discontent' in 1978-79 and the miners' strike in 1984-85.

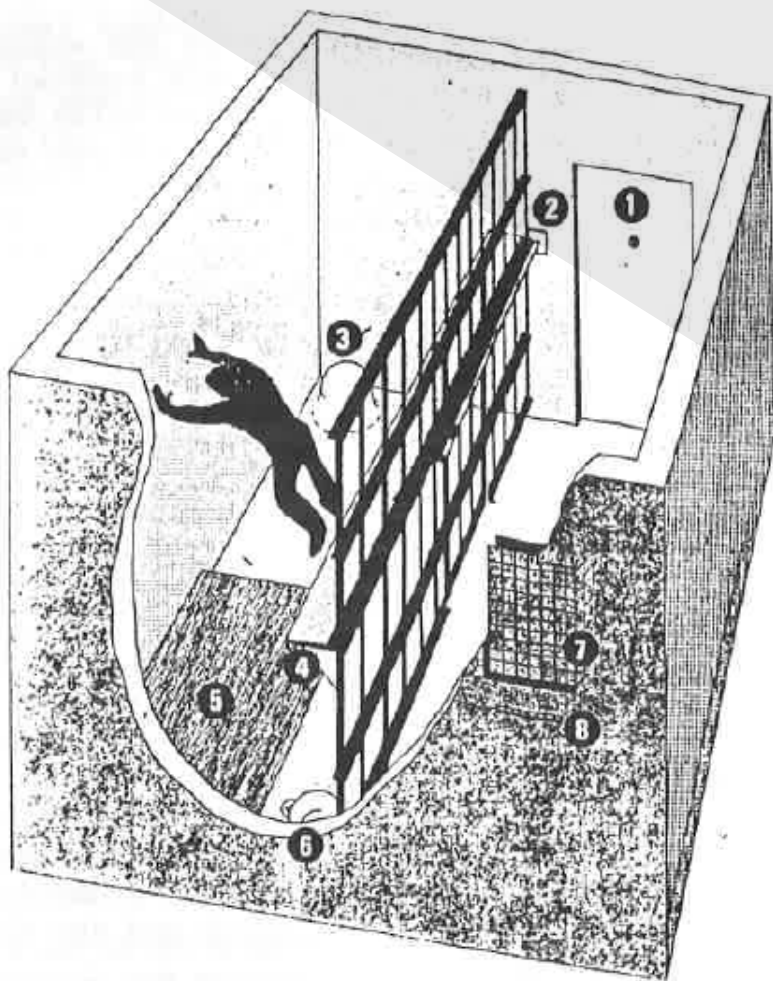
But it was not just the unions that mobilised in this period, different social movements on the left were engaged in liberatory struggles: the first women's refuge in Scotland opened in 1973 and Scottish Women's Aid founded in 1976; anti-racist groups formed in this period, such as the Scottish Council for Racial Equality in 1980 and Scottish Asian Action Committee in 1981; anti-nuclear protests were common and included the start of Faslane peace camp in 1982; and the Scottish Union of Mental Patients formed in 1971 alongside broader challenges to psychiatric institutions. Ongoing political unrest in Northern Ireland connected to republican movements in Scotland and though Irish political prisoners were not detained in Scotland there was support for their campaigns. Connections between the outside struggles and the protests and campaigns inside prison are evident, many of the social movements came into direct conflict with the criminal justice system through aggressive policing and criminalisation of its members, and indirectly as all were part of a broader shift challenging liberal ideologies and authoritarianism.

CATEGORISATION, SEGREGATION AND PROTEST INSIDE SCOTTISH PRISONS

In Scottish prisons, the 1970s and 1980s were considered to be a period of 'crisis' particularly across the men's estate with a rising population, brutal regimes and poor conditions in ageing institutions. The daily average prison population in Scotland rose to an unprecedented level and by 1987 Scotland ranked second only to Northern Ireland as the European country with the highest imprisonment rate per 100,000 of its population (Scraton, Sim and Skidmore 1988: 249). There was also a steady rise in the number of long-term prisoners, who the authorities claimed to be at the centre of the violence and unrest inside the prisons.

During the 1970s and early 1980s Scottish prisons relied on disciplinary regimes, prisoner categorisation and segregation to maintain order. From 1966 onwards prisoners were categorised by age, length of sentence and aptitude for training; prisoners under the age of 35 and deemed to have no aptitude were sent to Peterhead prison in the far north-east of Scotland. 'Subversive prisoners' deemed violent and non-compliant were sent to segregation units at Peterhead and Porterfield Prison, also known as the 'Cages' at Inverness, which held prisoners in isolation deepening punitive conditions. In seeming contrast to the use of segregation units, the Barlinnie Special Unit (BSU) was opened in 1973 also for 'long term and potentially violent prisoners' but which purported to be a therapeutic community with a more relaxed regime and supportive relations between prisoners and officers.

Despite the use of segregation and special units, unrest and violence in Scottish prisons escalated in the 1980s, with protests at Low Moss Prison in 1985, Barlinnie and Saughton Prison in 1986, culminating in a 'major incident' at Peterhead prison in 1986 which involved a roof top demonstration, the burning of A Hall and hostage taking of a prison officer. Complaints about brutal regimes, poor conditions, lack of family contact and accountability had been raised by prisoners over a number of years. The prison responded with the use of violence, lockdowns, solitary confinement, segregation and siege tactics. This response, combined with the failure to investigate or address prisoners' concerns, provoked outrage both inside and outside of the prison. Whilst this period was characterised as a time of 'crisis' for Scottish prisons, an Independent Inquiry into the protests at Peterhead and subsequent academic writing contend that the problems were not a sudden crisis but indicative of the longstanding and widespread issues raised by prisoners, resulting from structural issues and challenges to the legitimacy of the Scottish prison division (Chadwick 1996).



FRFI March '85


◀ **THE CAGE:** 1) Main cell door (steel), with spy hole. 2) Cage door can only be opened by device outside cell. 3) Concrete bollard seat (recent addition). 4) Metal shelf welded to cage front. 5) Wooden planks on floor as bed. 6) Chamber pot. 7) Double-glazed opaque window. Cannot be opened. Difficult to tell whether it's night or day. 8) Ventilation system, eight quarter-inch slats.

Figure 1: Diagram of 'The Cage' a cell at Inverness Cages, printed in *Fight Racism Fight Imperialism* (1986: 23)

III. ACADEMIC LITERATURE



This briefing foregrounds the words and actions of prisoners and grassroots organisations, however, a brief review of the academic research on this period contextualises how the groups and campaigns featured in the activist materials are discussed in the existing literature, and shows the common thread across the activist and academic work to counter official narratives.



PRISONER RIGHTS AND ABOLITIONIST GROUPS IN THE LITERATURE

UK accounts of prisoner rights and prison abolition in the 1970s and 1980s tend to focus on England based groups RAP and PROP, with limited reference to Scotland (e.g. Ryan & Sim 2007; Ryan & Ward 2015). In an overview of the prisoner rights and abolitionist movement in the UK, Ryan and Ward overlook almost all Scottish groups and campaigns, mentioning only the Gateway Exchange and Jimmy Boyle (perhaps the most well-known resident of the Barlinnie Special Unit) as the outside supporters of the 1980s protests in Scottish prisons (2015: 111). Nevertheless, the literature focused on England still provides insight on the dynamics and impact throughout the UK of the movement in the 1970/80s. Ryan and Ward point out that the prisoner voices of the period were not as directly abolitionist or politically and racially aware as groups in the United States, although:

“Their politics appeared less vibrant, but the stories they told broke the secrecy surrounding UK prison to reveal a catalogue of violent and corrupt practices engaged in by the authorities that informed the public that the reform agenda might be fiction.”

Ryan & Ward, 2015: 111

Groups like RAP and PROP challenged the widely accepted notion that prisons were concerned with reform and that liberal penal reform groups were an improving force (Ryan and Ward, 2015: 112), positing that the role of penal reform was in fact to strengthen and legitimise the prison. The impact of this critique, they argue, was not only to have “reinject politics into penal reform” (Ryan and Ward, 2015: 112) but also to have “penetrated public discourse” (Ryan and Sim 2007: 701).

