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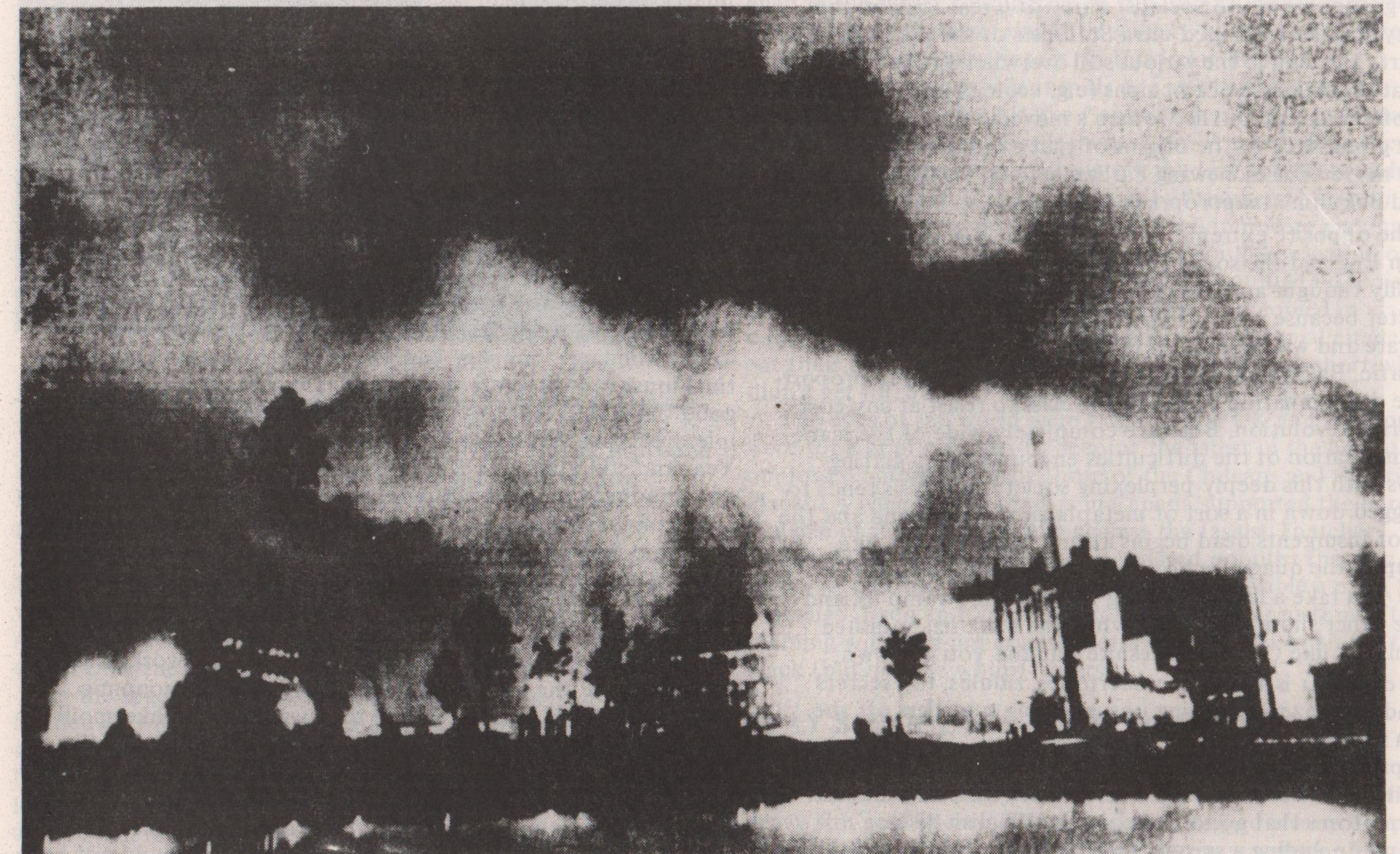
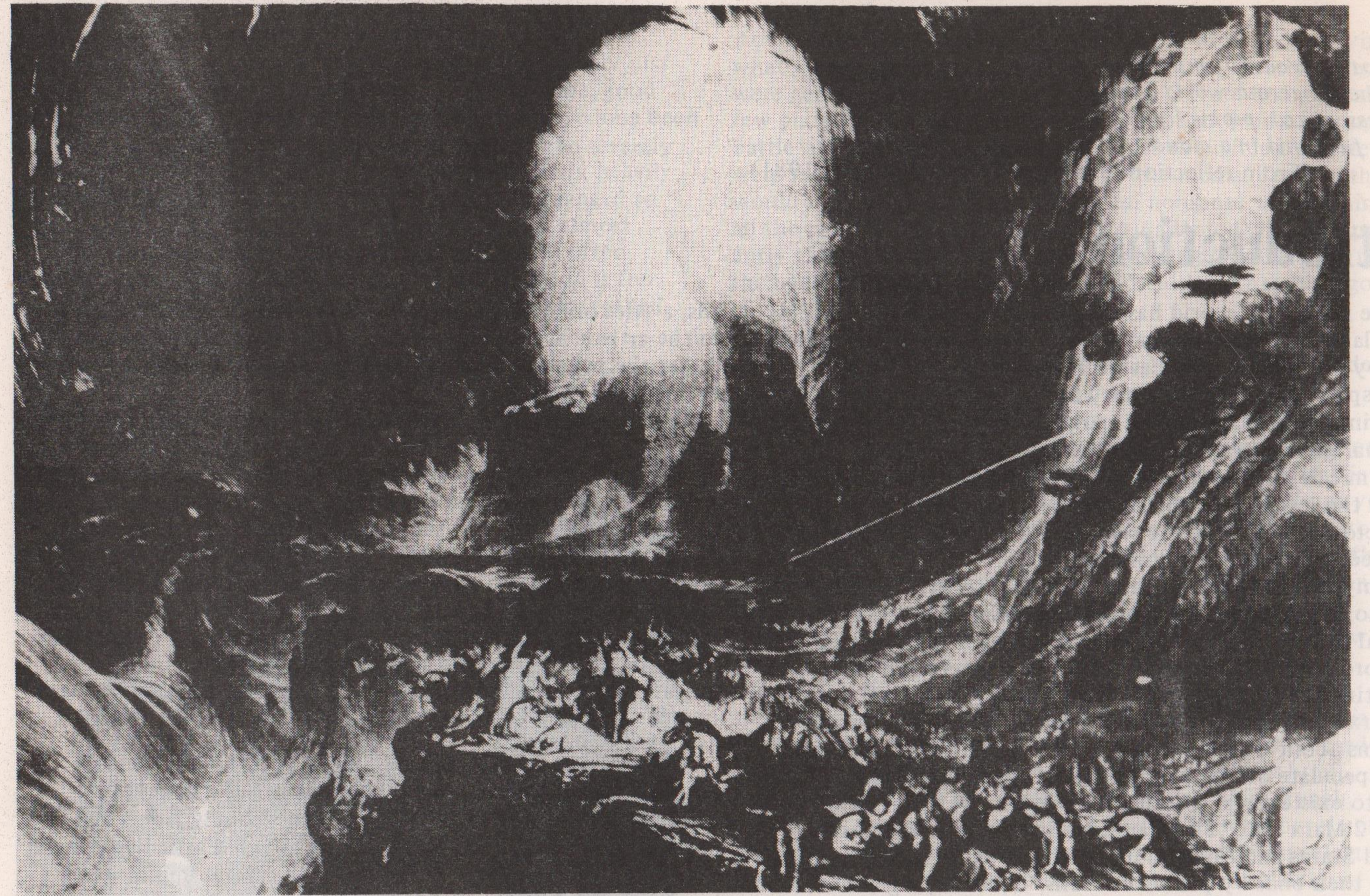




