

PRISONERS PROTESTING BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT BEEN GRANTED SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

Numbers

- 1. The number of protestors as at 1 April 1977 was 97. A statement (Appendix A) is attached listing the prisoners involved chronologically in order of dates of commencement of protests. The statement shows also their para-military affiliation and their length of sentence.
- 2. The total of 97 includes 10 female prisoners.
- 3. All protestors are republican prisoners -
94 are PIRA and 3 are IRSP.
- 4. The male prisoners are refusing to work or to wear prison clothing. The female prisoners are refusing to work. They are not required to wear a prison uniform.

Location

5. The protestors are located as follows:-

Maze	83
Belfast	4
Armagh	10

6. All male protestors are accommodated one to a cell. At Maze Prison the adult protestors of whom there are 34 are housed in 2 wings of H4; the Young Prisoner protestors who number 48 are located in 2 wings of H2.

7. One protestor is at present held in the ^{Punishment} cell block. He is a PIRA prisoner (McFeely) and is being held there under Prison Rule 24(1) with the approval of the Board of Visitors. McFeely was a disruptive influence and was removed from association with other prisoners for the maintenance of good order and discipline.

Regime (Male Protestors)

- 8. Each protestor is provided with a bed, a mattress, bedding, a table, a chair and a chamberpot. Prison clothing (including underclothing) is also available to him in his cell at all times as is a bible.
- 9. Except for visits to the Welfare Officer, the Medical Officer, and legal representatives, attendance at religious services, appearances before the Governor, time spent in the ablutions, or the receipt of of statutory visits protestors normally remain in their cells 24 hours a day.
- 10. They conform to the extent of brushing out and helping to clean up their cells each day; they slop out themselves and they collect their own meals from the trolley when it comes round.
- 11. They wear a shirt and prison trousers when visiting the Welfare Officer or the Medical Officer or attending religious services. They wear full prison clothing for their statutory visits.
- 12. Each prisoner has a statutory right to not less than one hours exercise in the open each day. This is offered daily to the protestors but they do not avail themselves of it.
- 13. On average they leave their cells about twice a week for a shower.

14. A library is available in each cell block and every prisoner is allowed to have library books and exchange them as often as practicable. In practice however I am advised that few of the protesters avail themselves of this facility. Prison Chaplains are permitted to leave religious journals with the protesters subject to scrutiny by prison staff. Most prisoners have a few of these journals.

15. Convicted prisoners are allowed, as a privilege, to have a radio in their cells. Protestors however lose all privileges and are not therefore allowed the use of a radio.

16. It follows from the foregoing that protesters are undergoing self imposed cellular confinement, and are spending their time sitting in their cell wrapped ~~up~~ in a blanket.

17. Refusing to wear prison clothing or to work is an offence against discipline and results automatically in loss of privileges, including association with other prisoners, the right to wear leisure clothing in association periods, the use of a radio, privilege visits, letters and parcels. Every prisoner is however allowed by statute to write and receive a letter on reception and thereafter once in four weeks and to receive a visit once in four weeks. Most protesters decline their statutory visits.

18. Adjudications take place at fortnightly intervals and the normal punishment is loss of remission - one day for each day that the prisoner is in breach of the prison rules. In addition the Governor normally imposes a punishment of 3 days cellular confinement in respect of each appearance before him by a protestor.

19. The latter punishment is served in the prisoner's own cell, and in this period the bed, mattress and bedding are removed from the cell during the day. All that he is then left with is a blanket, ~~and~~ a table and a chair. A mattress and bedding are always available at night.

20. Prison rule 68(3) provides that the Medical Officer shall once very day, or oftener, visit every prisoner under punishment or under special discipline or any other prisoner to whom his attention is specially directed. I am assured that this is done.

21. The temperature in the cells is kept at about 65°F and the heat is controlled centrally for each wing - it cannot be cut off in a particular cell or cells.

22. Electric light in the cells is controlled by the prisoners and is on all day and late into the evening.

Regime (Female Protestors)

23. The regime operated in respect of female protestors is less restrictive.

24. The Governor adjudicates on the protestors at fortnightly intervals and the normal punishment is loss of remission (1 day for each day spent on protest), loss of privilege visits and parcels, loss of association with other prisoners at weekends, and ban on attendance at weekly film show.

