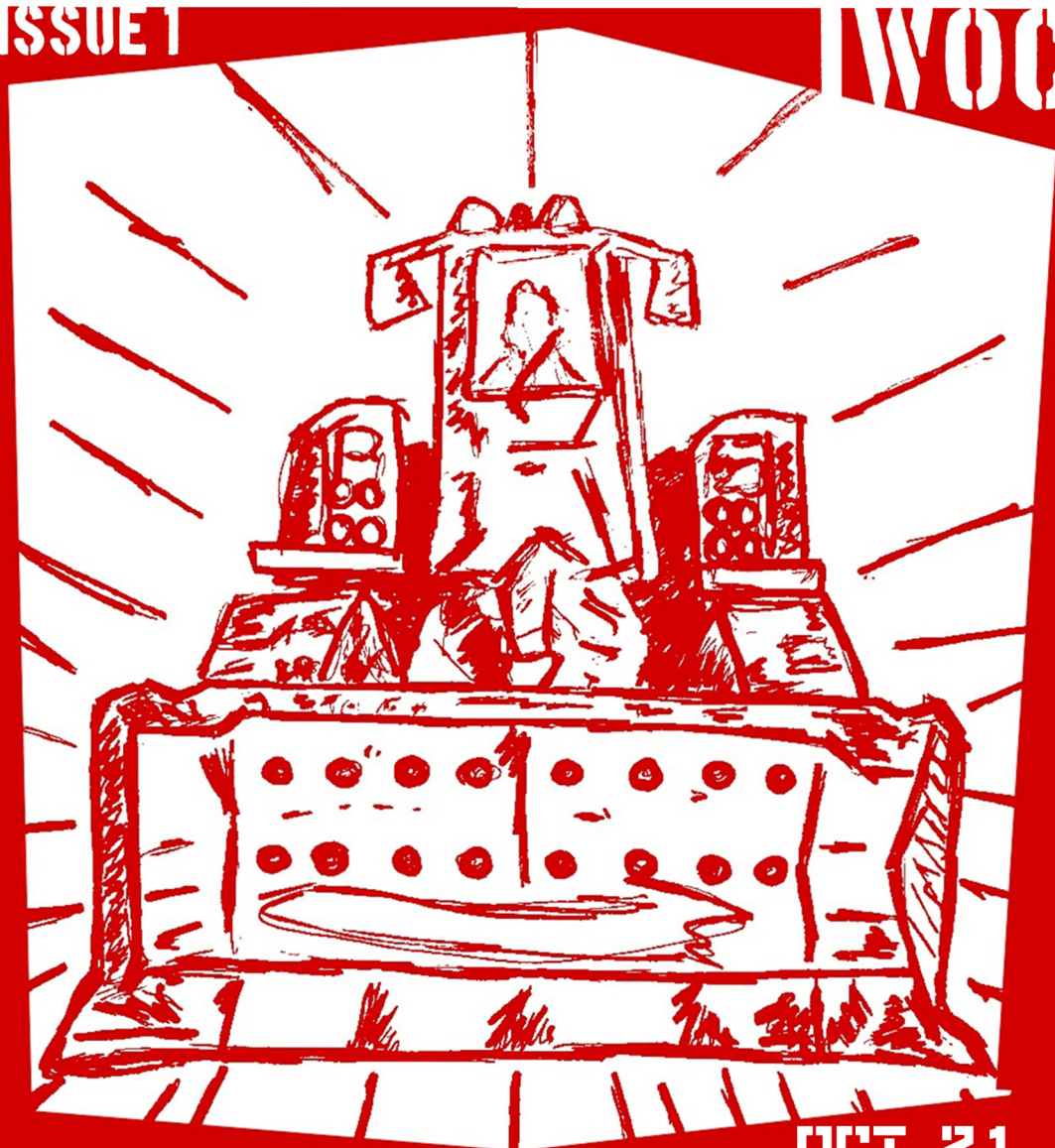


# BULLDOZER

THE ONLY VEHICLE FOR PRISON ABOLITION

ISSUE 1

WOC



OCT. 21

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**IN CARCERATED  
WORKERS**



**ORGANISING  
COMMITTEE**

If you are a prisoner or a relative of a prisoner in the Irish prison system, north or south, and would like to highlight an issue of concern, rights or prisoner struggle then please get in touch with IWOC below.