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There is an uncanny visual parallel between Mad Martin's apocalyptic vision and this eerie photo of Moss Side burning. Martin's biblical, romantic cataclysms once touched off, melodramatic, self-destructive presentiments amongst the Victorian bourgeoisie but his pictures were still given pride of place amid the bric-a-brac. Also many of Martin's images were taken from foundry explosions and pit disasters in which workers lost their lives. Just so long as the workers didn't revolt such disasters were a comfort to the bourgeoisie providing a measure of their strength. None of today's rulers will look at the photo of Moss Side without shuddering because it represents as plain as day, the beginning of their end.



## INFANT SORROW

*My mother groaned! my father wept.  
Into the dangerous world I leapt:  
Helpless, naked, piping loud:  
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.*

(From reflections of a Moss Side rioter, circa 1981)

# Introduction

The rest of the world has long recognised the UK (except N. Ireland) as one of the most liberal countries in the world. This by now reflex view has been slow to die the death.

In spite of the Parliamentary ambivalence intrinsic to declaring several 'States of Emergency' and shortish periods of national government restricted to wartime and the '30s economic depression, the Mother of Parliaments has adequately served the interests of the ruling class. Since Cromwell's Protectorate following the civil war of 1640-5, it has never resorted to outright dictatorship.

Many illusions have been spawned about Britain's liberal tradition by people who should have known better. The general drift of their pronouncements if not remembered word for word have been passed on from one generation to another inhibiting the emergence of a revolutionary critique.

Marx and Engels (particularly the latter who had many illusions about German Social Democracy also) went so far as to speculate on the possibilities of legislating social revolution into existence in Britain. In a speech given in Amsterdam in 1872 Marx said, 'There are certain countries such as the United States and England in which the workers may hope to secure their ends by peaceful means.' This misjudgement much influenced by English liberalism has persisted through to the present day. It is the backbone of left parliamentarism and ginger groups from the Socialist Party of Great Britain, the Trotskyists, the revamped ultra-Stalinists of the New Communist Party through to the various still overwhelmingly Parliament orientated single issue campaigns (e.g. ecology and the increasing professionalism of the women's movement).

But going back to the origins of that other strand of the labour movement eschewing Parliament and politics in general, we find Bakunin's inappropriate judgements on Britain exaggerated the opposite extreme. In *Statism and Anarchism* Bakunin said 'In England the social revolution is much nearer than is generally thought and nowhere will it assume such a terrible character because in no other country will it meet such desperate and well organized resistance.' Marx is naively pragmatic, Bakunin apocalyptic magnifying out of all proportion the determination of the ruling class to resist at any cost, libertarian revolution. Both are completely wide of the mark — a sure indication of the difficulties encountered in getting to grips with this deeply perplexing society. Analysis tends to get bogged down in a sort of metaphorical swampland and the blood of insurgents dead begins after a while to look like ketchup as the quagmire begins to suck in the partisan. Or maybe you take a leap expecting to clear the swamp to land on 'the other shore'. But meanwhile the bank has vanished into thin air like Carroll's Cheshire Cat and you go down, down, down. It is a land of undertones, riddles, top secrets and endless mazes attracting unsuspecting travellers off the known routes.

Approaching the end of the 20th century, to EEC bureaucrats sitting in Brussels, the UK is the 'sick man of Europe'. The symptoms that go to make up the 'English disease' are many, including a seismic strike record. Unlike the modern technocratic character of French capitalism, Britain's fixed capital is antiquated. Rapid de-industrialization and the acres of reclaimed land on which only a few years previously stood mighty industrial structures appears to painlessly blend with a still powerful feudal heritage sold the world over to attract tourists. This medieval tableau appears to stand cheek by schizoid jowl alongside some of the most advanced projections capital is capable of (fashion, pop music, joke packed

ads, a sales oriented exploration of the human psyche indebted to the artistic avant garde of the '20s and '30s and surpassing by far the psycho analytical obviousness of the *Hidden Persuaders*.)

Britain is a paradoxically closed yet 'open' society ruled over by a patrician but condescendingly populist elite possessing the most remarkable cunning and duplicity well versed in a token recuperation of everything from below that raises its head in protest. Yet at the same time it unfailingly manages to treat those below as another species being. On almost every side there is also an almost totalitarian repressiveness in daily life at odds with the trajectory of modern capitalism and deriving ultimately from the native strength of the puritan tradition. In 'The Twilight of the Idols' Nietzsche said 'In England, in response to every little emancipation from theology one has to reassert one's position in a fear-inspiring manner as a moral fanatic'.

It was a lightning observation only marred by Nietzsche's failure to explain why. Much of the historical strength of moral fanaticism in Britain derives almost totally from the need to keep the working class pressed down. Particularly in the first half of the 19th century British capitalism possessed in religious garb a remarkably effective array of penitential ordeals, abject deliverances, a horrifically mutilated sexual imagery, ministering to the whole person but designed to assure labour discipline and the very profane ends of increased profitability.

These religious practices have disappeared but the immense Jekyll and Hyde psychic damage they inflicted still lingers on, it tends to generate a sort of unhealthy euphoria springing from being tied down. In fact there was just enough strength left in the beast its hour come round well over a century and a half ago reared on hard work and thrift, despising leisure seekers and idlers to ensure Maggie Thatcher a near landslide victory.

At the opposite extreme there is a boll weevil refusal of work which Thatcherism has only patchily checked. But longer holidays, 'sickness' benefits, absenteeism on the firms time must venture more than comfy arm chairs and let the good times roll right on through the capitalist leisure principle. For example the long Xmas break extending into the New Year and still unique to Britain is experienced by many people as a grindingly empty endurance leisure-test.

Leisure in Britain is still organized far more than it need be — even in terms of capitalist alienation — around the maintenance of work discipline. As a moral philosophy monetarism is the heir to a long line of secular disapprovals of enjoyment forced to intermittently hibernate throughout the long boom of the '50s and '60s and early '70s. Naturally the workers were not cut out of the shopping spree. That made no economic sense whatsoever. But in revenge they were treated like spoilt wayward kids liable, given half the chance, to put coal in the baths of their new dolls houses. Though the economy held the keys to the toy cupboard, patrician forbearance (e.g. Macmillan) was there to regulate the playroom terrain of consumption in broadly the same manner as workers could not be left alone to get on with a job at work. (Skilled British emigre workers particularly in Holland are genuinely taken aback at the comparative absence of surveillance at work and the *adult* availability of credit facilities: in contrast British management is hamstrung by attitudes more appropriate to the early stages of capitalism). With the result leisure in Britain has a crazed edge and every second is flogged to death as if it were the last. Contrary to myth Britain is a very violent society.