25. Female protestors are permitted to associate with other prisoners in the evenings on week days. They are offered and they do take exercise each day. They share cells and they are not debarred from having a radio.

Duration of Protests

26. A statement (Appendix B) is attached summarising the duration of protests by weeks and the numbers involved. This shows that 31 prisoners have been on protest for over 3 months; 45 for over 2 months and 71 for over 1 month.

27. A statement (Appendix C) is also attached giving details in respect of 53 prisoners who were protesting at one time but are now conforming. These include 27 PIRA, 1 OIRA, 3 IRSP, 5 UDA and 17 UVF.

Attitudes

28. A number of the protestors are defiant, truculent and unrepentant. They either refuse to plea, answer in Irish or make utterances such as "the system will break before we will". There are other protestors however who would be prepared to conform but are afraid to do so because of pressure from both inside and outside the prison. Their main concern is for the safety of their families. Some protestors undergo considerable emotional stress immediately following a statutory visit and resort to tears in their cells. McShane is a case in point.

Prison Management

29. Protestors are demanding as regards accommodation since doubling up is not practicable. They are time consuming also in relation to Medical supervision and in adjudications by the Governor but so far as normal prisons management is concerned they present no immediate problems and ironically the work load on the discipline staff is much reduced because of the protestors self imposed cellular confinement.

30. This protest is however an important facet of the special category battle and not only could the numbers of new committals swell the ranks of existing protestors but there is always the danger of some of the present conformers joining the protestors either by choice or as a result of pressure from within the command structure. This is particularly true of the Easter period.

31. There is no room for compromise. The position could become actue if the physical or mental condition of any of the long term protestors seriously deteriorated. Fortunately there is no problem at present in relation to the medical condition of any of the existing protestors.

32. There has been very little propaganda of late regarding the protestors and this must be discouraging to them and frustrating for the para-military organisations. My own view is that no publicity is good news as regards this particular issue and any initiative on our part might be construed as a sign that we were worried about this problem and that the protestors were making an impact on the system.

33. We can control the situation within the prisons. The longer this protest continues however and the more prisoners become involved the greater is the danger that it will attract ^{outside} support in the form of violent action by para-military organisations which may be directed against the prison service or take the form of widespread attacks on property and/or persons.

34. We never of course expected the ending of special category to be accepted without protest and we can be thankful that to date this is the most serious protest we have had to cope with inside the prisons. It will no doubt become worse before we can look for an improvement on the present position but it is a case of sticking it out and

any weakening of our attitude would be a body blow to the staff who have so far borne the brunt of the protests and the attacks on the prison service.

1. The number of protesters as at 3 April 1977 was 97. A statement (Appendix A) is attached listing the prisoners involved chronologically in order of dates of commencement of protest. The statement shows also their personal details, affiliations and their length of sentence.

2. The total of 97 includes 13 female prisoners.

E N Barry

E N BARRY
4 April 1977

3. All male protesters are refusing to work or to wear prison clothing. The female protesters are refusing to work. They are not required to wear a prison uniform.

4. The protesters are located as follows:-

Haze	85
Belfast	4
Armagh	10

5. All male protesters are accommodated one to a cell. At Haze Prison the adult protesters of whom there are 14 are housed in 2 wings of 11; the Young Prisoner protesters who number 45 are located in 2 wings of 11.

6. One protester is at present held in the cell block. He is a PIRA prisoner (McFaulx) and is being held there under Prison Rule 28(1) with the approval of the Board of Visitors. McFaulx has a disruptive influence and was removed from association with other prisoners for the maintenance of good order and discipline.

Regime (Male Protestors)

7. Each protester is provided with a bed, a mattress, bedding, a table, a chair and a chamberpot. Prison clothing (including underclothing) is also available to him in his cell at all times as is a bible.

8. Except for visits to the Welfare Officer, the Medical Officer, and legal representatives, attendance at religious services, appearance before the Governor, time spent in the canteens, or the receipt of statutory visits, protesters normally remain in their cells 24 hours a day.

9. They conform to the extent of brushing out and helping to clean up their cells each day; they also eat themselves and they collect their own waste from the toilet when it comes round.

10. They wear a shirt and prison trousers when visiting the Welfare Officer or the Medical Officer or attending religious services. They wear full prison clothing for their statutory visits.

11. Each prisoner has a statutory right to get less than one hour's exercise in the open each day. This is offered daily to the protesters but they do not avail themselves of it.