For all correspondence, write to:

**I.W.O.C**  
**P.O. BOX 346,**  
**DERRY, BT48 4FZ,**  
**IRELAND**

*Disclaimer: The views, information, or opinions expressed within these pages are solely those of the individuals involved and do not necessarily represent those of Incarcerated Workers Organising Committee.*

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# WELCOME TO BULLDOZER!

Bulldozer is a zine for prison abolition.

Prisons are tools of oppression. Tools that are used by Governments to discipline the working class and repress political dissent.

The prison system is also an industry. An industry that commodifies prisoners and generates significant private profits for Capital.

The human beings churned up in prisons suffer dehumanising experiences while inside, and stigmatisation when they are released.

Bulldozer speaks back to this industry of oppression, the suffering it creates and the profits it makes. Bulldozer is produced by members of the Industrial Workers of the World's (IWW) Incarcerated Workers Organising Committee (IWOC) Ireland.

The IWW Ireland is a union based on grass-roots action and real democracy from the bottom up.

IWOC Ireland are currently involved in a number of campaigns to support individual prisoners as well as fighting for prisoners collective rights to education, health and employment. We are also on hand to connect and support prisoners family members.

## **Join the IWW for real solidarity!**

We welcome people irrespective of their employment status, industry, country of origin, race, gender, or sexuality.

To find out more about the IWW and IWOC or to contribute to Bulldozer write to:

**Bulldozer**  
**P.O. Box 346**  
**Derry City, BT48 4FZ, Ireland.**

# Early Morning Poem To Maghaberry

A shaft of light creeps into the darkness of my cell, I stir, trying to avoid with my eyes the new reality, a new day. The clatter begins, and the monster of Maghaberry creeks into life.

The shouts and bangs, slow at first but always in tune with another day. I stir and blink and realise that the last memories I have were nothing but a dream.

The clatter begins and the monster of Maghaberry creeks into life.

Today will be a challenge, to keep the dog that sometimes visits me, to keep him at bay. That dog is depression. The black dog. Outside and inside of these walls it has arrived.

Like an old lost relative, it arrives and places itself firmly at my feet.

A panic rises in my stomach, is this the day that I will be able to cope, with the darkness in my soul.

At times outside, sitting in the luxury car, with the gold chain and the money. Even then when all was fine, he came, and he sat, and I cried.

At other times when excuse was there, in the darkest nights, my soul flew high, free of all fear and worry and pain and grief but now, the clatter begins and the monster of Maghaberry creeks into life.

# **A Step Backwards: *Isolation & Punishment***

Maghaberry prison has been using what is essentially an emergency power to segregate prisoners as an informal punishment.

Segregation and isolation has a negative impact on the emotional and psychological health of prisoners. When used unjustly as an informal punishment, segregation and isolation amounts to a form of torture.

In theory, there exists what is called the “adjudication process” through which allegations of wrongdoing made against prisoners are supposed to be tested in a formal hearing.

Over the years prisoners have made many gains and won many “due process” rights that have made it more difficult for the authorities to inflict punishment without sufficient grounds.

This limit to their power is obviously something they have been unhappy about and so, in order to wield the stick of solitary confinement more freely, they have sought a way around these regulations.

In response to a particular incident, powers exist that allow prison staff to act to “maintain good order and discipline”.

This can include isolating, temporarily, “disruptive” prisoners.

What has developed is a situation whereby prisoners have been actively punished through use of these powers and the formal proceedings are no longer used or required for the most part.

All gains won by prisoners are at risk of becoming jeopardised because of this.

I decided to challenge this approach and attempt to secure protections against the misuse of this power. My first step was to bring a case to the Prisoners Ombudsman.