Other than as a means of reviving energies expended at work leisure has no place in Britain. Latin socieites only just manage to maintain a whiff of the good life but wine, good food, relaxed eating and drinking, leisurely raps have long been a mark of class distinction in the UK. This would be severely utilitarian regulation of social life weighs particularly heavily on the unemployed who are forced in over, press ganged so often into an a-sexual cell like existence alienated almost beyond alienation. They are left dangling in a void often without a modicum of social contact. Their isolation is frequently aggravated by a collapsing family structure excelled only in the States.



Home Sweet Home.

Yet over the last decade the UK has lived through profound social turmoil. Mingled with the seemingly never ending hopelessness of drugs, drugs, drugs, drink, drink, drink, the place is alive with an unfocussed rebellion.

There is a path that leads out of this wasteland and during the summer of '81 the unemployed started to travel its length unaided. The totality of desperation and misery produced its opposite — The nights were youngggg and tho' the pubs had called time the firewater was freely circulating.

In the space of 10 days in early July '81, England was transformed. It will never be the same again. Every major city and town was rocked with youth riots. Bored youngsters ranging from 8 to 80 excitedly got ready for an evenings burnin' and lootin'. Even Army recruits on leave joined in. If the grandkid did the hell raising, grandma helped out with the free shopping. In Manchester an 8 year old was arrested for setting fire to a bike shop and in Bristol a paraplegic pensioner was wheeled obligingly into a supermarket so he could get in on the lootin' too.

Beginning in London, the riots spread north to Liverpool, followed by other big northern and midland cities. Up to now people have been kept in the dark about their actual extent. It was said over and over again that sensational media coverage fanned the riots (the so-called copy cat effect). By the end of

riot week holidays it was clear; the media were underplaying what was going down in the towns and cities. Clearly things were getting out of hand and Chief cop Oxford had just said few people realized how close the police had been to losing the battle of Liverpool. Scotland and Wales though less affected were more or less totally blanked by the media. Trouble there would have done for that sociological nonsense which claims all the trouble was caused by black 'unadapted' youth. Apparently there was more to Saturday night aggro in Glasgow than the usual trouble at closing times and Paisley Anarchists got closed down by the police.

Throughout the glorious week, the police received the hammering of their lives. Several police stations came under seige in Bristol, Southall, Birmingham (Handsworth) Manchester (— in Moss Side where youths set fire to 12 vehicles in the police yard), Sheffield (an unmanned station attacked by skinheads) and in Derby where a police traffic office was set on fire. The four corners of England if not yet the whole of the UK were exposed to a force 10 gale of youthful class fury. There will be set backs but in the long run the infectious momentum will hopefully prove unstoppable and roll on through other sectors of alienated society.

What had once been a solitary half mad '60s vision now grown old with time, of volcanic eruptions affecting vast masses of people in every nook and cranny and backyard appeared about to come true. Across an incredulous media was flashed the news that sleepy towns — the scented rose gardens of England's dreaming — had suddenly been hit by brief, furious riots: towns like Cirencester, Market Harborough, Dunstable, the fossilizing well spa resort of Knaresboro' and ultra posh Southport where the northern bourgeoisie elect to die on their fat retirement pensions. Old oaken shades and mossy lanes with evocative olde worlde names had lost their immunity from potentially revolutionary turmoil. What happened in the rural Cremlington on the Bumps' was also reflected in Halifax, a quintessential 19th century northern industrial town preserved almost intact. In this living museum of industrial archeology, silent mills and smokeless chimneys, sand blasted to look a bit like Canterbury, petrol bombs were also to snake through the cleaned up air. Preservation orders may now be organically assimilating the first shocks of industrialization to the more archaic past but the heirs of Robin Hood and his merry men women and children were making doubly sure no such preservation order would be slapped on them. The New Towns descendents of the countrified socialist garden cities, which Lenin loved so much and copied in mother Russia, laid out and policed like old colonial citadels got their dues. Letchworth where Lenin lived for a short while didn't get torched but nearby Harlow did.

The eyes of the world were fixed on the UK and its peoples were for a brief moment to become the latest in the line of oppressed nationals beside those of the Chileans and the Irish. Placard waving demonstrators in Canada supported the heroic struggle of the British People against the fascist Thatcher tyranny!! Applied to Britain this inflated populist rhetoric, which lefties find so irresistible, was inconceivable a mere 8 years ago. Even an Iranian Ayotollah in Qom accustomed to foaming with anti-imperialist rhetoric prayed to Allah for the black (but not the white) rioters.

## PLAY SCHOOL FREEDOM FIGHTERS GO RADICAL WINDOW SHOPPING

It was kids amazingly who were responsible for most of the heavy shit going down. Teeny boppers dragged weeny boppers along in their wake. Or vice versa — no one was quite sure. It was that sort of anybody's guess time. Although the rioting was commonly said to be the effect of mass unemployment, top authorities refused to acknowledge unemployment as a cause of the rioting because of the large number of children involved. The authorities were right on the level of facts but the kids intuitively knew far deeper than any big shot, there was No Future for them in the old world of work. Whitelaw said 'Many of the hooligans were aged between 10 and 11 even less so there can be no question of unemployment being the



cause'. Children in particular played a prominent part in the battle of Liverpool 8. Out of 67 arrested during rioting on Park Road, 21 were juveniles aged between 8 and 16. The Tories tried to blame the troubles on lax parents and the break-up of the family. Relations within the family are loosening but a growing distance between parents and kids even in tight knit working class families didn't stop parents from being right behind their kids.

... Waiting for night to fall. What was going to happen next? A kid breaking free from school in the late afternoon, shouting loudly to others — was that a signal for a riot to begin? Who could tell? Adults thought so but then they weren't really in the know. 'Hey son, where's it going to be tonight?' 'Kilburn', came back the answer. And five hours later the police got ready for the battle of Kilburn which never came. ... a few broken windows, a clothes rack nicked out of a store but Sinn Fein still blinkedly sold their wares in the pubs.

Galvanized awake many older people particularly in the northern towns joined with gusto in the rioting. If caught they could expect no mercy from the courts and several received stiff prison sentences. But it was on a more general day to day basis the effects of the rioting, causing people to sit bolt upright and take notice, were the most apparent.

During past proletarian upheavals, the 3 day week, the Winter of Discontent etc, the lives of people not directly involved had been sufficiently disrupted for them to start asking why. Now people were hit in the gut with a sledgehammer blow. Suddenly there was an endless amount to talk about. The baffling uniqueness of the events for a time all but stamped out prejudiced superficial reactions. The battle on the streets opened up closed, frivolous, trendy, desperate minds everywhere. Before peoples eyes a new level of reality was being unforgettably exposed and a dream of distant utopias became by fits and starts a real possibility.

In pubs there was only one topic of conversation. Trivia: tennis at Wimbledon, the Test match, the coming Royal Wedding were barely mentioned as talk came to center on the streets. Did anyone really want to watch escapist films, the lies and half truths of TV documentaries or listen to music. Rank was going to close 13 cinemas in London because of falling profits. So fucking what!

