

## 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: **Naomi**  
Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**  
Date of interview: **01/04/2015**

#### **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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Naomi Clip

**Clip title:** Working in the early 1970s

**Duration:** 00:02:56

**Clip start point in full interview:** 00:01:40

**Clip end point in full interview:** 00:04:36

**Interview identifier:** 075\_T\_01

**Description:** Naomi joined The Open University as a member of the administrative staff in the Belfast Office in its first year of teaching in 1971. In this clip she reflects how, in the early 1970s, some staff had reservations about The Open University teaching in the prisons, and how even though staff and the Belfast office were affected by the Troubles, staff continued with their jobs.

**Transcript:**

*You were around when teaching in the prison started. It was a long time ago but can you remember anything about people's attitudes, do you want to set the scene of what was happening in Northern Ireland at that stage because, just to get an idea of—*

Well we would have started in 1972 and as you know that was during a period of the conflict, and people did have reservations and I had reservations myself because I think people thought if students outside were paying for tuition, why should these people who had been involved in the conflict have free tuition because we had many students who were in remote situations, students who had disabilities that we unable to provide this individual tuition for, but as time went on we agreed about the scheme and we carried on doing our job and then it became part of what we did.

*So instead of being something sort of extraordinary, it just became the normal process?*

Yes.

*And were there any times in terms of the Troubles when being involved with the prison work was more difficult than others?*

I don't recall any particular time when it was more difficult. We had colleagues who were personally involved in the conflict so this required to be sensitive around them, but we went on and continued on doing our jobs and they continued on doing what they had to do.

*And you were telling me earlier you had a memory of sitting in the office with people on the day all the bombs went off in Oxford Street [Belfast]?*

Yes, at that time the office was in University Street and there were bombs in Botanic Avenue so it was quite close to where we were and so we were affected by it.

Naomi Clip

*But you just kept going?*

Yes we continued on, even during the Workers' strike [UWC Strike: 15<sup>th</sup> May to 28<sup>th</sup> May 1974], we always went into the office. So people were affected although some more than others.