I engaged with the Ombudsman's office in May 2019 and 7 months later a report was issued exonerating the prison and their practices. What this report showed was a serious lack of insight or understanding of the issue on the part of the Ombudsman.

I made further submissions on the matter, highlighting the flaws in the initial investigation and report, and filling the necessary gaps in their understanding. Finally in October 2020 a new report was published into the matter that upheld my case.

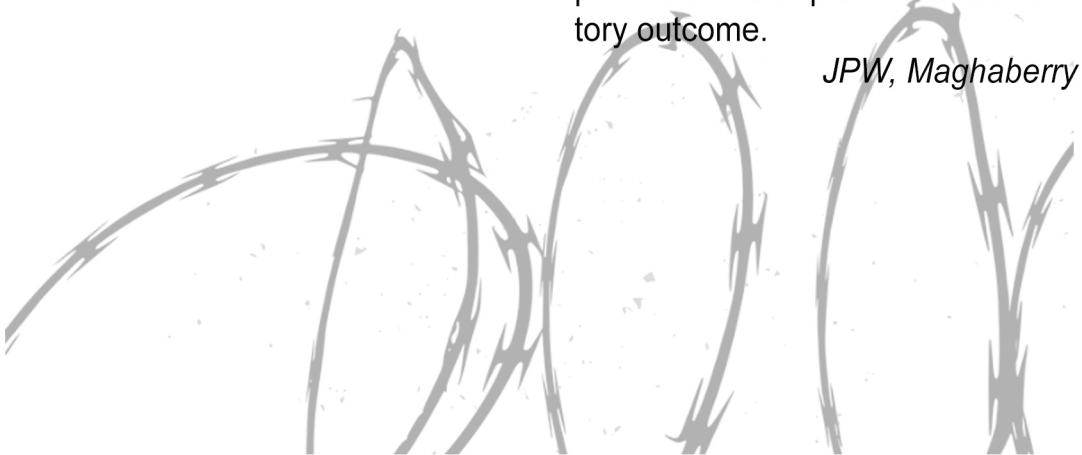
The report found that no policy or guidelines existed for the proper use of the powers in question and that the prison staff had indeed used them wrongly to punish and not as a de-escalation tool as they were intended.

As a result of all this, the prison has now developed some guidelines and, anecdotally, we have seen a reductions in the number of people being confined in this way.

However, concerns still exist around safeguards and accountability mechanisms. There is ongoing work to identify shortcomings and achieve further protections.

Ultimately, so long as solitary confinement exists, a problem exists and it is only the eradication of prisons that can present a satisfactory outcome.

*JPW, Maghaberry*



# What is IWOC?

## Unionising on the Inside

Prisons are a weapon of class warfare. Though their stated aim is to protect the public, the real aim of prisons is to maintain class privileges and inequalities. The Victorians established prisons during the 1800s to deal with the 'social problems' (urban poverty) created by capitalism and industrialisation.

Built within inner-city working-class neighbourhoods, Victorian prisons were designed to look like dungeons. Medieval aesthetics sought to strike fear into the hearts of workers and compel them to accept pitiful working and living conditions.

Today, prisons are designed to look like friendly clinical settings, yet, their primary function remains the same: to control, regulate and discipline the working class.

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) recognises the importance of working-class solidarity with prisoners and the value of supporting prisoners to organise themselves in order to challenge harmful prison conditions, exploitative prison work conditions, and the role imprisonment plays in reproducing social inequality.

Members of the IWW in the USA created the Incarcerated Workers Organising Committee (IWOC) to liaise with prisoners interested in unionising and building bridges with fellow workers on the outside.

IWOC was founded on the basis that the harms prisons do to working class communities can only be combated with the conscious participation of prisoners and solidarity with fellow workers on the outside.





Members of IWW Ireland have established IWOC Ireland in an attempt to actively reach out to prisoners as well as in response to prisoners who have reached out for assistance in unionising. IWOC Ireland is currently actively liaising with prisoners and developing strategies of how best to support them to organise a union branch.

IWOC Ireland is soliciting IWW membership applications from prisoners across the island of Ireland who agree with the IWW Constitution and are committed to union organising and mutual aid and solidarity.