Eyes and ears were glued to the news media. However the predictably slanted version of events did not signify control over peoples mind. The salient facts were all that counted and reading between the lines must have become habitual. At any rate inspite of the press, TV and radio coverage there was remarkably little animosity, at least in the big cities shown towards the rioters — excepting the police that is. Bewilderment maybe amongst sections of the working class and lower middle class but no thought of ever coming down hard on the rioters crossed their minds. In fact many an onlooker was inspired by their example as buried hopes and expectations were raised. Violence in the streets externalized the violence raging within as the phoney class peace announced by Thatcher came to a dramatic and unanticipated end.

## 'WE SHALL OVERCOME' Maggie Thatcher on the friday night of riot week hols.

Black youth were the main protagonists but only in the sense that they opened up the gap through which Asians, Anglo-Saxons, Celts, Turks, Greeks, Cypriots, Eskimos — if these categorizations still have any meaning — and others, followed. So sing out if your're glad to be an albino! Truly it meant that the UK was in the throes of becoming one of the first unfolding multi-racial, pre-revolutionary societies. The rioting as press and politicians alike had to frankly admit (Enoch Powell excepted in a BBC radio program on July 7th '81) was not racial in character. (Here too we exclude fascists like Charles Parker of the 'New National Front' who said, 'the riots are just a rehearsal for full scale war') But elsewhere in the world accuracy was lacking. A journalist from *Corriere Della Sera*, probably hooked on some anti-imperialist ideology of racist Brits, lyingly reported there was fighting between

black and white youth in Liverpool. And initially some of the German press (e.g. *Frankfurter Allgemeine*) reported the riots as racial in character too. They quickly changed their tune in the next few days. The American press taking their cue from *The New York Times* which made the mistake of describing the first night of the Brixton riots in April '81 as racial (again quickly changing its tune the following day), now at least plumped for a semblance of accuracy. Emphasizing class as the prime factor, they rightly noted London had seen nothing like this since the days of the Gordon Riots in 1780 (*The International Herald Tribune*). Though 400 insurgents were shot by the army in the streets of London in 1780, taking the UK as a whole, it's a fair bet the riots were the most extensive if not the most intensive ever since the Civil War. And Ned and Lady Ludd were weeping with joy in an anonymous grave on some wild Yorkshire moor at the splendid audacity of their successors.



Piece Hall Halifax. Buffing up the 19th century pre-industrial and industrial architecture wasn't enough to preserve the town from rioting.

# 'The Only Race Is The Rat Race'

grafitti Notting Hill Gate, 1968

Racism exists in the UK alright. But the mixed character of the rioting overcame racial separations pushing it well into the background. Powerful sections of the State would have liked it to be otherwise and actually tried to foment racial confrontation. In Derby police forced mainly white youths running amuck in the smart city center into the ghettoised Normanton Road and Peartree area. Fortunately this tactic came unstuck because a battle ensued involving white, black and asian youth who more or less fought the police together. Was this an example of overt police racism or were they calculating on disrupting class unity? Certainly as a means of stirring up hostility, the race question in press reports was secondary to the practice of highlighting incidents which taken out of context looked like the work of animals.

In the pages and pages of bumph written on the riots most have stressed racial/ethnic differences rather than class factors. Apart from the gift horse of Southall everyone has to admit racial confrontation (excepting police of course) hardly figured in the riots. But how come so many writers who invariably turn out to have secure prestigious, well paid jobs in Universities, Polys' or in the Race Relations Industry almost instinctively opt for race rather than class? Is it because race is one of those collective nouns intrinsic to the continual existence of the Nation State? Certainly both trendy academics and race relations careerists would like to see the status quo changed. But only within the confines of the Nation State making for instance the lily white British State more 'a State of the whole people' (positive discrimination etc). At best they will only ameliorate racism never totally abolish it which requires nothing less than the international extension of proletarian revolution sweeping away all national territories and Nation States. All their venom and contempt are ultimately held in reserve to counteract this.

Actually there are few things more irritating than the tut-tutting reprimands of the various arms of the race relations industry faced with 'racist' jokes. They are totally unselective in these matters unaware that 'racial' jokes can actually defuse rather than stir up trouble. They seem not to have any experience of situations where such things have happened. More probably than not the Race Relations Board will in the future moderate their attitude because on the level of shitty entertainment (Tiswas, OTT) minorities are starting to give as good as they get. This reflects a far more open ended and much funnier situation below where there is a stronger desire than ever to escape out of the ethnic, regional, national bolt holds. Being able to laugh at oneself is part of this process.

The media on the face of it was unprejudiced. However a current of racist innuendo was apparent particularly in the press reporting. In the circumstances its appearance was predictable: the British bourgeoisie when driven into a corner disparage their opponents more through suggestion than outright calumny. The practise of calling blacks 'immigrants' was especially offensive when applied to districts like Liverpool 8 where a sizable black community has existed for close on 100 years.

During riot week hols, radio and TV were crammed with instant interviews of staid psycho-sociologists in top universities. They would always finalize their homilies (what else?) with the need for more effective police measures. But this was drama! In future what we are likely to see, is an 'enlightening' mountain of material, taped on video and in print, interpreting the weeks events. It is more than likely Leicester University's Center of Mass Communications will publish some report examining the influence of the media on the riots but not the impact of the rioters on the media. They will for ever fight shy of raising this upsetting question.

In Brixton rioters attacked photographers from the *Daily Star*, burnt out ITN film vans and in Toxteth attacked the *Guardian* reporter who then pretended he was a dosser to get

his copy. However, the sad fact is, the rioters were too negligent about media infiltration and many poor sods were later picked up by the coppers after being identified in photos. There were unsubstantiated rumours that TV networks had handed footage of the riots over to the police. Failing this the police in any case were taping television coverage on their videos.

TV items particularly the early evening news must have had an effect but to accurately assess its influence isn't as easy as it sounds. The British Film Institutes Broadcasting Research Unit funded jointly by the BBC and the IBA in a sociological survey to be published later in '82 claimed the 'copy cat' effect was greatly exaggerated. Maybe. Up to a point kids did emulate what they'd seen on TV. For instance youths gathering on Wood Green High Road in N. London the morning after the riot there, loudly played back tape recordings of news reports just to goad the police. Chris, a 17 year old Greek Cypriot said 'I hope this gets us in the papers. I hope this counts as a big riot like Liverpool'.

On the otherhand the younger generation watch less TV than any other generation since television first became a mass consumer item. Apologists excusing declining literacy point to the effect of TV as decisively influencing this historic change. The relative lack of interest shown by the youngest generation in TV suggests there is a basic sea change toward the media in general going on. With luck the media is about to be blown out. Certainly according to the *Daily Telegraph* the heads of TV corporations are deeply worried people. The date, July the 13th, '81, the end of riot week is telling showing how convulsions tend to bring out point by point the concentrated fears of the bourgeoisie. Maybe the heads of TV will more than roll. When interest in the box is declining they obviously have more to fear than just being made redundant.

In fact the Police thought the youth grapevine was by far the most effective media for communicating a message which burst out simultaneously in all parts of the country. It was throughout the entire week their only promising insight.