In the literature on Scottish penal reform in the 1970/80s there are few references to the grassroots groups and campaigns featured here. One remarkable exception to this is Chadwick’s (1996) interviews with prison staff about the unrest in Scottish prisons in the 1970/80s, which provide some insight into the perception of the prisoner rights campaigns and their influence on the protests in Scottish prisons. On the development of the protests from 1972 onwards, one senior manager recalls: “PROP arrived down south which caused a bit of a stir - we had the odd sit down in the yard” (Interview response, Chadwick, 1996: 227) and another interviewee recalled rumours amongst staff that prisoners were “orchestrating this mass campaign” across Scottish prisons (1996: 229). One governor interviewed dismissed the protests as a “copy-cat influence from down south” but admitted the prison was not equipped to respond to the:

“... pressure group influence being organised on a scale that we had never met before... far more sophisticated and prisoners were probably far more informed about what other prisoners were thinking and doing elsewhere.”

Interview response quoted in Chadwick, 1996:231

These interviews highlight a sense amongst staff that prisoners had changed, they were questioning the legitimacy and authority of the prison (Chadwick, 1996: 230). These responses indicate some of the influence of the wider prisoner-rights movement in Scotland but the full extent of this movement in Scotland has not been fully explored. This briefing begins to explore this movement through archival material and reveals connections between English groups and Scottish prisons in the 1970/80s, as well as the formation of local Scottish groups and campaigns.

COUNTERING OFFICIAL NARRATIVES: THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY AND SUBSEQUENT LITERATURE

Countering official narratives and sharing prisoner perspectives was a central function of the Independent Inquiry on Peterhead (1987) and continues into the subsequent literature (Sim 2009; Scraton, Sim and Skidmore 1988 and 1991; Chadwick 1996), as well as a number of Scottish prison memoirs such as Boyle (1977) and Collins (1997). However, the activist material featured in this briefing also engaged in countering official narratives and sharing prisoner voices for years prior to the 1987 Inquiry. There is therefore a common thread through the activist materials, formalised in the Independent Inquiry and continues through to the academic literature.

The Independent Inquiry into the 1986 protests at Peterhead prison surveyed prisoners, families and organisations in order to challenge to the official narrative presented by the prison, politicians and media which claimed that the unrest in Scottish prisons was caused by violent long-term prisoners with nothing to lose, and that overall the prison regime was fair and just (Scraton, Sim and Skidmore 1991: 39). The Inquiry Committee was led by the Gateway Exchange and included author and former prisoner Jimmy Boyle as well as researchers Joe Sim, Phil Scraton and Paula Skidmore. The Independent Inquiry's report, *The Roof Comes Off*, published a year after the events at Peterhead, documented prisoner's enduring experiences of brutality, violence, poor conditions, lack of privacy and lack of prison accountability (1987). The voices and demands of prisoners as a 'counter-narrative' to the official discourse was formalised by the Inquiry report and it became one of the most well-known grassroots interventions in Scottish penal history.

In the 1988 article and 1991 book *Prisons Under Protest*, Scraton, Sim and Skidmore build on the original aim of

the Independent Inquiry and aim to shift understandings of prisons and prisoner protests more generally. The use of prisoner voices is central to this mission, in the preface to *Prisons Under Protest*, Jimmy Boyle describes the book as "unequivocally about the unheard voice of the underdog" (1991: vii). Similarly, in Chadwick's research on prison staff and prisoners' experiences in the 1970/80s she juxtaposes the 'view from above' with the 'view from below' (1996). By focusing on prisoner experiences both Chadwick (1996) and Scraton, Sim and Skidmore (1991) share the reality of life in the prison and crucially they expose that the issues raised by prisoners were long standing, persistent and widespread.

This shared aim across the activist materials, the Independent Inquiry and some academic literature is unsurprising given the involvement of particular researchers (Phil Scraton, Joe Sim and Kathryn Chadwick all wrote pieces for RAP and SCCL) and the influence of critical criminology and prison abolition at the time. The significance of this commitment to challenging the dominant narratives is conveyed by Sim:

"... for all the 'state talk' (Corrigan and Sayer, 1985) (and indeed much of criminology's 'talk') about rehabilitation, reform and progress since the end of the nineteenth century, prison life for many of the confined remained bleak, brutal and bewildering."

Sim, 2009:25

The academic literature also draws on abolitionist theory to communicate the possibility and necessity of transformational change from the violence and desperation of the time (Chadwick 1996; Scraton, Sim and Skidmore 1991; Sim 2009). While the Independent Inquiry and academic literature formalised and sustained the commitment to counter official narratives through prisoner experiences, the activist materials demonstrate this commitment from a grassroots level for years prior.

IV. ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS ACTIVE ON SCOTTISH PRISONS 1972-1987

This section introduces the groups and content that feature in the activist materials, drawing on their manifestos, and publications, sketching an initial map of the movement in Scotland between 1972 and 1987.

A broad distinction can be drawn between those who campaigned for individual prisoner rights through changes to the law and prisoner voices, and those who took a political stance against prisons as institutions. There is also a distinction between those who focused exclusively on issues in prison and those who located these issues within a broader struggle against capitalism or for civil liberties. A lack of funding and support from state agencies for these groups reflects their oppositional character but also ensured their independence (Chadwick, 1996: 176). Differences in politics and strategies are evident throughout but overall, there is a shared solidarity with prisoners, scepticism towards reform and penal reform groups, independence from state institutions and a political critique of the prison system. Furthermore because of overlapping politics and Scotland's relatively small size there was crossover between groups.

PROP:

“THIS BUNCH OF CONS UP HERE ARE SOLID AND WITH YOUR PROP THE WHOLE WAY”

The National Prisoners' Movement, known as PROP, formed in 1972 by former prisoners and other supporters. The union-like group organised a national prison strike in Britain in 1972 and campaigned for a charter of rights for prisoners (Fitzgerald 1977). In their own words, taken from their 'who we are... what we do' pamphlet:

“... we are not concerned with assisting the home office in the running of its prisons. We are also painfully aware – having experienced some 'reforms' at first hand – that it is in our most modern and treatment-oriented prisons that the psychiatric abuse of prisoner is most prevalent. We must not forget that, historically, the penal reformers have not been the adversaries of the prison system, but its architects”

PROP, 1977

There are indications that Scottish prison staff were aware of PROP (Chadwick 1996) and founding member Mike Fitzgerald's book refers to a PROP banner raised at Peterhead prison in 1972 (1977: 169). Letters received by PROP from Scottish prisoners also feature: “...I hope that at all costs you'll establish contact with us for its badly needed... this bunch of cons up here are solid and with your PROP the whole way... RIGHT ON! From all the guys” (Letter from prisoner quoted in Fitzgerald, 1977: 172) introducing a recurrent theme, the desperate need for support in Scotland. The 1978 PROP journal included a section titled “Scottish Notebook:

Contributed by supporters of PROP in Scotland”, with the headline “If you think English prisons don't work – look at ours!” (PROP, 1978: 8) demonstrating efforts to develop PROP's membership in Scotland. Furthermore, when the Independent Inquiry on the protests at Peterhead published their report in 1987, PROP were credited with influencing the Inquiry as their work had been “such a significant development in redressing the balance of official accounts of prison regimes” and the Inquiry intended to do the same (*The Roof Comes Off*, 1987: 13).

SCOTTISH NOTEBOOK
CONTRIBUTED BY SUPPORTERS OF PROP IN SCOTLAND

IF YOU THINK ENGLISH PRISONS DON'T WORK - LOOK AT OURS!

Ninety-four percent of prisoners released from Scottish prisons will be back inside within 12 months (20% or so higher than in England). These remarkable figures are being widely quoted by Mr. Nicholas Fairburn, CEC, MP (Kilmarnock and Fenwick) as ammunition, not as you might expect, for arguing the futility of prisons, but in support of his call for prisons to be made more punitive.

Prisoners in the Inverness cages and their reverse image - the Borlisma Special Unit (left) and some of our MP's anything at all!