IWW membership is free for prisoners. Prisoner members are

full-fledged members of the IWW and have the same rights and responsibilities of non-prisoner members.

The aim is to establish, maintain and develop IWOC branches within prisons across the island of Ireland and developing capacity to mobilise around collective concerns and take direct actions.

IWOC Ireland members on the outside will offer solidarity, by providing whatever support is needed by imprisoned members. This will extend from individual letter writing to supporting campaigns for justice.

# Call to End Prison Book Ban Within Prison System

At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) put in place a ban on books in prison.

More than one year on, as the pandemic eases, the NIPS are continuing restrictive access to reading materials such as books and magazines, this is a shocking violation of the human rights of people inside. With library services closed, access to books and reading materials from family and friends is without doubt a **BOOK BAN** by another name.

Restrictive measures including being held in cells for up to 23 hours a day were accepted by people in prison and their families in the interests of public health. Eighteen months on, for the NIPS to maintain a ban on books and other publications at any time, let alone while visiting rights have been gutted due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, is a devastating attack upon the lives of all those currently held within the prison system.



In recent times, similar book bans within the English prison system quickly led to this horrific decision being overturned.

Restrictions placed on personal movement and interaction with others can prove detrimental to the mental health of people in prison as they are denied the ability to form social bonds with others and foster community inside the prison walls. We believe it is essential to challenge the decision by the NIPS to continue to outlaw books and

other reading materials while simultaneously restricting prisoners' interactions with those inside and outside the prison. The actions of NIPS are a blatant denial of prisoners' human rights at a time when society at large is recovering from prolonged periods of relative social isolation.

A spokesperson for the IWOC, a union directly linked to the radical Industrial Workers of the World, called upon the NIPS to end the book ban "immediately".

IWOC has been actively campaigning for end to the de facto book ban. In a statement issued to the media they said "Incarcerated Workers throughout the Covid-19 pandemic have been hit hard with restrictions of movement seeing prisoners locked up for 23 hours a day. Reading materials are vital for prisoners, it's a lifeline for everyone to be able to immerse themselves in books, pamphlets, magazines and newspapers.

To have that restricted, withheld or banned is a denial of prisoners basic human rights and we call upon those within the NIPS to lift the ban immediately as it runs counter to Article 10 of the Euro-

pean Convention of Human Rights.

Prisoners have even been refused books, reading materials and even accessing music interests if it wasn't bought from a reputable outlet such as from multinational corporations as Amazon.

This in turn prevents those incarcerated from accessing material of their choice such as small independent publishers and distributors who actually have a wider range of reading materials which are fundamental to freedom of choice. Effectively this is a ban on books to prisoners by another name.

At present there is currently only regulated access to book distributors which NIPS approve of such as Amazon. This in turn dramatically limits financially what a prisoner can access.

There is also a ban on books and publications which family and friends send in from the outside. No matter what way they dress it up, this is fundamentally a ban on books by another name.

*Continues Pages 15*

# The Prison System & Disability Awareness

IWOC Ireland has created a series of interviews on what it is like within the prison system. This interview explores living with a disability while in prison and aims to raise awareness about the rights of people living with disabilities in prisons.

## Could you tell us about your disability?

I was temporarily disabled and wheelchair bound with no use of

my legs for about six months having multiple compound fractures. Even after I was out of the wheelchair I still wasn't fully mobile for a long time.

## When you look over that period now what jumps to mind?

Before I got remanded to prison, I was at court. I was wheelchaired to the dock which was elevated by a few steps. It was shown to me that a narrow wooden ramp had been temporarily installed in order to push me up.

Now i'm 14 stone, for one court officer to achieve this would be good work, it wasn't. He had to take a running start, and the ramp was not much wider than the chair's wheels', so I ended up flat on my face in front of the Judge, solicitors and spectators. The newspapers then spun this as 'the accused stumbled into the dock' as if I was some drunk or something.



## **And how did you feel after all that?**

I felt embarrassed and afraid of people jumping to conclusions. As if I was in some way on drugs or inebriated or something.