## DEVIANT SOCIOLOGISTS

The riots at least should prove a lucrative source of income for that symposium of oily rags the Sociology of Deviancy.

One of their most notable celebrities the dishonourable Jock Young wrote (together with a certain John Dea) an article on the riots in that lefty rag *The Chartist*. It is a classic of its kind ending by condoning what it had just written off as a compromised solution. He knows the Labour Party and trade unions have acted as a drag on the working class preventing it from ever achieving a revolutionary consciousness. Yet he proposes the trade unions shake themselves out of their torpor and become 'channels for the political organization of young people with minimal contact with work.' This will only lead to the 'compromise solution' he has just panned. But that is what he is secretly after. This example of the purest cynicism shows the pivot around which his life revolves: a sinecure for life and a string of wretched sycophants whom he can wrap around his little finger.

Young does not mention by name 'the reconstructed Labour Party' but that is what he has in mind when he alludes to 'an extension of democracy at a local level' to counteract institutions which have been originated 'from above'. The sort of mass democracy Young pretends he wants at a local level sporadically appeared once the riots had died down and people spontaneously came together to discuss the events. As will become clear later these meetings were emphatically not political and the presence of political parties was hotly resented. Though it was never said so clearly they were, admittedly very much in embryo, a new form of power containing within them the dissolution of State power. It is non-



sensical therefore to say 'we are witnessing the return of rioting as a form of political expression for those for whom all other channels of political activity have either dried up or are non-existent' (ibid).

To further suggest as he does there are parallels between these riots and those of the late 18th and early 19th century when a factory based proletariat was in the process of being formed is stretching it more than a bit. Illusions about the wonders of Parliamentary democracy were then rife. When the mob burnt down Nottingham Castle in the early 19th century they were protesting against the delay in the passing of The Great Reform Bill in 1832. A good century and a half later and the cup of political reforms is just about drained. If his comments on America in the same article are anything to go by, Young is well aware of this even though when it comes to assimilating immigrants Britain has much to learn from America. Yet the sly dog goes through reel after reel of type-writer ribbon saying there are solutions when deep down he knows as well as anybody short of revolution there are none. Predictably the article closes with an appeal for the 'political de-marginalisation' of inner cities; 'more police accountability to local government' and the decriminalization of "soft" drugs — the cause of many a combustible hassle (e.g. Notting Hill April '82) between the police and young blacks.

All along the front line the Sociologists of Deviance have been afraid to say the obvious. They have toyed with revolution in the past solely to hit the jackpot and the highspots putting on their soluble-in-water war paint of radicality to aid their sexual conquests. Being yesterdays martyrs to the lost cause of Trotskyism is not to their fashionable tastes. Quitting the Socialist Workers Party they have not sunk below the horizon as the sun finally set on a Bolshevik seizure of State power. They now look to the reconstructed Labour Party as a more realistic option offering the hope of a glittering prize in place of former mock heroic dreams of a commissarship.

One of their favourite tricks is to let fly with radical sounding phrases which are later retrieved for bourgeois democratic ends. In his article on the riots the fork tongued Young sounds really enthusiastic. But don't let that fool you. Another of them Stan Cohen in an article on prisons he wrote several years earlier had this to say, 'The prison is a small (and not necessarily permanent) terminal point of a much larger process of social change'. (*New Society*, Dec. 74). Fuck you jack if you were dumb enough like some of us to think for a sec' this is an earnest plea for the abolition of prisons. However the remark is strictly remedial in intent pertaining to the development of non-custodial punishments. Considering the penal obsessions of the English judiciary it should have done wonders for the deviant sociologists fading lustre of radicality but the bluff doesn't serve like it once did.

Over the past decade the Sociology of Deviancy has dealt with the social disintegration of modern capitalism. Parcelled up into discreet bundles of essays, books and articles, this has included sabotage, survival in high security prisons, drug taking ripping off, pornography, suicide, soccer violence and Weathermen/Women bombing (uncritically clapped on the safer sidelines by that creep Paul Walton).

Originally much influenced by the Chicago school of Sociology in the aftermath of '68 they looted further afield lobotomizing more radical theories coming from France, particularly the Situationists. By striking matches under the rigor-morticized toes of State functionaries the aim of these intelligence spies of the State then as now is to promote reforms. Like grub street journalists the depths they are prepared to sink to have yet to be plummeted. The shameless Jock Young for instance before being scared off by revolutionaries was about to blow the whistle on the black economy. What did he care if as a result life was made even more insupportable for millions of people?

Finally just for the record they are drawn irresistibly to big time villanry (like John McVicar) seeing there a distorted reflection of their own high flying careerism. However much they may protest to the contrary, petty criminality is for non-entities going very much against their success-minded grain.

Having rejected the proletariat they are bound to reject whatever's proletarian in petty criminality. They have for example little first hand knowledge of and indeed sympathy for the conscientious resolve not to pick on the proletariat that lies behind much petty criminality. Jock Young for instance subscribes to the view 'most working class crime is directed against working class people' which is hard cheese on shop-lifters, scroungers and the like.



John McVicar as Roger Daltrey

Time was not that long ago when Phil Cohen hadn't a good word to say about the Sociology of Deviancy. Now he has cut his losses and teamed up with them. And how. Having rejected the 'wageless society' as utopian dreaming he must eventually turn on every other revolutionary conviction. The path from revolution to reform is paved with the utmost malice and we weren't the only ones who were stunned to learn he had been lecturing at Hendon Police college.

As a result of his experiences there he has proposed a 'special police education unit' — composed equally of police with a university training in social science and academics with a knowledge and understanding of the force' (*City Limits*) under the control of the GLC Police Committee. These suggestions hardly differ at all from those made by Shirley Williams (SDP) who in a speech (April 6th '82) given at the Police Training Centre in Hutton, Lancashire stressed the need for police cadets to 'learn more about the political social and economic background of the country and of their own areas'. She made a point, obviously, of not supporting the 'left' wing dominated police committees but in all other respects her proposals are the same as Phil Cohen's.

The class rather than racial character of the rioting rules out an American style purely ethnic educational program in police colleges. Phil Cohen realized this and was only able to rap the knuckles of the police cadets on the race question by first probing the sensitive nerve ends of the class system as reproduced in the police force. This same duality, acknowledging class in order to belittle it from an unrevolutionary middle of the road, middle class standpoint was evident in *Knuckle Sandwich* a book he wrote with Dave Robins

(former editor of the late '60s underground newspaper *Ink*). Published in 1978 the books interesting empirical details like the regionally mixed character of Manchester United's football hooligan supporters are all but swamped by the ludicrous conclusion: 'Racism not revolution is in the air'. The riots knocked that on the head good and proper but for the liberal patriciate the race issue has the advantage of avoiding the thornier problems posed by a thorough going class war against capitalism. And Cohen doesn't like it when the proletariat becomes too independently minded neglecting to pay him the respect he so often abuses.

Both Cohen and Robins are experts at tapping charities but the money is never diverted to revolutionary ends. Rather grants from e.g. the Leverhume Trust go towards setting up yet another social work con (e.g. Street Aid in Soho and Covent Garden). But give credit where credits due because Cohen had during the London Street Commune of '69 displayed qualities the cowardly and parasitic Sociology of Deviancy have always lacked. Regrettably he wished even then to impose a super annuated sub cultural research unit on this audacious squat interring its radical potential beneath a respectable sounding appeal for money.