PROF/PROP PRISON PLAY IN SCOTLAND

Counters brought their play 'Screwed', sponsored by PROP and RSP, to Scotland for two weeks during March. It played to audiences in Inverness, Dundee, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Stirling, Edinburgh, and was accompanied during part of its tour by a PROP representative. Largely as a result of its success we hope to develop PROP in Scotland. Meanwhile, we, as Scottish friends of PROP, will be taking up the offer of a regular page in the PROP newspaper.

CORNTON VALE WOMEN'S PRISON
one week's supply of drugs

Though Scottish prison authorities seem to be slightly less drug orientated than our neighbours south of the border, there is every sign that we are catching up fast. Our reputation with the 'Wiggle Club' may yet equal our name for dexterity in the use of the more traditional objects like riot sticks and bats.

It is only months since the death of Larry Winters as a direct result of the drug dependency acquired during nine years of massive dosages of barbiturates and 'tranquillisers', sometimes at a level - and certainly during his period in the Inverness cages - far in excess of the dosage given in closed state hospitals.

Now PROP publishes the weekly order list of drugs used at the new women's prison of Cornton Vale, Bridge of Allan. The prison takes all categories of women prisoners and currently accommodates 55 prisoners, 50 young offenders and 40 'boat-hoists'. To these must be added prisoners awaiting trial, making a maximum total of 140 to 150. It is in the context of these numbers that the list of drugs must be read. We understand that many of the younger girls are being subjected to drug 'treatment'.

Tranexane capsules	x 100
Cyflinax capsules	x 50 (Vitamin)

The rest of the order is made up of the usual run of anti-biotics, aspirin, anti-diarrhoeals, etc. Other drugs have been ordered at intervals, notably Magalonal and Sotium Amydol.

INVERNESS CAGES 'OPEN TO APPLICANTS'

The cages at Peterhead prison, Inverness were opened in 1966. Since the beginning of 1972 they have been unoccupied. Now a circular instruction has gone the rounds of the Scottish prisons, drawing attention to the availability of the Unit. It makes clear that there is no minimum period of detention in the Unit but no prisoner will be detained for a period longer than is necessary. That very obvious assurance is further 'invaliated' by the manner in which the regular reviewing body is constituted. 'Each prisoner's case will be reviewed on the second Tuesday of each month ... by a Unit Board which will comprise the Inspector or Assistant Inspector as Chairman, Governor, Medical Officer, Chief Officer of Inverness prison and two members of the Unit staff.'

Rule No. 29 reads "Except for exercise periods and sleeping out, prisoners will be kept locked up at all times". Segregation is used - Rules 22 and 28. 'Prisoners will not work in association' and 'Not more than one prisoner will be exercised at any one time'.

One important privilege denied to Unit prisoners refers to accumulated visits. 'Prisoners in the Unit will not qualify for accumulated visits, nor will the period in the Unit be counted towards the qualifying period for accumulated visits on return (to other prisons). Visits accumulated prior to the prisoner's reception to the Unit will not be taken into account'.

When questioned by the Scottish Spokes 'Seven Days', the Controller of HMPs in Scotland maintained that these regulations signified nothing new - because the Segregation Unit had never been closed, but merely excluded suitable applicants. A strange justification indeed. It affects the Scottish Home and Health Department is saying 'We can't be criticised for opening the cages, because in fact we never closed them'.

COMPLACENCY IS DANGEROUS

The existence of the cages, and of the Regulations for their use, are sufficient grounds for casting any complacency over the apparent caution of the Department in proceeding with its plans for neutralising the Borlisma Special Unit. Any weakening of the campaign to save the Borlisma Unit can only play into the hands of those, like MP's Teddy Taylor and Nicholas Fair-

Figure 2: 'Scottish Notebook' in PROP's Journal Vol 2, No 5 (May 1978: 8)

RADICAL ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON:

“WORKING TOWARDS THE ABOLITION OF IMPRISONMENT”

Radical Alternatives to Prison (RAP) started in 1970 originally in support of imprisoned antinuclear protestors (Ryan & Ward, 2015: 108) but they became, in their own words, “a pressure group working towards the abolition of imprisonment” (*The Abolitionist*, No7, 1981). In their manifesto they advocate for measures to reduce the prison population by ending prison building, cuts to maximum sentences, decriminalisation of certain offences and end to imprisonment for minor property offences and fine defaulters (*The Abolitionist*, No7, 1981). RAP were sceptical of penal reforms and called for “‘radical alternatives’ which were, as far as possible, non-coercive, non-stigmatising and independent of the State.” (*The Abolitionist*, No 13, 1983).

The RAP newspaper, *The Abolitionist*, is the most consistently produced publication of the materials reviewed here and reported throughout the late 1970s and 1980s on issues in Scottish prisons. Although RAP were the more abolitionist group, they often worked in alliance with PROP; Women in Prison who set up in 1983 to campaign on women’s experiences were largely ignored by other campaigners and officials; and INQUEST who set up 1981 to campaign on death in custody and support bereaved families. These alliances are reflected in the regular contributions from different

groups in *The Abolitionist*. Throughout their existence RAP faced extensive internal debate and external criticism as they engaged with difficult but fundamental questions about what types of reform they could support and what alternatives they could develop such as the Newham Alternatives Project (Ryan and Ward 2015).

The work of both RAP and PROP demonstrates efforts to connect the wider British movement with Scottish prisoners where support was greatly needed. Prison letters indicate that prisoners in Scotland felt ignored and forgotten by the public and to some extent the prisoner’s rights movement.



Figure 3: Image from *The Abolitionist* No4, 1979

SCOTTISH PRISONER SUPPORT COMMITTEE

"A LONG NEGLECTED PART OF THE WOODS"

The formation of the Scottish Prisoner Support Committee (SPSC) indicates more localised organising in Scotland. Formed in 1984 by former prisoners, relatives and friends the SPSC was originally set up in support of Peterhead prisoners and families but expanded to "FIGHT the prison system throughout the whole of Scotland" (Scottish Prisoner No.1, 1985:10). The Scottish Prisoner: newspaper of the Scottish Prisoner Support Committee ran with three issues in 1985 and set out their aims:

"... to act as a voice on the outside for prisoners and their grievances... to conduct propaganda work amongst the people of Scotland to inform them of the reality of life inside the jail... whilst we campaign on demands put forward by prisoners themselves... to improve their immediate conditions of life, we recognise that only the total abolition of the prison system will bring to an end the imprisonment and suffering of the thousands upon thousands of working class people."

Scottish Prisoner No.2, 1985:3

The need for support in Scotland was repeated in a letter to SPSC from a prisoner at Peterhead: "Your work in support of prisoners is valuable and will reap its own rewards. There has been a vacuum in this respect in Scotland and your work is filling it" (Scottish Prisoner, 1985:7). There is also solidarity sent from a prisoner in England: "I congratulate you all on the campaign in support of Scottish prisoners, for a long-neglected part of the woods." (Scottish Prisoner, 1985:7).

The SPSC combined immediate prisoner demands with abolitionist principles and centred a Marxist analysis of the prison system reflecting their connections to the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG), an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist group whose support for Irish prisoners was extended to a broader struggle for prisoner rights. The RCG newspaper Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! (FRFI) frequently reported on Scottish prisons, this coverage from 1984-86 is combined in the 'Scottish Prisons: Lift the Lid' pamphlet. The pamphlet concludes:

"A movement for prisoners' rights can be built. Prisoners have already organised to take the fightback on the rooftops and into the court-rooms – refusing to be silenced and refusing to accept cover-ups... What is needed is support and organisation on the outside to match the prisoners' resistance."

FRFI, 1986:39

The pamphlet also reflected that a lack of political prisoners in Scotland was a barrier to building support for prisoners' rights, pointing to presence of "Irish prisoners of war and black prisoners" in England as a politicising force for prisoner solidarity, and expressed hope that the jailing of miners would rouse the same in Scotland (FRFI, 1986:38).