Or even affected by the court appearance or something, when in fact it was down to my disability and being 'man-handled'.

## **So eventually you get to prison, what happened then?**

I was sent to the Health Care wing which was good. I had a hospital bed and treatment from NHS nurses. I was still a prisoner and ultimately the prison establishment gets a say.

After two weeks there I was moved to a cell and the toilet which was closed off like a cubicle. I had to try and bare weight on my broken legs, spin around and sit on the toilet or I had to use a bed pan.

After days of complaining, urinating in a bottle and passing no solid waste, I was sent to a disabled cell on an ordinary landing.

## **And what was that like?**

I quickly learned that prisoners are genuinely more concerned and more inclined to help than the prison staff. My cell got cleaned daily and my food was brought without me having to ask, and all this by prisoners. So this was more suitable but many more things weren't such as travelling.

## **I was going to ask about that. How was it getting about the prison?**

Well, having been relocated I was now at least one thousand to one thousand two hundred meters away from the visits building and the Health Care building where I needed to attend there regularly for treatment. I made this journey, I'd say on average, at least two or three times every week. I was told prison staff weren't allowed to push me over there or back, so I had to do this myself. Then the snow hit and I was refused help again. My hands were froze and I was out of breath from trying when thankfully a passing prisoner offered to help. My family couldn't believe it when I told them during a visit.

**That sounds horrible, it seems that the prison didn't seem to care?**

Definitely not.

**Did they ever try to actively penalise you because of your disability?**

Yes, drug testing was an issue. My first one was classed as a failure. It was a while before I got through to them that I couldn't do it because I simply couldn't get into the testing unit. There was only steps and no ramp. Eventually they saw sense and I was tested on the wing and never failed. Although urinating while being watched, holding myself up and holding a plastic beaker without soaking myself may have been more difficult than even coming to prison in the first place.

**It definitely hasn't been easy for you and thankfully you are almost fully recovered now, but what about your treatment, access to doctors and health care generally?**

The very fact the prison security makes it so difficult. One morning I

was surprised to learn that I had a hospital appointment for X-rays and a meeting with the consultant. After being forced to travel to the prison reception building, being strip-searched in my wheelchair and being subjected to a long wait I was told that there was no one available to take me to this pre-planned appointment. So I was sent back to the wing feeling humiliated from the strip-search and frustrated with not getting my treatment and unsure when the next appointment would be scheduled as I had no control over this.

**And what about help with pain and stuff?**

I was advised by the consultant not to take Ibuprofen to help my bones mend quicker. So I needed alternative pain relief. I have a copy of this letter of recommendation to the prison doctor but staff supposedly lost it at the time. No doubt because of an unspoken policy within the prison of legitimate medications that could in theory be abused, even if seems at the risk of medical malpractice, and a legal case being raised. It was only after I did get a lawyer that I got the correct prescription.



**Unfortunately we are almost out of time, but you have given us a great insight in to what it is like living with a disability in prison. Thank you so much for your time but is there anything you would like to add before we finish?**

I have come across people who are permanently disabled and my heart goes out to them having to deal with all this for their entire sentence, and indeed their entire lives. I was only subjected to this for a short period of time and it will remain with me always.

## **Call to End Prison Book Ban Within Prison System**

*Continues From Page 11*

The Incarcerated Workers Organising Committee demand that the Northern Ireland Prison Service immediately end their policy of banning books and reading materials across the prison system.

This must not be allowed to continue. We call upon those interested in human rights and social justice, to writers, independent publishers, artists and musicians to help add

their voice by supporting prisoners human rights by also demanding that this be stopped immediately.

To date several thousand people have signed an online petition to call upon the Northern Ireland Prison Service and Naomi Long, as the Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, to bring an immediate end to prisoners not being allowed access to books.

# Challenging the Damage Category Status Can Do

Maghaberry prison is a Category A prison, meaning the highest level of restrictions are imposed upon the people held there. At present, it holds around 900 people, only 50 or so of whom are assessed as actually being in need of such security measures. So, despite the fact that around 850 people are deemed to not require the stringest constraints, they are subjected to them nonetheless.

