

Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee:	Seán Murray
Interviewed by:	Jenny Meegan
Date of interview:	24/08/2011

Important

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Clip title: Winning the battle for education

Duration: 00:01:59

Clip start point in full interview: 00:08:34

Clip end point in full interview: 00:10:29

Interview identifier: 037_S_01

Description: Sean Murray had completed his first year studies with Queen's University, Belfast in Long Kesh Internment Camp in 1972. He was responsible for developing education among Republican prisoners in the H Blocks (the Maze and Long Kesh Prison) after the end of the Protests in 1983. He studied with The Open University in the Republican Wings of the H Blocks from 1984. He describes overcoming negative perceptions of education among Republican prisoners and battling with the Prison authorities for access to education.

Transcript:

So you sort of pioneered the development of the education system among Republicans?

Well, that was part of my remit in the jail.

That was amongst the Republicans?

Amongst the Republican prisoners, and obviously I had the benefit of having some experience of being at university and an insight into some of the courses which were, I think from a Republican perspective, relevant and interesting because you had to make it interesting. People had this, maybe a lot of them had a bad experience with education in the past and you had to break that myth. Also, and I mentioned earlier to you this perception, which was the wrong perception that because the jail authorities ran the education system, you shouldn't be part of it. You can understand that because they have been engaged in protests for many years now. So it was breaking down the myths, winning the debate in relation to the benefits of engaging in education and it was also a battle, I have to say, with the prison authorities because they were very reluctant to have so many prisoners come on board in relation to the education system. It was a shock to their system, apart from the costs I don't think they liked the idea of too many Republicans educating themselves as well.