## ORGANISED RACISM AND INTER-RACIAL RESISTANCE

The one big racial incident which by default preceded riot week resulted from the National Front/British Movement guided skinhead invasion of Southall's Asian community. The battle which followed, as the young asians cleared the streets of fascists and torched their musical venue at the Hamborough Tavern was thankfully untypical of what was to come. On the whole racist attacks, in contrast to the orchestrated invasion of Southall, tend to be less well organized and more individualistic.

Undeniably over the last year or so, there has been a series of ugly and horrific acts, carried out by white racists, against blacks and asians. The most notorious occurred in Deptford on January '81 when 13 young blacks were burnt to death after an all night party. A Coroner returned a verdict of not proven but collusion between police, fascists and the higher and murkier regions of the State was the real point at issue. Also at the end of the week of fire, after the funeral of Mrs Doreen Khan and her 3 children a riot of asian youth broke out in Walthamstow, E. London. They died as a result of a petrol bomb attack on their home early in July. On both occasions, the police, adding insult to injury, detained for questioning friends and relatives of the victims, repeatedly grilling them hoping to shift the blame for the tragedies on to them. Mr Khan, already a broken man recovering in hospital from his burns, was doubly shattered when he got to learn of this.

These isolated attacks are horrendous but must not be used to disguise the way blacks and whites have spontaneously come together (outside the reach of lefty contrived orchestration) and fought white racists. There's the memorable battle of Chippenham, Wiltshire on May 30th '81, where in a supposedly dumb fuck country district, black and white fought white racists after an incident at a night club. Also, the example comes to mind of the suicidally depressed black youth who was stabbed to death at a Peckham fish and chip shop on June 20th '81 by skinheads. Earlier in the evening when attacked by the same skinheads, who were later to kill him, white and black youths had come to his aid. However not all teenage killings are random or racial in character. During riot week at the Black Uhuru concert in the Rainbow, Finsbury Park a black kid was stabbed to death by another black kid after an argument over dividing the spoils. For both

black and white if violence cannot express itself lucidly by destroying commodity relations, then it is going to turn in over in a whirligig of brutality. Racism finally is part of that whirligig.

*'Standing at the corner swinging a chain,  
Up comes a copper and he takes my name,  
Takes out my razor and I slit his throat,  
Blood all down my teddy boy coat.'*

(50s psycho billy street Ted song from Co. Durham and W. Yorkshire)

It's a very complicated whirligig too. There's no clear cut distinction so far between pathological behaviour and a near revolutionary assault on the old world. Often youths are yennening for a bruise any which way they can. After all society is organized in a hierarchical fashion and those at the bottom of the ladder know they are looked down on by almost everyone. They inflect the general values of society by setting up their own pecking order whose values run counter to those of respectable society. Youths who are looked up to are those who have been involved in the most punch ups, those who have been arrested the most times. Their university is the slammer. Youths on the lam try to achieve a status and recognition for themselves which they cannot achieve in any other way. This made itself felt in the riots and it is pointless denying it at the same time as it merged into a class experience. A youth arrested in Manchester for throwing a petrol bomb into a police van frankly admitted in court. 'I did it to make a name for myself'.

## JOHNNY YOU'RE TOO BAD. WAITING HERE IN LIMBO FOR THE PROLETARIAN TIDE TO TURN

Black youth have the highest levels of unemployment of any section of society. Lacking money to consume, their resentment has often resulted in a form of indiscriminate aggression. Small wonder then that they have turned to mugging. All too often the victims of muggings are poor whites who live in close proximity to them, the people least responsible for their plight.

However being black does not imply immunity. At the 1977 Caribbean Carnival in Notting Hill, blacks were also mugged alongside whites. During a Carnival dance in Hammer-smith, a gang of black youths invaded the dance hall mugging and beating people savagely. This incident was mentioned by older blacks who were shocked by it serving to emphasize just how estranged they had become from their own kith and kin. It said a lot for the myths of racial identity to hear these youths denounced in terms echoing racist police and magistrates.

But having exposed racial solidarity for what it's worth, they then go and put the boot in on class solidarity. Sometimes it does look as though they don't give a piss for anyone. A quite justified pride at having made such an impact during the rioting can so easily be turned into an abuse of power. Drunk with success.

And then there's family complications too. Parents of black youth tend to regard any symbols of rebellion or visible signs of black pride with fear and suspicion. There is a very definite breakdown in relations between younger and older blacks. Aggravation between parents and children is not common to them but it is much more pronounced in the black community.

This is a legacy of 19th century colonialism. One writer in the *Jamaican Gleaner* said that the facts about slavery and the obvious ways in which blacks were kept down are well known. 'But what is not so generally appreciated is the way in which we are colonized in our minds'. The standards of Victorian society were imposed on blacks and these attitudes have persisted among blacks long after they broke down in the Imperial country. Many West Indian and African parents are very authoritarian and take a heavy handed Victorian attitude



when it comes to discipline and orderly behaviour.

Many blacks have fought a losing battle to maintain old fashioned standards in the face of a permissive society. The kids rebel against this and many run away from home. Some are even thrown out by their parents when they become too defiant. There is an echo here of the phrase from Victorian melodrama, 'Never darken my door step again.'

In the first year of its existence a hostel for homeless kids in Waltham Forest catered for 64 black kids and 11 whites. This probably gives a fair indication of the breakdown in black families in proportion to whites. In some cases it resulted from social deprivation which neither the kids nor their parents could do much about. In most cases it springs from a conflict between kids and their parents, arguments about dreadlocks, a father forbidding his 17 year old son to have a girlfriend etc. The parents of an Islington youth were so frightened he would get into trouble that they forbade him to go out and tried to keep him home every evening. He ran away and became homeless at 14. He was eventually picked up by the police with a gang of other boys and brought to trial for mugging. His parents fear had brought about that which they feared the most. The discipline West Indian parents want to enforce can become excessively harsh and this has been criticized by some black community workers with the unfortunate side effect of lending credence in the eyes of the kids to their function as social controllers. Really they should tell them to sod off double quick. This has on occasion happened. In one local incident we know of a number of homeless blacks who squatted a property in Notting Hill Gate put the frighteners on a local rasta-dandy social worker sent in as the para-State's secret weapon to get them to quit the premises.

Some parents have expressed an antagonism to social security and the social services from authoritarian family based attitudes rather than any revolutionary point of view. One black guy said on TV 'How can I discipline my son when he can leave home when ever he likes and get money from the SS. He also was hostile to social workers because they provided black kids with all the necessary back up when they leave home. Black parents see what they believe to be a too permissive society and the social services as conspiring to undermine the authority of black parents and frustrating their efforts to raise their children in a 'proper' manner. One black woman in a letter to *The Times* said that parents were blamed for failing to discipline their children and letting them run wild. 'Parents are frightened of being too strict for fear of welfare officers coming in. The welfare officers are dying to snatch black kids away and put them with nice white aunties and uncles for love and affection.' This condescending bullshit sums up State benevolence: it even produces a sneaking sympathy for the repressive fucked up black parents.