There are a number of grounds on which this is objectionable, apart from simply being morally wrong. It is counter to the prisons own rules, it impacts negatively on people, it effects their reintegration back into society, and it is a waste of public resources.

Prison Rule 2 (h) states as a guiding principle:

*“Order and discipline in prison shall be maintained at all times... but with no more restriction than is necessary for safe custody and well-ordered community life.”*

Clearly, holding non-Category A prisoners in Category A conditions is not consistent with this.

According to the state, imprisonment itself is the official punishment: any further punitive measures are unjust.

The imposition of unnecessary restrictions can only be described as punitive and therefore constitutes an injustice by the state.





Compounding this is the impact it can have on people's well-being: Prison is known to cause harm.

Living in a controlled environment, separated from family and friends, and subjected to decisions made by others puts psychological and emotional pressure on people.

Enduring this long-term can create deep-seated consequences and, naturally, the more restricted the person is, the greater the impact.

Of course, the harm done has implications for that person's eventual return to normal society. Having been stripped of the autonomy, and assaulted psychologically and emotionally (sometimes for decades), they are then thrust into the real world.

Being unfamiliar with having to support themselves, they are subjected to a new and intense pressure, and many scramble for anything familiar in order to cope.

Unfortunately, for far too many, this leads to more imprisonment.

Finally, we must realise that all these excess security measures cost money. Imposing Category A conditions on 50, rather than 900 people would, I believe, save a significant amount of resources which could be better spent on mental health and addiction support, as well as alternative programmes to support those most at risk and prevent contact with the criminal justice system in the first place.

For all the reasons above, conditions in Maghaberry need to be radically altered to reflect actual security needs.

This would reduce harm done, and provide a stepping stone to a better approach to justice wherein prisons can be abandoned altogether. This would benefit society as a whole.

# Health Care: A Symbol of Care & Compassion?

For the majority of us, a health care system should be a symbol of care and compassion, a safe place when we are at our most vulnerable. How then does nurturing ethos fair when it becomes intertwined with the oppressive, despotic framework of the prison industrial complex?

Setting aside the physical limitations of delivering a health care system in prisons, albeit significant problems in their own right, what is most alarming is the abandonment of basic principles of care. Principles that beyond the prison walls we take for granted and assume apply at all times.

The first of these principles is confidentiality. Patient confidentiality not only is a legal matter but is present to protect a patient's trust in the each of the respective professions.

Yet this principle is cast aside on a daily basis for drug tests, medication checks to name but a few examples.

The second is the principle of autonomy; that is the right to make decisions about your own health. Operating in an authoritative environment, the health care system prefers a paternalistic, and subsequently infantilising approach. A practice that was shunned many years ago and has been shown to reduce "compliance" with treatment, damage patient satisfaction and actually lead to worse outcomes for patients.

The third principle is to protect the patient from harm, and act as an advocate. The injustices of prison are well-evidenced through research, inquests and court proceedings and challenges, as well as individual accounts.



However, not once has the prison health care team stepped forward to intervene, to act as a buffer or implement any form of safeguarding. Instead, they put their heads down and say 'it is a prison matter'. When history looks back at the mistreatment of any person, the people who stand by and watch silently are judged just as harshly as those who perpetrated it.

The list unfortunately goes on, basic standards of care are overlooked or not compatible with prison life.

The final principle I will mention is the right to complain. Mirroring the prison's complaint system, the procedure for health care problems is

equally as flawed following a two-stage internal procedure.

There is an option to raise your complaint with the Public Services Ombudsman who has a similar role as the Prisoner Ombudsman as an independent body.

However, there is one elemental flaw in this process. The unnatural marriage between the prison and health care system creates an intersection, where care meets discipline. This is no-man's land; a grey area where each system can conveniently discharge responsibility or blame to other institution, in a perpetual game of ping-pong.

