

Voices from Trade Union representatives in Falkirk, Scotland

1. Culture, what culture? Everyone watches Eastenders (a soap opera) and American crap, like everywhere else.
2. When I'm out in my kilt (Scottish tartan skirt for men) it's unbelievable. In the pub, women keep trying to touch my bum. With my wife standing next to me! It's bloody embarrassing.
3. Scotland? Bloody tourists. It takes me an hour to get to work in the summer. Shite weather.
4. No, even in the rain this place is beautiful. My heart sings when I get back here. I don't say anything though.
5. Bosses are bosses everywhere I suppose. But when our factory was taken over by an American company, it took management some time to realise we weren't go to say 'How high?' when they said 'Jump'. They thought they were going to be able to push us around. It's a constant battle though.
6. We're not so well organised in my place. They're cutting jobs. They've hired a load of Poles, no training, working all hours. Some see this as a threat. It's only a threat if we let the bosses divide and rule. We're signing them (Polish workers) up to the union. Making sure they are getting the same wage as us. They hadn't even been given information in their own language on how to get out safely if there was a fire. That's been sorted since we kicked up about it.
7. There's not so much sectarianism (Catholic/Protestant hostility) now. Just 90 minutes sectarianism on the football field. Folk from down south can't get over it though when they realise we want any other country to win, when they play England.
8. When you first come here, you can't believe how dour people are. No hug, no kiss when you meet, just a slight nod. You think they're unfeeling; then you realise you are their close friend.

Voices from a Scottish prison

Kenny (prisoner): We're all equal in here. We've all got nothing. What gets me about Scotland \$ families with children went without heating last Christmas. Yet Edinburgh his hoochin with (has a lot of) millionaires.

That can't be right.

Jim (prisoner): Yeah, well you've done your bit for redistributing wealth, haven't you?

Joe (prisoner): I used to get belted (hit with a leather strap by a teacher – now banned in schools) for saying 'Umm' before I answered a question. After a while I stopped saying anything at all.

Michael (prisoner): I used to get the belt every single day.

Teacher: What for?

Michael: For supporting the wrong football team, for smoking.

Teacher: Did it stop you smoking?

Michael: (laughs) No. It became a badge of pride, how many stripes you'd get.

Andrew (prisoner): The worst were the nuns. I got a ferocious flogging from one for needing the toilet when I was eight. I put my hand up and my friend was having a carry on (mucking about) and I laughed. She went mad. She leathered me so much I wet myself. When I sat back down I could feel the hope draining out of my hands into the desk.

Stewart (prisoner): My mother was pretty bad. You never knew whether you would get a hug or a doing (battering). When anything was on offer, I learned to take it quick. It wouldn't be there for long.

Unnamed sex offender: I didn't do it. I just plead guilty to save her the trauma of a trial.

Steven (prisoner): I was mortified when my nan (grandmother) died. The screws (prison officers) had me cuffed either side at the funeral in front of my family. But afterwards, on the way back to the jail they (screws) asked me if I wanted a McDonalds. I couldn't believe it. I eat it in two gulps. They asked me if I wanted another one. I took it back to my peter (prison cell). My peter mate had just had a carpet burger for his tea. (Reference to the chewy tasteless food in prison). I took my burger out of my pocket, dripping with cheese. His face fell, but I shared it with him.

Prison officers

- Do you know the worst insult an officer can pay to another. 'You do-gooding, social-working b...' If you try to help one of the cons (convicts) you're seen as soft.
- One con was having a bath, probably his last (he was dying of AIDS). So the officer in charge took the cuffs off. The guy wasn't going anywhere. The officer was disciplined for that.

Ali (prisoner): I was furious this morning. Guy next to me was in a state. They (screws) opened his door and started laughing. He had fallen out of bed in the night. He's got no legs and the night shift had picked him up and put him upright in his wheelchair. He was shattered, crying, covered in excrement. I shouted at the screws, 'I don't care what he's done. He is a human being. You should be ashamed of yourselves.'

Darren (prisoner): I'll miss this place when I get out. In Edinburgh, the only time you get a conversation is in the Oxfam (charity) shop, or people giving away Muller Rice (in the street). Here in jail you can talk to anyone.