## UNEMPLOYMENT . . . .

The Notting Hill Carnival riots from '76 to '79 were almost exclusively a black show. By the summer of '81, everybody was mucking in. By then unemployment had easily doubled. In spite of the forgoing remarks, unemployment was a contributory factor even if not consistent with a dour 'Right to Work' myth of downtrodden masses hungry for work at any price.

For those in the straight jacket of Suburbia a survey conducted by Liverpool University of 20 year olds living in inner city areas might have produced surprising results. For those accustomed to living in inner city areas they were as stale as yesterdays news and further evidence of the Universitives stuck fast in their time machines, waking up to the obvious. The findings were made known in August 1980. The survey showed that not all the youths were unemployed because they had not been able to find work or had been made redundant. Jobs had been given up voluntarily. The principal reason given was boredom. The second, dislike of superiors and inability to get on with work mates and thirdly dissatisfaction with pay. Youngsters would take a low paid menial job and find themselves unable to put up with it and so they would go on the dole. After a period of time the boredom and poverty of life on the dole would become unbearable. So they would

try a job again. They cannot stand work and at the same time cannot stand life on the dole. With the recession biting hard, there weren't enough jobs to keep them all in employment all the time but as the kids did not want to be in permanent unemployment, there was enough jobs to fall into when they felt like it. This situation just about kept the lid on the inner cities. However since the survey the situation has dramatically worsened, although for us hopes of a new world have dramatically brightened. At the time of the Toxteth riots there were only 12 jobs on offer for school leavers at the Job Centre. There was literally nothing for them to even 'fall' into.

These attitudes outlined above differ markedly from those of their parents and grandparents who coming from the West Indies in the '50s were prepared to take anything available. The young blacks born in the UK expect something 'better'. Perhaps more so than their white counterparts they are prone to a brittle image worship falling somewhere between golden-calf idolatry of music, dancing, fashion and theater and easily provoked aggression. Slavery maybe abolished but it remains very much in the minds of young West Indians and some refuse any job that has the slightest stigma attached to it. One young black girl for instance wanted a job in fashion. After a great deal of difficulty she managed to get fixed up as a receptionist/model with a West End clothing firm. The girl was delighted until she discovered part of her duties was to make tea for other staff. She promptly turned the job down.

## . . . AND CRIME

Undeniably the huge increase in unemployment has resulted in an increase in crime. An unemployed white teenager said 'Sure there's robbery — when your dole runs out, which is quick, you have to do something to live. Everybody round here does it.' There's even desperation just to get the feel of dole money in your hand too. During riot week, some black youths in Hammersmith post office menaced a long queue of black and white unemployed people waiting to cash their giro's by shoving everyone aside to be served first. Edgy mounted police had been stationed outside the post office in case of trouble and these young blacks, outta their skulls with hope, were looking for any occasion to provoke a riot. But in their understandable eagerness they were well out of line and this silly action only served to put everyone against them in the airless and crammed post office. Even so, the cops were scared of dealing with them.

## THE TURBAN ROCKS

What we are beginning to see (the riots were the living proof) is the end of racism. Even a bum liberal like Mr Raj Nayan, a senior officer for Leicester Council for Community Relations appreciated this. 'I think we're seeing an embryonic movement of poor working class white kids teaming up with poor black kids' (*Daily Telegraph* July 15th '81) and as an unemployed London East End skin said of the middle classes: 'They're terrified of the blacks and whites rising together and storming the suburbs. That's where they ought to riot in Finchley and Richmond, not in Moss Side'. (*The Guardian*, July 10th '81) And the once submissive asians played their part too. Asian kids are breaking away from the traditional values of the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh stranglehold. Elders of the Asian community repeatedly call for youth to remain peaceful and law abiding but their appeals increasingly fall on stony ground. If now you want to see the revolt of Islam, then here it is — the revolt *against* Islam. The asians kids have more that's obnoxious to fight against — chaperoned girls, arranged marriages, wives behind locked doors, a culture of passive resignation to one's supposed lot. Now they are making the greatest breaks of all from the nightmare past — actually through a see sawing interaction with black and white kids whose respect for the family is at an all time low. The old asian values are crumbling fast. Even so, the Sikhs long fighting tradition held them in good stead in Southall. Specially selected racist skins who thought they could easily throw a scare into the predominately Sikh Southall community sure as hell got their ethnography fucked up. They are not

submissive East End Bengalis who in any case are beginning to square up to racist provocation. Their standing in the Brick Lane area of East London has gone up by leaps and bounds since they first started to resist racist thugs unaided. At Southall there was an explosion of anger against the police. In the later phase of the rioting, asians living in other places, particularly Bradford, were to get involved. In Bradford several asians were later framed and confessions beaten out of them. During the preliminary hearings a high proportion of whites were evident in the pickets surrounding the court house.

Although the police do not pick on them to the same extent as young blacks, asians constantly compalin that the police are indifferent to racist attacks and will do nothing to protect them. In spite of the constitutional illusions inherent in this sort of reasoning, it does at least represent a step in the direction of organizing one's own defence.

One incident which particularly angered young asians in Southall was an attack on one of them by three white racists who carved swastikas on his stomach. The police did not believe him and charged him with wasting police time. Many young asians are angry with their elders who they see as too passive in the face of racist attacks and police indifference. In Southall, in response, militant youth have organized themselves into the Southall youth movement in order to defend themselves, preferring not to put their faith in the established asian organisations dominated by their elders. Many of the Elders are store owners, supermarket under-managers and restaurant owners — those asians in fact with a direct interest in protecting capital. The Indian Workers Organization — a thoroughly misleading title — is dominated by this crew. However worker oriented the ad hoc defense committees also call on asians to lay down their arms. The Coventry Committee Against Racism for instance made up of councillors and trade union reps is not much more than a lefty talking shop. Its main aim now is dissuading young asians against self organisation against police and fascists. Shamelessly the committee call this self organisation 'vigilante' aware doubtless the term, because of the use made of the vigilante in the USA has a nebulous fascistic implication.

The splits then, developing in the Asian community reflect to some extent those in the black community. There are uneven features to this and they don't always amount to unequivocal class progress. But much that is reactionary (religion and the status of women amongst asians in particular) and harmful to class struggle is at the same time being jettisoned.

Attitudes amongst whitey (the chitties) have been changing fast also. Respect for asian workers has been growing steadily amongst white workers once they began to stand up and fight back. The long battle by a largely asian workforce at Imperial Typewriters at Leicester in 1973, even though accompanied by trade union lock stock and barrel illusions nevertheless forced admiration out of the local white working class who previously had often voiced ugly racist sentiments. Standing up to the bosses, not allowing yourself to be put down by the police or other authorities, is the surest way of knocking racist attitudes out of those white proletarians in a similar structural position. They then become the best ally in the struggle for libertarian revolution. In the riot at Luton on Saturday July 11th '81, black, white and asians went on the rampage together. There was a back log of racist activity in the town but this act of multi-racial insurgency was a shining example of integrated rioting. Once having gone on the rampage there was no stopping the crowd and soul brother black and asian business in Moss Side, Brixton and Liverpool provided no immunity against a more fundamental attack on commodity relations.