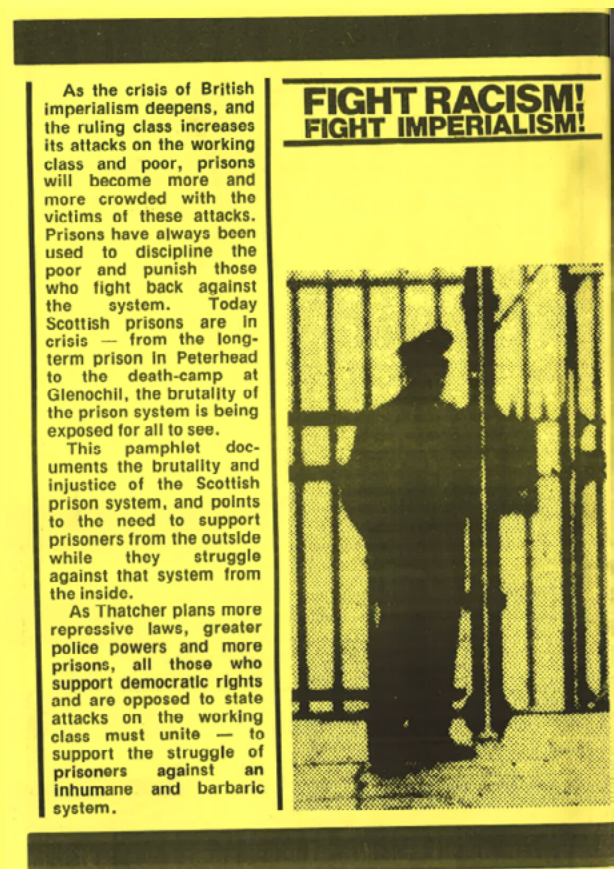
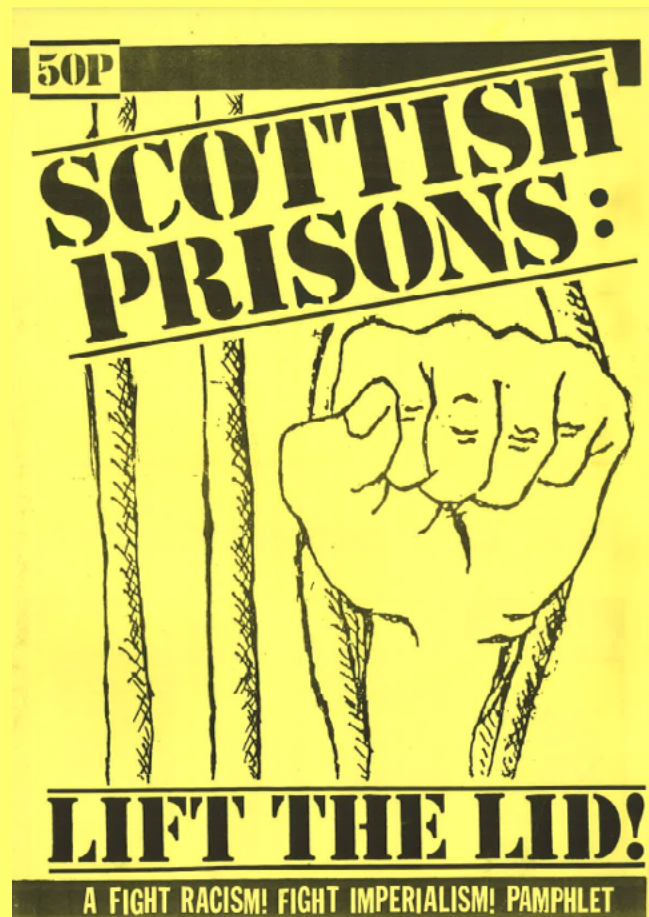


Figure 4: Front and back cover of 'Scottish Prisons Lift the Lid' (Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism 1986)

SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES:

FACING REALITY ON PRISONERS' RIGHTS

A key organisation in Scottish prison campaigning in the 1970-1980s was the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties (SCCL). The organisation became wholly independent of the National Council for Civil Liberties (based in England) in 1975 because of the separate legal system and the distinct problems faced in Scotland, not least in Scottish prisons (NCCL, 1978). SCCL supported prisoners' rights as part of a broader struggle for civil liberties as their 1972 annual report states:

"Homosexuals, prisoners, mental patients, long haired hippies; it is precisely because so many infringements of Civil Liberties concern unpopular, inarticulate or despised groups (unappealing to basic sympathy) that there is a need for an organisation that will speak out all the time in defence of Civil Liberties, otherwise our fundamental and time-honoured liberties will soon start to go by default."

SCCL Annual Report, 1972:6

From as early as 1972 SCCL described evidence of a "build up of tension" in Scottish prisons from the huge volume of prisoner letters they received and called for urgent action on the conditions in prison, complaints procedure and information on prisoners' rights (SCCL Annual Report, 1972:4).

SCCL's focus on law reform and individual rights set them up as the more liberal voice among the activist

materials reviewed, however they were directly involved in prisoner advocacy, lobbying government and publishing research. Over the years the SCCL researched and produced a wealth of materials on Scottish prisons with the aim of raising public awareness and holding institutions to account.

This included bulletin Civil Liberties (SCCL, 1981), comprehensive reports and factsheets and pamphlets such as *Scottish Prisons and the Special Unit* (Sim & McDonald, 1978)

'Your rights and the Criminal Justice Bill' (SCCL, 1979). This took place alongside broader campaigns

and reporting on immigration appeals, prostitution law, mental health law reform and work with Scottish Women's Aid reflecting SCCL's social and grassroots understanding of civil liberties. In 1987 a few months before the Independent Inquiry published their report, SCCL published their own critical and independent report *Facing Reality: The Scottish Prisons Crisis in the 1980s* (1987) which set out the facts and figures of what was happening in Scottish prisons to expand public debate and called for a Royal Commission of Enquiry into Scottish Prisons opposing the piecemeal and short-term crisis management (1987:2).

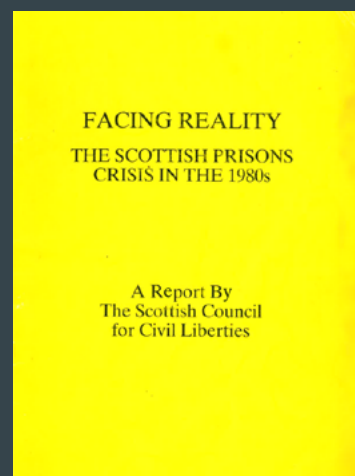
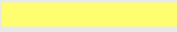


Figure 5: Front cover of 'Facing Reality' (Scottish Council for Civil Liberties 1986)

V. GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS ON SCOTTISH PRISONS 1972-87



This section summarises three of the issues that the groups campaigned on between 1972-87: the use of segregation units at Inverness and Peterhead; the number of deaths in prison and the inaction from the state; and the prisoner protests at Peterhead.



These campaigns have been selected because of their prevalence across the activist material and because they offer a different perspective on familiar aspects of Scottish penal history. This snapshot of campaigns illustrates the navigation of responding to prisoner demands with specific and pragmatic campaigns on issues in Scottish prisons, whilst sustaining a commitment to be independent and critical of the prison system overall. Some of the issues included here, such as the reopening of the Cages at Inverness and the treatment of protesting prisoners at Peterhead, drew collective outrage across the different groups, whilst issues like the Barlinnie Special Unit highlighted more fundamental differences in perspectives.

SEGREGATION UNITS AT INVERNESS & PETERHEAD: 'CLOSE THE CAGES' 1978-1987

Calls to close the segregation units, specifically those known as the 'Cages' at Inverness, emerged in 1978 following reports from PROP that the supposedly closed Cages were "open to applicants" after the threat of industrial action from the Scottish Prison Officer Association (PROP, 1978:8). The Cages had been closed following a major disturbance in 1972 and the fact that they were back in use sparked outrage amongst prisoners and outside activists. Across the different groups and activist materials there are calls to close the Cages at Inverness and objections to the use of segregation units elsewhere. The SCCL called for the Cages "... to be not merely taken out of use but physically demolished" a demand which received unified endorsement from British groups PROP, NCCL and RAP (*The Abolitionist*, No.1, 1979). In a public statement of support, RAP demanded:

"...ask anyone concerned with human rights to urge the Scottish Minister of Home Affairs not to tolerate dictation from the SPOA by agreeing to the use of the Inverness 'cages' and the construction of a control unit incorporating sensory deprivation techniques at Peterhead Prison."

