

PAP NEWS ISSUE 19 2015

Hello again from **PAP News**. The Penal Affairs Panel of the Unitarians sends you news of current issues in criminal justice, Human Rights and in prisons.

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1 Prisons at “Breaking Point”? Now record suicides The Howard League published its report on UK prisons “Breaking Point” in 2014 (see Issue 18). Just months later comes report of a rise in number of deaths in UK prisons in 2014. Alarming are the suicides, particularly amongst young adult prisoners. Are they related to the cuts in prison officers? See www.howardleague.org/suicide-in-prison/

2 The First Death in Custody of Black Man by Taser The Institute of Race Relations has issued “an overview” of deaths and inquests. Adrian McDonald died after being stunned at a flat in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs at the end of December. The overview looks at current inquests of deaths in police custody and notes that Staffordshire Constabulary is in the top five of police forces using Tasers. See www.irr.org.uk/news/recent-news-on-deaths-in-custody/

3 Joint Enterprise – A source of injustice? The doctrine of joint enterprise in English Law allows courts to convict an associate present at the moment of an offence by the principal. The sentence is often the same. The doctrine has been under suspicion for many years. The concern of MPs and lawyers led to Parliament’s Joint Select Committee holding a short inquiry in 2011. Since then, more questions have been raised about the doctrine. The current number of prisoners convicted under the doctrine along with principal offenders is now estimated to exceed 6,000 of the 86,000 in UK prisons. The Joint Select Committee has held a second short inquiry. For an explanation of the effects and some results of the use by the prosecution of the doctrine in criminal courts see www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/joint-enterprise-the-legal-doctrine-which-critics-say-has-caused-hundreds-of-miscarriages-of-justice-9926939.html and for the Committee’s recent report and recommendations as the thinking, the mens rea and the foresight, required of the associate see www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmjust/310/31006.htm#a11

4 Boris Johnson’s “Operation Shield” – More Joint enterprise? In January the London Mayor’s office for policing announced a trial for 12 months in Lambeth, Westminster and Haringey to deal with crime by gangs by seeking to convict any known gang member of any crime by the gang even if the known gang member took no part. The action has raised criticism that it is aimed at working class black youths. See www.irr.org.uk/news/archaic-operation-shield/

5 UK Intelligence Services Monitor Solicitor-Client Phone Calls Phone calls and letters between solicitors and clients are “privileged” in English law. Such intrusions clearly give unfair advantages in legal claims and criminal cases. Investigations into claims by two Libyans that they were returned by the UK to the Libyan government have revealed the intelligence services listening to calls between the claimants and their lawyers in direct breach. See www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jan/13/mi6-snooping-privileged-lawyer-client-communications

6 Inspection of YOI Feltham finds 1 in 4 boys in “virtual solitary” The Chief Inspector of Prisons has protested that one in four of the 240 boys in custody aged 15 – 18 are locked alone in cells for up to 23 hours each day. The Prison Service blames the violence between gangs but the Chief Inspector found the number of violent incidents to have fallen albeit too high at 262 in six months. See www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/1-in-4-at-youth-prison-held-in-virtual-solitary-confinement-say-inspectors-9973232.html

7 UK’s Detention of vulnerable asylum-seekers “deeply shocking” The All Party Parliamentary Groups both on Refugees and Migration have reported their shock at the 24% increase in detentions in the last year. UK is the only country in the EU which has no time limit for the detention of asylum-seekers. The Groups have demanded review of the UK’s “expensive, ineffective and unjust” asylum system. See www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/act-now-to-overhaul-britains-shocking-detention-of-migrants-indefinitely-and-in-appalling-conditions-say-mps-10081353.html

8 Denis MacShane’s “Prison Diaries” Not all those who were imprisoned for wrongly claiming Parliamentary expenses went to open prisons. Denis MacShane, a contemporary and assistant of the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was sent to HMP Belmarsh, a high security prison. Recommendation of his recent book comes from Rev. Phil Silk of the PAP Network. Read the review at www.theguardian.com/books/2014/sep/27/prison-diaries-denis-macshane-review

9 International Women’s Day – Shameful UK statistics continue The Independent considers the IW Day, 8 March, should continue and while the UK statistics on violence against women remain amongst the worst in Europe. See www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/international-womens-day-2015-the--shameful-statistics-that-show-why-it-is-still-important-10091504.html

10 Sanctuary 50 Vulnerable Refugees – Pressing Local Authorities The Norfolk Unitarians are pressing local authorities to support the campaign for the UK to honour its agreement in January 2014 to admit “most vulnerable refugees” from Syria selected by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. In the first 14 months, Germany has admitted many1000s, Sweden over a 1000 and the UK less than 100. Will you press your local authority? See www.citizensuk.org/

11 Please Send Your News for PAP News to bruce_chilton@hotmail.com

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