

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: **Billy Hutchinson**

Interviewed by: **Pat Jess**

Date of interview: **22/08/2011**

Important

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it.

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Billy Hutchinson Clip

Clip title: It allowed me to see things differently

Duration: 00:01:25

Clip start point in full interview: 00:40:59

Clip end point in full interview: 00:42:24

Interview identifier: 002_S_01

Description: Billy Hutchinson recalls how his academic study with the Open University in the Compounds (the Maze and Long Kesh Prison) in the 1980s helped equip him to negotiate with governments and political opponents during the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

Transcript:

I now work in the community, and I would say to you that my work in The Open University and the stuff that I do is well rooted in my work. And my work would be, I suppose in terms of government circles- and particularly OFM, DFM, and DSD [Office of First Minister, Office of Deputy First Minister and Department of Social Development] and our own government in Northern Ireland- they actually value it quite highly and like the system that I use. And all of that system comes from my learning in The Open University and my experience in work, the theory side of it comes from there in terms of what I had learned. So for me, you know, as I say it widened my horizons, it allowed me to see things differently. It also, I think in many ways, taught me how to react and talk to the enemy and I don't mean that in a negative sense. I mean it is a term I am using and, you know, being involved in the Peace Process and being one of the first people who, being one of the first group of people who were talking to the Irish government; the American government; the British government and also Republicans, in terms of Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA. The Open University taught me how to actually do that.