The Abolitionist, No.4, 1979:20

The article also reported that the government had no plans to close the Cages despite a petition of "Over 1000 signatures of people from all over Britain" sent to the Scottish Office (*The Abolitionist*, No.4, 1979:20). Concern was also shared at a local level, in a letter from Rose Innes, a campaigner in Inverness which read: "Certainly, we desperately need an alternative to the hell hole here which by its continued existence brutalises and degrades us all" (*The Abolitionist*, No2/3, 1979).



Figure 6: Page from *The Abolitionist* No. 4 (1979: 20)

Continuing into the mid-1980s, the use of the Cages at Inverness and the extension of control units at Peterhead were strongly criticised by the RCG who highlighted and supported the campaigns of two specific prisoners: Mick McCallum on hunger-strike against the Inverness cages and Peter Wardlaw in Peterhead control unit who described the conditions at length (1985 article in FRFI 1986). FRFI published a diagram of a cell in the Cages but maintained that "The barbarity of the Cages is only the most extreme form of the barbarity of the Scottish prison regime." (March 1985 article in FRFI 1986:23). The support campaign for 'Scottish political prisoner' Peter Wardlaw detailed outside pickets and petitions with "FRFI, Edinburgh Irish Solidarity Committee, Glasgow Irish Freedom Action Committee and Scottish Republican Socialist Party", highlighting the connection between prisoner support and broader political struggles for the RCG (March 1985 article in FRFI 1986:23).

Further details of the unit at Peterhead are provided by SCCL's research and publication in 1987, which revealed the reality of the 'Peterhead maximum security unit' and the 'cardboard cells' in which the cardboard furniture was removed at night, except for the mattress on the floor (SCCL, 1987:22). Their research, published to raise public awareness, found that in 1985 the average length of stay at the control unit was 18 weeks, and that prisoners were transferred without warning, often without knowing the reason or the length of time they would be held for (SCCL, 1987:22).

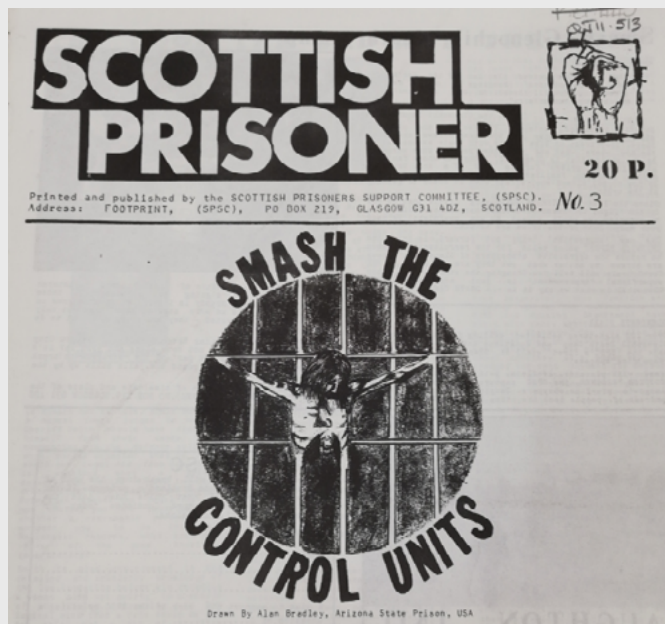


Figure 7: Front cover of 'Scottish Prisoner' No.3 (1985)

Outrage to the use of segregation units in Scotland at his time was further compounded by the existence of the Barlinnie Special Unit. There were conflicting views on the BSU within the activist materials some saw it as "an experiment which we continue to see as lying at the heart of the prison/prisoner question" (PROP, 1977:1) or an example of a less authoritarian approach while prisons remain (The Abolitionist No 4, 1979:1) whilst others questioned advocating for "a 'progressive' arm of the prison 'service'" (The Abolitionist No 1, 1979:18).

Crucially the coverage which includes prisoners' perspectives highlights the enormous disparity between graduation of some prisoners to the BSU while others are held in segregation (The Abolitionist, No.13, 1983). This is articulated in a letter from prisoners in Peterhead, reprinted by FRFI:

"Scotland is meant to be pioneering the new prison units and is claiming the Special Unit works where all else fails... Why then have the Government just spent half a million pounds building a segregation block for ten men in Peterhead. Are we going back to the darker side of prison policy."

1984 letter featured in FRFI, 1986:17

Sharing the direct experiences of prisoners not in the BSU highlights the contradiction and harm of focusing on and celebrating the BSU whilst others are held in segregation units. This approach resisted the use of the BSU as a distraction from the rest as argued by McDonald & Sim (SCCL, 1978), of the prison and refocused attention on the campaign to close the Cages.

DEATHS IN CUSTODY: 'SMASH GLENOCHIL DEATH CAMP' 1984-85

Another issue that groups mobilised around in Scotland was the nature and number of deaths in custody during the 1980s and the lack of action and accountability from the state. An increasing suicide rate in Scottish

prisons and a series of deaths at Glenochil prison in the early 1980s prompted investigation and campaigns at a grassroots level, with a central campaign in 1985 to close Glenochil Detention Centre and Young Offenders Institute. Or as phrased in the SPSC campaign materials: "SMASH Glenochil Death Camp!... Six Murdered in Three Years" (SPSC, 1985). In the *Scottish Prisoner*, SPSC expanded on their position:

"We do not want 'improvements' like better torturers, more surveillance, closed circuit TV.. or a special control unit. Infact we would like to see Glenochil flattened to the ground. Not one lump of concrete or one iron bar left standing."

Scottish Prisoner No. 2, 1985: 2

The SPSC campaign blamed the prisons 'short, sharp shock' treatment for the deaths and suicides, but explicitly rejected calls for a public enquiry which it described as a whitewash, cover up and delay to closing Glenochil

down (SPSC 1985 [Leaflet]). There was also support for the campaign to close Glenochil from RCG, SCCL and the Gateway Exchange (FRFI, 1986:16).

In a detailed article in *The Abolitionist*, Phil Scraton and Kathryn Chadwick report on the militaristic regime at Glenochil and share details of the deaths of a number of young men (No. 20, 1985:28). The state response is strongly criticised as the Fatal Accident Inquiries and official Chiswick Report on Glenochil did not include operational policies and regimes as relevant factors in the deaths (*the Abolitionist*, No. 20, 1985:30). They conclude:

"It is some measure of how deeply the ideology of punishment is institutionalised that the closure of Glenochil – after seven deaths, twenty-five serious attempts and over a hundred on strict suicide observation – is not on the agenda."

The Abolitionist, No. 20, 1985:33

Whilst the article called for Glenochil to be closed, Scraton and Chadwick also recognised that the regime would likely be recreated elsewhere.

While much of the activist material on deaths in custody centres on Glenochil, SCCL's reporting on deaths and self-inflicted injuries inside Scottish prisons found that Barlinnie, not Glenochil, had the highest number between 1979 and 1986 (SCCL, 1987:10). PROP also reported on the death of Larry Winter in the Barlinnie Special Unit, which caused controversy at the time because the cause of overdose was disputed, and ongoing concerns were expressed about the medical drugging of prisoners in Scotland (PROP, 1978). In 1985, the SPSC reported on the 40-day hunger strike of prisoner Mick McCallum, amongst his demands were an inquiry into deaths and injuries in custody (*Scottish Prisoner No. 1, 1985:4*).

