

## 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: **Robert Campbell**

Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**

Date of interview: **11/10/2011**

#### **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.

In some cases, interviewees may have made changes to the transcript.

Personal/sensitive information regarding individuals who may be living has been removed from transcripts where necessary.

#### **Copyright and Permissions**

Rights owned or controlled by The Open University.

**All use of this transcript in part or in full requires prior permission from The Open University Archive.**

Please contact [university-archive@open.ac.uk](mailto:university-archive@open.ac.uk) to discuss possible use of the content.

Robert Campbell Clip

**Clip title:** When is a spring a security risk?

**Duration:** 00:01:45

**Clip start point in full interview:** 00:08:10

**Clip end point in full interview:** 00:09:55

**Interview identifier:** 031\_S\_01

**Description:**

Robert Campbell describes his experiences of studying Mathematics with The Open University in the Loyalist Wings of the H Blocks (the Maze and Long Kesh Prison) and recalls a security check and the personal journey and sense of worth achieved from studying.

**Transcript:**

I found it strange, by the way, in terms of security because I remember I was doing a course called, Mathematical Models and Methods [MST204]. And within that there was some practical work that was testing stresses and strains, so we were allowed this box of springs. And I used to find it really strange that I wasn't allowed a pen that had a spring, like a Parker pen, you weren't allowed the spring. But I can remember pointedly having a Parker pen and a box of springs which were my Open University materials and during a cell search I had left the pen and the springs together. When I returned to my cell after the search, the pen was missing but the box of springs was there and I sent obviously for the officer in charge and asked, "Where is my pen?" And he said, "You are not allowed it, Campbell, because it has a spring in it" And I said, "What about this full box of springs?" And he says, "Well, that is educational material" And I always found that really strange. The whole time I did the OU, it was really self-fulfilling for me. It was a personal journey for me at the time. I'm sure it was the same for a lot of the other lads, but it always just gave me that sense of worth, while I was there. It is hard for me to describe it at the time, but when you were locked up at night and you were struggling with some problems, you nearly had to fight with the officers to leave your light on after 11 o'clock at night; either because you were enjoying what you were doing, or you had been playing football and didn't do an essay so you had to stay up late and get it in for the following day. So there were different sort of things happening around that time.