

PAP NEWS ISSUE 20 2015

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1 Scotland Does Different: End of Large Prisons for Women Scotland's Justice Secretary, Michael Matheson, has announced the replacement of Scotland's one large prison for women with smaller custodial units closer to prisoners' homes. The announcement follows an adverse report by Scotland's Chief Inspector of Prisons on the sole women's prison in Scotland, HMP Corton Vale. See [hwww.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/disgraceful-unacceptable-harrowing-corton-vale-women-s-prison-is-damned-again-1-2255935](http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/disgraceful-unacceptable-harrowing-corton-vale-women-s-prison-is-damned-again-1-2255935) The Guardian followed the announcement in Scotland with an editorial calling for action by the new Justice Secretary at Westminster, Michael Gove, to "tackle the tinderbox of our jails". See www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/28/observer-view-prison-reform-michael-gove

2 Witnesses have Less Trust in the Criminal Justice System The Government has published an "Analytical Summary" of the crime survey for 2013 – 14. It concludes that witnesses of crimes have less faith in police stations and courts because of their experiences than those people who have never become witnesses to crime. See www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/449584/witnessing-crime-findings-from-crime-survey.pdf

3 Books for Prisoners – Restrictions End The Justice Secretary, Michael Gove, has announced the relaxation of the restrictions on books being sent to prisoners and the number which might be held by a prisoner. The High Court ruled in January against reduction of prisoners' "privileges" by the former Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling. The announcement marks the end of a successful campaign by the Howard's League and others seeking prison reform, including the Unitarians. See www.howardleague.org/campaign-books-for-prisoners/

4 Quakers in Britain Object to Military Targeting of Schools The Quakers have produced a short film opposing the Government's support and allocation of £45 million "for the military to target young people". Michael Gove, when Education Secretary, introduced provisions for the Armed Services to join the education services in schools as "character-building" for pupils. The Quakers oppose the distribution of an "unbalanced" British Armed Forces pack to schools and, particularly, its aim to recruit children under 18. See the film on www.quaker.org.uk/unseenmarch

5 Detained Fast Track Procedure for Asylum-Seekers Suspended The Home Office's "Detained Fast Track Suitability Exclusion Criteria" was introduced in 2003 by the Labour Government. It enables the immediate detention for removal of asylum-

seekers whose applications are considered to be weak and deportation often before a decision has been made. After several recent successful legal challenges, the procedure has been suspended pending its reform. For an interesting article, see www.irr.org.uk/news/detained-fast-track-how-to-reform-structural-injustice/

6 Deaths at Calais The continuing failure of the EU states to agree to share the burden of migrants and the failures to provide a humane system for aspiring asylum-seekers is having deadly results. For the deaths at Calais in the last two months, see www.irr.org.uk/news/asylum-seeker-death-toll-rising/

7 US-Style Plea Bargains for Offending Corporations Plea bargaining has many forms, not least before UK criminal courts. The Serious Fraud Office has announced it expects to complete its first deals, “deferred prosecution agreements, with companies this year. The agreements are to be used only where the “public interest is not best served” by criminal prosecution and must be approved by a judge. See www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/justice-for-sale-big-companies-could-soon-escape-prosecution-for-corporate-corruption--by-paying-their-way-out-10414792.html

8 Should Tobacco in Prisons be Banned? Government ministers have since 2007 proposed a total ban on tobacco in prisons on health grounds. For the arguments for, see www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/of-course-smoking-should-be-banned-in-prisons--its-time-for-inmates-to-start-living-like-the-rest-of-us-10407372.html and, for an explanation of the role of tobacco in prisons by a former inmate, see www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/a-smoking-ban-in-prisons-wont-really-help-cons--but-it-could-destroy-their-economy-10411955.html

9 Freedom of Information – Whitehall's Secret Cache Former Government ministers have regretted the passing of the FOI Act, but there is a secret store of documents dated up to 2007 which remain hidden in Whitehall and a means to add new documents. See www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/07/30-year-rule-documents-government-nuclear-tests-gchq-falklands

10 Obama Again Tries to Close Guantanamo The President is again seeking means to close the extraterritorial prison at Guantanamo Bay not least because each of the remaining 116 prisoners costs \$3 million each year to keep there. See www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/guantanamo-bay-closure-will-bring-danger-men-to-us-top-security-adviser-warns-10419924.html

11 Growing Small Amounts of Cannabis in Durham Durham's Police Commissioner, Ron Hogg, has decided that growing small amounts of cannabis should not be prosecuted. The news has drawn criticism and support in equal measure. See www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/33642016/cannabis-laws-is-durham-going-to-be-the-new-amsterdam Has your Unitarian church, chapel or meetinghouse supported the GA's resolution calling for a Royal Commission into Drugs by writing to your MP?

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

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