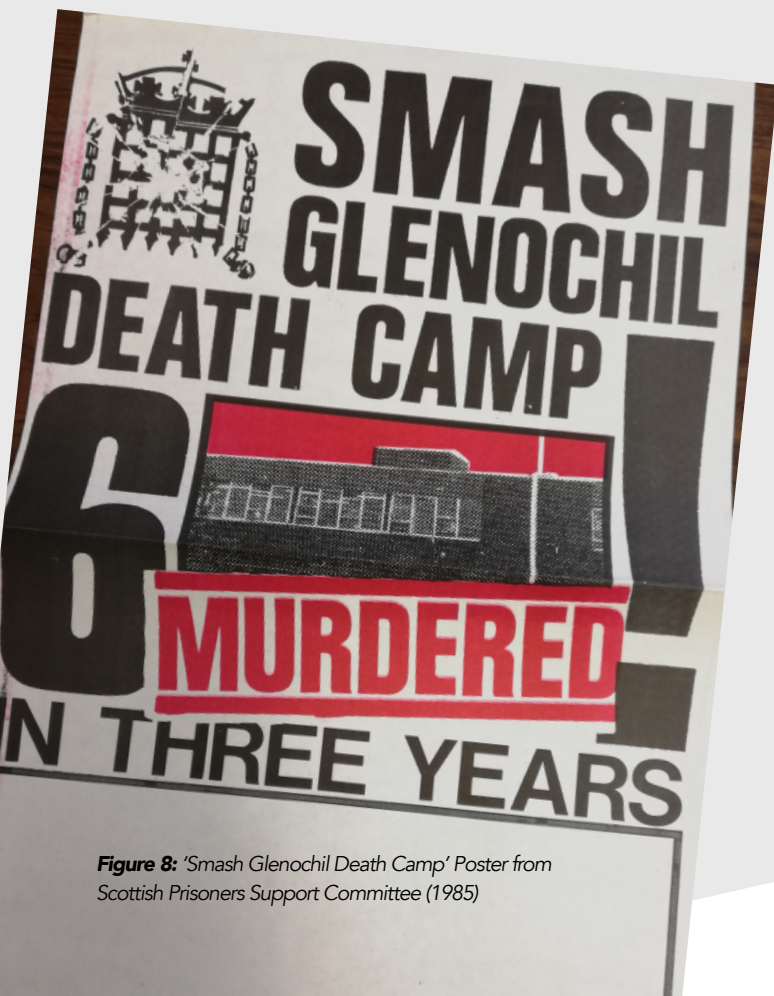


Figure 8: 'Smash Glenochil Death Camp' Poster from Scottish Prisoners Support Committee (1985)

PETERHEAD: 'IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?' 1972- 1986

The 'major incident' at Peterhead prison in 1986 is one of the most well-known prisoner protests in British history because of the violence of the confrontations between prisoners and staff, the hostage taking of a prison officer, the length of the rooftop demonstration and the media coverage surrounding the events. However, this section reveals the extent of prisoner protests at Peterhead throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s as reported in and supported by the activist materials. These protests were supported on the outside by the activist groups who published prisoner letters and interviews and called for support for prisoners' demands. This outside solidarity was a significant contribution as prisoners' voices were being ignored elsewhere. In 1978 a letter from a prisoner in solitary confinement at Peterhead was smuggled to the Glasgow Herald and reprinted by RCG, it reads:

"...Over the last 2 years we've written petitions to the Secretary of State (only got as far as the civil servants) complaining about conditions here. No-one had even listened to us. As a result we took part in a peaceful demo for which we are locked up on solitary awaiting disciplinary charges... We know that the public are told how well prisoners are kept and we want to make it clear that this is far from the truth. All we are asking for is the basic standards of cleanliness and existence..."

Letter in Glasgow Herald 1978, reprinted in FRFI, 1984:16

This was reiterated by Robert Love, a prisoner at Peterhead, in a 1979 SCCL interview he pointed to the conditions and neglect that led to a series of disturbances, as the prisoners felt it was the "...only way they could draw attention to the fact that they had persistently been refused outside assistance with their complaints about conditions." (Scraton, Sim and Skidmore 1991:17).

In 1979, *The Abolitionist* published a 'diary of events' at Peterhead where prisoners engaged in an 84-hour protest at the refusal of legal aid to pursue their case at the European Commission on Human Rights (No. 4, 1979:17-19). Following this protest, 40 prisoners were held in solitary confinement prompting support in a press statement from RAP, PROP and the Newham Alternative Project, who said they:

"... wish to support those prisoners at Peterhead Prison and elsewhere who take direct action to draw attention to the inhumanity of prison conditions. The solution to the problems of prison does not lie in spending money on altering facilities but in a change in attitude towards the whole question of crime and punishment."

The Abolitionist, No. 4, 1979:19

However, with no action taken by the prison to respond to the prisoners demands, the unrest at Peterhead continued into the 1980s. A letter from prisoners at Peterhead in 1984, published in *The Scotsman* and by FRFI, begins: "To Whom it May Concern (Is Anybody Out There?)" and goes on to describe the frustration in A-Hall that led to recent protests: the long distance for visits, the concern of their families and their status in Peterhead as 'the living dead' (FRFI, 1986:17). Echoing the sentiment that the public needed to be made

aware of the conditions inside prisons, the 1984 letter sought to challenge the 'propaganda' and highlight that Peterhead was one of the worst examples of prison reform in Europe (FRFI, 1986:17). The RCG described the letter as "the opening shot of a campaign by the protesting prisoners to turn the tables on the establishment's own campaign for repression and propaganda" (FRFI, 1986:17) as it revealed the reality of their treatment in contrast to government claims about progressive policy.

Additionally, the FRFI reported on a public protest in 1984 outside Peterhead which demanded: an independent inquiry, abolition of the control units and an end to isolation of 'subversives' (FRFI, 1986:20). Interestingly, the Scottish Prisoners Support Committee emerged from a support group for Peterhead prisoners but was expanded as "... it became clear that the developments at Peterhead were simply the spearhead of a policy of isolation for ALL 'difficult' prisoners in ALL of Scotland's jails" (Scottish Prisoner No. 1, 1985:10). The group's focus and politics shifted from the experiences of one group of prisoners at Peterhead to an abolitionist stance in solidarity with all prisoners and against all prisons.

Documenting the years of protest and campaigns inside and outside the prison prior to the 1986 'major incident' emphasises the desperation of the prisoners. But this incident was also significant because it marked the formalisation of many of these campaigns, as grassroots organisations the Gateway Exchange and the SCCL developed their own independent response through the Independent Inquiry's report on Peterhead The Roof Comes Off (Gateway Exchange, 1987) and the SCCL report on Scottish prisons more generally Facing Reality: The Scottish Prisons Crisis in the 1980s (SCCL, 1987).

