

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: **Dennis Kennedy**

Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**

Date of interview: **16/05/2018**

Important

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Clip title: Teaching 'The Folly of Irish Nationalism' to Republican Prisoners

Duration: 00:01:27

Clip start point in full interview: 00:01:44

Clip end point in full interview: 00:02:11

Interview identifier: 107_T_01

Description:

Dennis Kennedy, Open University Tutor, remembers being invited to give a lecture to Republican prisoners in Portlaoise Prison on 'The folly of Irish Nationalism'.

Transcript:

I was phoned up to ask would I agree to give a talk to the group of prisoners - he said there'd be about twenty or thirty in a room. And I said, "Well, what do you want me to talk about?" And he said, "Well, it's quite normal that they expect the lecturer to talk on the subject that he's been teaching" So I said, "That's fine. I'll do that" and he said "Can you give me a title?" And I thought for a moment and I thought, well now's the time to break a few boundaries, so I said "I'll talk on the folly of Nationalism, with particular reference to the Irish variety". He says, "What!? Right, okay, okay" So that was the title of the talk, and I must have spent about an hour with a group of twenty or twenty nine [Republican prisoners] with one warder present discussing the folly of Nationalism with special reference to Irish Nationalism; which was as hot and heavy a discussion as you could have wished for. And it brought out all the, what had been the rather subterranean contrast between a lot of what I was saying and a lot of what they firmly believed. But I thoroughly enjoyed it, and I ended up with a nice handmade leather wallet from the prisoners at Portlaoise, from the POWs in Portlaoise. I enjoyed it.