

Imprisonment in Great Britain

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The way that these private prisons are run you could equate to an ideal capitalist economy in a microcosm, because the private companies own the prison, they're paid for the prisons being there by the states.

They own the workshops where products are produced by slave labour. And they also own the shops where the prisoners can spend their money.

The private prison companies have their charges, the prisoners, in the position that capitalism would ideally like all its workforce:

They're at work, and when they're not at work, they're locked up and they're there to start the next day. They don't have days off sick. They're not allowed to have days off sick. They can't go on holiday, they can't hide and pretend to be ill. They're always there available to produce for the company. And everything that they earn goes back to the company. So the company really maximises its profit from those prisoners.

After more than 8. Years of imprisonment after spending nearly two years in solitary confinement, I was finally released from Whitehall Prison. In June 2002.

When the day of my release came, it was a bright sunny day and. I remember being being. Walked from the prison reception to the gate. It's a short distance, but of course, I wasn't used to walking more than just a few yards because everywhere in prison is split up with gates and I wasn't used to not being in handcuffs. I wasn't used to seeing the sky, so to see the rising and feel the sun on my face and arms, that in itself was a novelty because in all my time in prison, I'd never had a view over the prison wall. All I'd had to look at was concrete and steel.

And then suddenly the gates move back and the world outside was waiting for me and I could see my friends and supporters.

So after 8 years the state had had me in its clutches and then just backed me back out on the pavement.

I've been a political activist all my life. I've been fighting for injustice for myself and other people all my life. This has not made me a friend of the state. It's made me very much an enemy of the state. It's marked me out. As somebody they do not like.

When I was active my most politically active in the 70s and 80s, my house would be raided. I would be searched. I would be stopped in the street. I would be arrested. I would be beaten up. The police would try to fit. Up on in the way that they eventually did in 1994 when they took advantage of a situation where I had been attacked to send me to prison for 12 years.

And of course, when I went into prison, nothing changed because I wasn't prepared to surrender. I was constantly marked out for special treatment.

When I was first in the HM Prison, Doncaster. I was the prisoner's representative. Elected by the prisoners, basically acting as a shop steward, negotiating with the enemy from a in this case a position of great strength communicated across barricades and what happened was that when they eventually were in a position, they were in a

position of strength. They ghosted me. I was moved, basically taken off the wing out of the prison to get me away from the other prisoners to prevent any solidarity action.

So that was the first time I was ghosted. I was moved from there to Lincoln Prison. That was the first time that I was moved out of 22 successive times. That was moved while while I was in prison in the next eight years.

Work or punishment

I've always refused to work in prison. I'm not going to assist the state in terms of running my own imprisonment, in terms of keeping the place clean, in terms of making bars, in terms of making uniforms for screws.

I'm certainly not going to help some private company profit from my incarceration. And so I always refused to work and was punished for it as a result, I had days added to my sentence. I spent long periods in segregation because of that.

If you're a prisoner, you are forced to work. It's compulsory if you don't work, you are punished. You have no rights, you have no trade union. Rights you have no health and safety light rights. You have no minimum wage. The state or the private company that imprisons you can really treat you as they want. They can exploit you in whatever way that they want.

Private prisons

It's important for people in mainland Europe I think to understand the role of the United Kingdom in acting as a bridge head in terms of introducing prison privatisation into the continent from the United States since the Second World War Britain has existed very much as airstrip one as an additional state of the USA.

Private prisons routinely neglect their prisoners because as capitalist companies, they're constantly looking to make more profit, and they will. They will make cutbacks wherever and whenever they can. That's intrinsic to what they're doing. But they do have a legal duty of care to the prisoners they are put in charge of.

That was routinely ignored HMP Doncaster. I actually sued the prison successfully for breach of a duty of care.

Prison uprisings

The architecture at HMD HMP Doncaster is quite unusual for prisons these days. In as much that as you can see the wings of the prison which are located one on top of the other. Are very high. That's unusual because what we've seen in recent years following the uprising, it's strange ways present in 1991 is that prisons are built on a lower. Level what happened in the strange ways uprising in 1991 is that the prisoners got onto the roof the building. And so a prison protest as sign of prisoner resistance of working class defiance was. And put on the world stage and that lasted for a period of some time that these men were able to remain on the roof top of the prison. Defying the full might of the state and so after strange ways, the state was determined that would not happen again, that they would not have to suffer that. The same embarrassment, and that's the reason why prisons are generally. Built at a lower level.

Even the HMP Doncaster. Although It's built much higher. If you look closely at the rooftops, you can see that there's actually a massive overhang of something like 12 feet of two metres, two or three metres to stop people climbing onto the roof.

Unsafe conditions

The prison is split up into three house blocks. Each house block has four wings. And a man was trapped in a cell that was on fire. Very dangerous position to be in. And when the prisoners tried to find a screw to unlock the door, we couldn't find a screw on the entire house block, not one, and the prisoners actually had to rescue the man themselves. It's I mean It's a window that there weren't more deaths. Some of the things I saw there were absolutely appalling. He ended up with basically prisoners being forced to run the prison in the sense that we provided for ourselves. The wing I was on, which was a particularly militant wing, the screws were literally frightened to come on there, and all they used to do was push the food on there three times a day when they eventually got that together and the rest of the time we would, we would take care of ourselves.

After a few weeks, I transferred down onto sea Wing, which was the most militant wing known as Beirut and on that wing really we had complete control over it.

The Governor of the prison, Kevin Rogers hid in his office for the first six months, the prison was opening, frightened to come out. In the 1980s the prison, the British prison population was very high ...

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