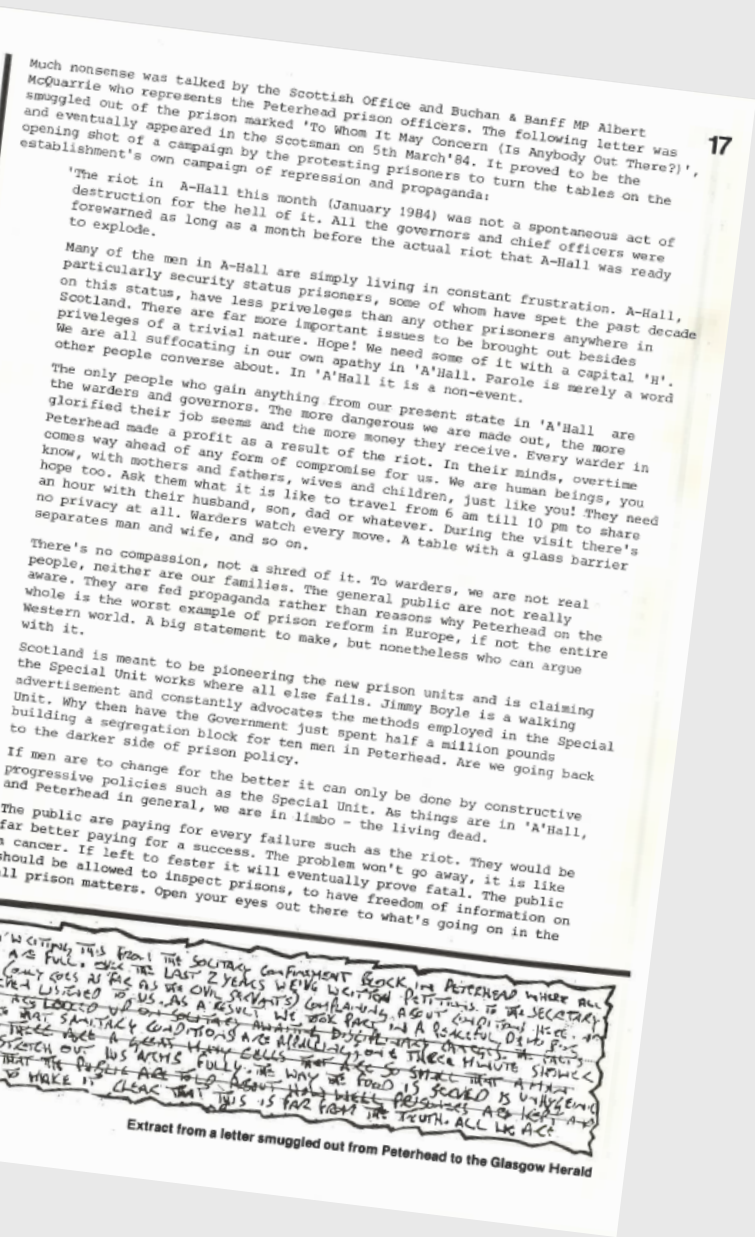


Figure 9: Extract from 1984 letter from Peterhead prisoners featured in Fight Racism Fight Imperialism (1986: 17)

VI. CONCLUSION: THEMES AND LEGACY OF PRISON ACTIVISM IN THE 1970S/80S



Figure 10: 'Image from an article on Peterhead protests in
'Fight Racism Fight Imperialism' (1984: 19)

KEY FEATURES OF THE CAMPAIGNS

The standout features of the campaigns, actions and reporting are summarised here as key lessons for future research and organising.

A) SHARING PRISONERS' EXPERIENCES AND SUPPORTING THEIR DEMANDS

Prisoners' voices feature across the activist materials, sometimes directly through their letters and demands but also through outside support for prisoners' protests and campaigns informed by prisoner's experiences. Sharing the prisoner perspective continued with the Independent Inquiry (1987) and some of the academic literature (Scraton, Sim & Skidmore 1991; Chadwick 1996) which positioned prisoners as a counter-perspective to the official discourse on Scottish prisons. In recent years Scotland has embraced the insight of 'lived experience' and 'user voice' of the criminal justice system. However, as this often is mediated through third sector and state agencies it risks losing the independence and critical structural analysis which is so compelling in the prisoner voices of the activist materials.

B) USING 'PROPAGANDA' FOR PUBLIC AWARENESS AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The materials reviewed here were originally produced with the intention to challenge dominant ideologies and official narratives, to be their own form of 'propaganda'. The politicisation of the issues related to prison and prisoners by grassroots campaigns reflected the wider

political current in the 1970/80s which challenged liberal ideology and resistance to an authoritarian state. The critical and independent research and reporting held institutions to account and raised public awareness on issues like deaths in prison and prison responses to protest.

C) BUILDING ALLIANCES WITH PRISONERS AND OTHER GROUPS

In addition to the solidarity with prisoners in Scotland there is also evidence of alliance building between the different prisoner-rights and abolitionist groups. There are examples, on a range of issues, of unity and collective action, in particular joint calls to close the segregation units and shared opposition to the treatment of protesting prisoners at Peterhead. There are also examples of wider alliance building beyond prison-focused groups; SCCL connect their calls for prisoner rights with campaigns for gay rights, migrant rights and all civil liberties; and RAP worked closely with Women in Prison and INQUEST. Ryan and Ward argue it was these wider alliances and mobilisations which "secured a serious hearing for abolitionism in Western Europe in the 1970s" and which will be required for any future impact (2015:117). The need for this alliance building is perhaps even more urgent in contemporary Scotland where neither Women in Prison nor INQUEST have been active.

D) PRAGMATIC ABOLITIONIST CAMPAIGNS

A central theme of the activist materials is the navigation of prisoner's experiences and immediate needs with broader analysis and critique of the system as a whole. Scepticism towards penal reforms and an independence from the state was based on the reality of prisoner's experiences and this is made clear in some of the

manifestos but also in positions on specific issues. For example, the injustice of the BSU is drawn out through sharing the perspectives of the wider prison population and those in segregation units. Whilst abolitionist and activist work can be accused of utopianism, and often may seek to be utopian to reimagine ideas of justice, this grounding in people's experiences and survival does not feel utopian. Rather, the campaigns in the activist material are specific, practical and pragmatic and feel urgent and very real. Sim too has pointed to the involvement of abolitionist ideas and individuals in effective campaigns such as the closure of control units, the abolition of the prison medical service and support for families of those who have died in custody (Sim, 2009:12).

RESISTANCE TO PRISONS THEN AND NOW

There are striking similarities between the activist materials of 1970/80s and present-day Scotland regarding prisons and wider social unrest outside of the prison. Unfortunately, many of the issues campaigned on in 1970/80s endure in Scotland's penal system: Scotland still has one of the highest imprisonment rates in Europe (Aebi & Tiago, 2021) and has invested £72.8 million into the building and expansion of the Scottish prison estate (Scottish Government, 2021); there are ongoing campaigns for justice for families bereaved by deaths in custody and recent research has highlighted the lack of accountability and action from Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service on deaths in custody (Armstrong et al, 2021); the Covid pandemic has exacerbated and exposed the conditions in Scottish prisons with prisoners reporting severe negative impacts on their mental and physical health and the continued use of lockdown has been deemed a form of solitary confinement that prioritises control over prisoner safety (Armstrong et al 2022), but issues of overcrowding, lack of access to services and staff shortages are longstanding complaints that predate the pandemic (Scottish Prisoner Advocacy Research Collective, 2020).

The materials featured in this briefing also resonate because of growing interest in abolition as a social movement and theoretical framework. In Scotland existing and emerging groups are engaged in prisoner solidarity, police monitoring, migrant rights and sex work decriminalisation to name but a few campaigns that connect with abolitionist principles. There have been moves to resist carceral institutions directly, including the campaign against a new women's prison in Inverclyde (Brooks 2015) and the campaign to shut down Dungavel Immigration removal centre (We Will Rise 2015). In the academic literature, calls for abolitionist analysis and responses in Scotland have been drawn from critiques of penal reforms (Malloch 2017; Armstrong 2018).

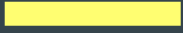
There are also evident differences in the approach of the 1970/80s groups and current discourse on penal reform and abolition reflecting significant developments in abolitionist thought. The 1970/80s materials focus

on the prison rather than a more expansive anti-carceral movement and whilst contemporary abolition, particularly in the United States, cannot be disentangled from the abolition of chattel slavery and resistance to racist systems of oppression, this is not part of the frame in the Scottish activist materials here. Relatedly, nuanced conceptualisations of harm and justice that have emerged from the transformative justice movement and the centrality of feminism to contemporary abolitionist analysis, are also largely absent in these materials. Increased attention to Scotland's state violence and racism (Davidson et al 2018, Akhtar 2022), as well as Scotland's history and legacy of slavery (See for example: Evans 1995; Runaway Slaves in Britain Project) should now inform contemporary struggles for prisoner rights and abolition.

In reviewing archival activist materials from 1970/80s this briefing has three purposes. Firstly, to share this period of Scottish penal history with a wider audience and emphasise the often-overlooked action taken by prisoners and grassroots supporters, a reminder that this was not just a period of violence and subsequent prison policy reform, but a time of campaigns and resistance both inside and outside the prison. Secondly, this briefing responds to the ever-growing resonance of penal abolition and begins to reflect on what those ideas have meant in Scotland as an awareness of their prehistory can only strengthen contemporary movements. Finally, in reviewing these groups and campaigns this briefing set out to highlight the necessity of abolitionist analysis and action for building resistance to official narratives of penal reform in the 1970/80s but also its necessity now given Scotland's decades of penal reform and expansion.

Thanks to Margaret Malloch for feedback on earlier drafts, and to Sarah Armstrong, Joe Sim and John Moore for sharing their materials and enthusiasm.