*Continues Page 22*

# Prisoner Solidarity & The Role of Prisons

My involvement in making the prison videos with Matt Roberts and the **Prisoner Solidarity Network** was and is motivated by a desire to raise awareness about the true role of prison in this society and how it operates and functions as an instrument of naked class repression.

During my decades long imprisonment I wrote extensively over the years about prison repression and was always motivated by a determination to penetrate the walls surrounding me and shine a light on the true reality of prison, and this was one of the reasons given by the Parole Board for repeatedly denying my release; apparently my attempts to expose the cruelty and brutality inflicted on prisoners was viewed by the prison authorities and Parole Board as a sufficiently

serious "risk factor" to justify my continued imprisonment for decades.

The countless articles that I wrote in prison were sent to and published by anarchist and revolutionary communist publications so their distribution was unfortunately fairly limited and confined to the converted, so to speak.

It was always my desire to reach out as far as I could with my writings and spread the word as widely as I could about the true reality of prisons and the struggle and resistance of prisoners who fought back and sometimes shifted the balance of power within those hellish places.

The pen truly became my weapon in jail and at times my only way of



**Prisoner Solidarity Network: Protest against Solitary Confinement**

fighting back, even when buried deep in solitary confinement. Since my release from jail last year and my involvement with the **Prisoners Solidarity Network** I've discovered an exceptionally powerful way of communicating my radical perspective on prisons and it's been such an inspiring experience to now speak and talk directly to people through mediums like YouTube and do so on this side of the prison wall.

For so many years my voice was silenced within jail walls and although I struggled constantly to

create pathways of communication with comrades on the outside and get my writings out to them it was completely dependent on the arbitrary power of my jailers if my voice transcended the walls.

Now my voice speaks freely and the films that I've helped make with Matt Roberts and the PSN have so helped convey and carry that voice to a broader group of people.

**John Bowden**

**PRISONER  
PSN SOLIDARITY  
NETWORK**

# Health Care:

*Continued from Page 19*

I have recently become aware that this grey area is opportunistic in another way. Not only do prisoners not get any resolution from either internal complaint procedures, but neither the prisoner nor the Public Services Ombudsmen have jurisdiction to investigate in these matters.

The net effect: patients are failed, devoid of any efficient means to resolve their problems.

This is not the only instance where public bodies are failing incarcerated people. I have recently contacted a number of health care bodies to raise my concerns about ethical procedures.

Unsurprisingly, a number did not even bother to respond.

Of those who did, including the General Medical Council, Nursing and Mid-Wifery Council, British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nurses, each declined to comment, investigate or even

## AN INJURY TO **ONE**



## IS AN INJURY TO **ALL**

inform me of the level of care I could expect from a health care professional.

Not one of the most influential health care bodies offered to investigate failings. I assert this further evidence that all of us stored in the prison system warehouse are hid away from society, rendered voiceless, defenceless and failed by the institutions that pretend to care for us.

How then can we be expected to put our unwavering trust in these professions who choose to be enforcers or, worse still, the secret-keepers for the state.

*DON, Magilligan*

# Prisoners of the past?

"The world's not out to get you" trust them, it must be true.

"It's all just in your head", fuck this, I'd rather be dead.

Trapped behind an unforgiving door, lying huddled on the overpaced floor.

Consoled by the cold embrace of fear, alone, save my own escaped tear.

In my chest that well-known pain, what's the point? Is it all in vain?

Reminders of wrongs in my past, how much longer is this going to last.

Screws don't even pretend to care, with righteousness that only they can bear.

You're just a number without a name, just animals they have to keep tame.

What do you do when your voice is lost? What else but shout, whatever the cost.

When hope is a memory of days gone-by, Smash the bars, and try not to die.

**Anon**

# Who Am I?

What defines me is what I do,  
What defines me is what I've been through.

What defines me are the things that I say,  
What defines me are the cards that I play.

What defines me is the face I wear,  
What are the burdens I bear.

What defines me is where I call home.

What defines me is who I have been,  
What defines me is what my eyes have seen.

What defines me is who I choose to be,  
What defines me is what others see.

What defines me is who others want me to be,  
So what is the definition of me?

**Anon**