REFERENCES



- Aebi, M. F., & Tiago, M. M. (2021). SPACE I - 2020 – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics: Prison populations. Strasbourg: Council of Europe
- Akhtar, S. (2022) Containment, activism and state racism: the Sheku Bayoh justice campaign, *Identities*, 29:2, 164-185
- Armstrong, S. 2018, "Securing Prison through Human Rights: Unanticipated Implications of Rights-Based Penal Governance", *Howard journal of crime and justice*, vol. 57, no. 3, pp. 401-421.
- Armstrong, S., Allan, L., Allan, S., Barkas, B., and Kinnear, D., 2021. Nothing to See Here? Statistical Briefing on 15 years of Fatal Accident Inquiries into Deaths in Custody. SCCJR Briefing
- Armstrong, S., Barkas, B., Casey, R., Cornish, N., Gormley, C., McNeill, F., and Schinkel, M. 2022. Prisoner experiences of Covid19 restrictions in Scotland during 2020. *Scotland in Lockdown*
- Boyle, J. 1977, *A sense of freedom*, Canongate Publishing, Edinburgh.
- Brangan, L. 2019, "Civilizing Imprisonment: The Limits of Scottish Penal Exceptionalism", *British journal of criminology*, vol. 59, no. 4, pp. 780-799.
- Brooks, B. 2015. Activists cheer Scottish government rethink on new women's prison, *The Guardian* 26 Jan 2015
- Carlen, P. 1990, *Alternatives to Women's Imprisonment*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.
- Chadwick, K. E. (1996). "Out of the darkness into light": A Critical Evaluation Of Scottish Prison Reorganisation For Long Term Imprisonment 1988 To The Present. PhD thesis. The Open University.
- Cohen, S. 1985, *Visions of social control: crime, punishment, and classification*, Polity Press, New York.
- Collins 1997, *Autobiography of a murderer*, London, Macmillan.
- Davidson, N., Liinpa, M. and McBride, M. eds, 2018 *No Problem Here: understanding racism in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Luath Press
- Evans, J. 1995, *African/Caribbeans in Scotland. A Socio-Geographical Study*. PhD thesis. University of Edinburgh
- Fitzgerald, M. 1977, *Prisoners in revolt*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth.
- Foucault, M. 1975, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*
- Home Office. 1987, *Report of an inquiry by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (Scotland) into prisoner grievances at HM Prison Peterhead*.
- Hulsman, L.H.C. 1986, "Critical criminology and the concept of crime", *Contemporary Crises*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 63-80.
- Leneman, L. 1993, *Martyrs in our midst: Dundee, Perth, Forcible feeding of suffragettes*
- Malloch, M. 2017, *The Imprisonment of Women in Scotland: Restructure, Reform or Abolish? In Women's Imprisonment and the Case for Abolition: Critical Reflections Beyond Corston*, eds. L. Moore, P. Scraton and A. Wahidin, Routledge
- Runaway Slaves in Britain: bondage, freedom and race in the eighteenth century. Accessed: <https://runaways.gla.ac.uk/>
- Ryan, M. & Sim, J. 2016, "Campaigning for and campaigning against prisons: Excavating and reaffirming the case for prison abolition" in *Handbook on Prisons*, eds. Y. Jewkes, B. Crewe & J. Bennett, 2nd edn, Routledge, pp. 712-733.

Ryan, M. & Ward, T. 2015, "Prison Abolition in the UK: They Dare Not Speak Its Name?", *Social Justice* (San Francisco, Calif.), vol. 41, no. 3 (137), pp. 107-119.

Ryan, M. 1983, *The politics of penal reform*, Longman, London.

Scottish Prisoner Advocacy and Research Collective. 2020, SPARC Statement on Changes to Prison Rules. 6 April 2020. <https://scottishprisoneradvocacy.com/2020/04/09/sparc-statement-on-changes-to-prison-rules/>

Scottish Government, 2021. *Scottish Budget 2022 to 2023*

Scottish Prison Service. 1988, *Assessment and Control: The Management of Violent and Disruptive Prisoners.* Edinburgh: HMSO

Scottish Prison Service. 1988, *Custody and Care: Policy and Plans for the Scottish Prison Service.* Edinburgh: HMSO

Scottish Prison Service. 1990, *Opportunity and Responsibility: Developing New Approaches to the Management of the Long-term Prison System in Scotland.* Edinburgh: HMSO

Scottish Prison Service. 1990, *Organising for Excellence: Review of the Organisation of the Scottish Prison Service.* Edinburgh: HMSO

Scruton, P., Sim, J. & Skidmore, P. 1988, *Through the barricades: prisoner protest and penal policy in Scotland,* *Journal of law and society*, vol. 15, no. Autumn 88, pp. 247-262.

Scruton, P., Sim, J. & Skidmore, P. 1991, *Prisons under protest.*

Sim, J. 2009, *Punishment and Prisons: Power and the Carceral State,* SAGE Publications, Limited, London.

We Will Rise. 2015, <https://enddetentionsite.wordpress.com/>

ARCHIVE REFERENCES

Fight Racism. Fight Imperialism, 1986. 'Scottish Prisons: Lift the Lid'

Gateway Exchange, 1987. *The roof comes off: the report of the Independent Committee of Inquiry into the protests at Peterhead Prison.*, Edinburgh: Gateway Exchange. Held at: Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland. QP2.88.53

McDonald, D. & Sim, J. 1978. *Scottish prisons and the special unit*, Glasgow: Scottish Council for Civil Liberties Distributed by PDC Scotland. Held at: Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland. QP2.79.553

National Council for Civil Liberties, 1978. *Rights! The Newspaper of NCCL, Vol 2, No 5, June/July 1978.* Held at: Glasgow: Spirit of Revolt Archive. T/SOR/3/56/106

PROP, 1977. *Who we are...what we do* [Pamphlet]. Held in Spirit of Revolt Archive, Glasgow. Held at: Glasgow: Spirit of Revolt Archive. T/SOR/3/56/100

PROP, 1978. *Paper of National Prisoner Movement, Vol 2, Nos. 4, 5.* Held in Spirit of Revolt Archive, Glasgow. Held at: Glasgow: Spirit of Revolt Archive. T/SOR/3/56/100

Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, 1972. *Annual Report May 1972*, Glasgow. Held at: Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland. DJ.m.2728(9) SER

Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, 1977. *Scottish council for Civil Liberties Fact Sheet: Bail*, Glasgow. Held at: Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland. C13.AP.77

Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, McDonald, D. & Sim, J., 1978. *Scottish Prisons and the Special Unit.* Held at: Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland. QP2.79.553

Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, 1979. *Your rights and the Criminal Justice Bill*. [Pamphlet], Glasgow. Held at: Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland. PB6.218.735/21

Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, 1981. Civil Liberties: The bi-monthly bulletin of the SCCL. Issue No. 1 September/October. Held at: Glasgow: Spirit of Revolt Archive. T/SOR/3/56/107

Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, 1987. Facing Reality: The Scottish Prisons Crisis in the 1980s

Scottish Prisoner Support Committee, 1985. Smash Glenochil Death Camp. [Poster]. Held at: Glasgow: Spirit of Revolt Archive. T/SOR/7/7

Scottish Prisoner Support Committee, 1985. Smash Glenochil Death Camp. [Leaflet]. Held at: Glasgow: Spirit of Revolt Archive. T/SOR/7/7

Scottish Prisoner: newspaper of the Scottish Prisoners Support Committee, 1985. Nos. 1, 2, 3. Glasgow: Scottish Prisoners Support Committee. Held at: Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland. QJ11.513

The Abolitionist 1983. No. 13. Available at: <https://jm Moore.org/2021/05/08/the-abolitionist-10-13/>

The Abolitionist 1985. No. 20. Available at: <https://jm Moore.org/2021/05/30/the-abolitionist-18-21/>

The Abolitionist 1987. No. 23. Available at: <https://jm Moore.org/2021/06/09/the-abolitionist-22-23/>

The Abolitionist, 1979. Nos. 1, 2/3, 4. Available at: <https://jm Moore.org/2021/05/03/the-abolitionist-1-5/>

The Abolitionist, 1981. No. 7. Available at: <https://jm Moore.org/2021/05/05/the-abolitionist-6-9/>