Also one must bear in mind there have been a number of multi-racial strikes. Class as a working category matters more than race in Britain. At work irrespective of colour of skin, black, white, brown and green are treated as equals. Like a piece of shit in other words! As a divide and rule wage cutting operation, the wave of post war immigration blew up in the face of its creators. Whether for sound reasons or not the unions made certain of that.

However it is somewhat ironic considering workers wages in the UK are now often below those of immigrant workers in the better off parts of the EEC. During the recent BL set-to someone remarked how the predominantly white labour force was having to knuckle under and accept conditions normally reserved for immigrants in other major European car plants. More by luck than good management the British State has not succeeded in creating broadly based privileged categories of white workers who also act as overseers to less privileged 'immigrant' workers. It will therefore encounter considerable obstacles should it ever attempt to intentionally re-organize white workers around the race question.

## SKIN COMPLEX. Ne-Ne Na-Na Na-Na Nu-Nu

Standing up changes attitudes before changing reality. Skinheads after the battle of Southall reflecting on that experience began to leave some of their bad old ways behind. In fact many were apologetic later. As one said at an Oi gig in Peckham immediately after Southall: 'Why do they think all skinheads is Nazis? Just cos' I'm white and working class doesn't mean I'm racist.' Earlier in the year a skin quoted in *The Guardian* (May 23rd '81) said, teenagers join right wing groups 'just for the punch up' and 'we hated the police too.' Unfortunately the guy was ditching one set of 'extreme' capitalist values, for a nicer but finally no less insidious opposite: the anti-nazi league. The skins are like souped up versions of the Cossack hordes, wanting activity and life above all else but always, or nearly always, through the aggro stakes. During riot week, skinheads joined with blacks on many occasions. Brixton, Croydon, and Upton Park in London. Further north, in Leeds, a large skinhead contingent coming from all over the city joined in with mainly local black youth in Chapeltown. Finally there is the odd jewish skinhead who goes round rassing out reactionary Hassidyn Jews.

In some areas there is a more permanent tie up between skinheads and blacks. Not for nothing are the London Notting Hill skinheads called 'commie skins' by others belonging to the hell fire fraternity. This does not mean they have been infiltrated by the local CP or Trot group, or even felled by the general liberal/left ambience of the area. Something of the sort has brushed off but chiefly they are pretty unique amongst skins when it comes to articulately defending their point of view. They were for instance maligned as an NF contingent in '79 when members were denied entrance to a 'Rock Against Racism' gig at Acklam Hall. They hit back fiercely wrecking amongst other things a couple of sound system transit vans. A RAR rep described them as racist thugs. But outside Acklam Hall there was no such clear cut racial demarcation. As skins, punks, rude boys and rastas slugged it out, most of the older and heavier blacks collected on the steps outside of the garage/sound system repair shop stood impassively by watching the fun and games and expressing no preference for either side. The Gate skins were so incensed by the coverage in the musical press that they wrote a collective letter of protest to *The New Musical Express* denying any involvement in racist groups. To no avail. The liberal/left anti skinhead consensus meant they were cast as NF boot boys in an attack on (presumably) Acklam Hall in the film *Breaking Glass* starring the nauseating Hazel O'Connor whose street credibility consisted in knowing how to use show biz connections to cast herself as a rebel punk superstar.

The skins possess all the quality and defects of modern day barbarians and vandals. In one week in May '81 they fire-bombed Indian and Commonwealth clubs and a Hare Krishna temple in Coventry. What did they have in mind? The transcendence of religion? Well, even though such acts are unnecessarily barbaric, it comes into it. They have after all been caught ransacking Methodist chapels though they never receive anything like the same publicity for wrecking such home grown articles. Inversely, during the riots in Derby a group of asians were seen carrying a large cross through the streets. The cross was later recovered but Our Saviour had been nicked.



But this was no Islamic anti-image jag, more probably it was a protest against a band of young catholics who marched with all the sensitivity of an elephant through Derby's semi ghettoised district singing 'We Shall Overcome'.

Nonetheless the attacks on religious symbols in Coventry were interpreted by asians as racist and its an accusation that cannot be lightly dismissed. Skins often do hit the right enemy but random cruelty (hitting old age pensioners etc) like that of black muggers, provides perfect material to the word smithies of sensational news copy. Screaming headlines are tied up with circulation wars but the 'news' they help in this respect to convey is one of psychotic lawlessness everywhere. This has the added advantage of keeping the proletariat locked away day and night in fearful little boxes of routinised existence. At one moment skins can drag the filthy rich out of their de-luxe cars in Chelsea, hand out a fistful of fives to ex-PM Sir Alex Douglas Home and split into the night. At other moments they succumb to a maimed psychotic rage lacking any class content whatsoever.

## THE SHEFFIELD STOMP

There was a few weeks before the mass rioting, a vivid example of class conscious skin activity. One Saturday, skins and a handful of blacks and punks (already a break thru') organised a demonstration themselves in Sheffield to protest against police harassment. Standing on the steps of Sheffield Town Hall, skins hollered out impromptu agit verbals to the rest of the assembled mob before proceeding to rampage through the city center. En route, they caused thousands of pounds worth of damage to the Crucible theatre, which with its £100,000 grant from Sheffield City Council had been invaded five times in the past 18 months by mods, soccer fans, as well as skinheads. These guys and gals really have taste because the Crucible theatre is a showpiece of 'enlightened' leftist theatre/music which in the past played host to every conceivable shade of dramatised bad conscience including the Sadista Sisters and Red Ladder (or, as it has come to be known locally 'Gets Sadder') But the one thing a skin sees red at is that mixture of inexhaustible guilt and superiority typical of audiences likely to attend the Crucible theatre. A skin and his girlfriend find it offensive because in every case they are written out of the script as barbarians, picked on and pilloried as an example of everything that's bad. Guilt likewise is a luxury they can ill afford. By negating this aspect of culture, they were making a class protest. How did Bruce Burchall a regional cultural organizer feel about all this? It's a fair bet he conveniently forgot how he once called for something like a total assault on culture.

Two Sheffield social workers had planted the idea of a demonstration in the skinheads when they had suggested calling a protest meeting. The local Sheffield Labour Party had then participated in the event. So did the local Euro' MP looking even more ludicrously out of place. As per usual a Labour Party councillor David Morgan blamed the trouble on a minority of vandals. But as the editorial in the *Sheffield Telegraph* more accurately pointed out on June 22nd '81... 'The element that raided the Crucible was estimated by staff at 150, the march itself numbered only 200'.

Though the local Labour Party was held to be guilty by association the main culprits according to the Regional Chief Constable Brownlow were the youth workers. Like so many in the ultra repressive State Apparatus, Brownlow counts the soft cops amongst his pet hates. For some inscrutable reason, mutual acknowledgement that they are performing equivalent repressive functions is scant. The social workers didn't after all justify the wrecking of the Crucible theatre.\*

\* In some senses, the wrecking by the white youth was often more 'aimless' than the often selected targets of the blacks (c/f later in the account of the battle of Liverpool.) After riot week in the great mod battle of Keswick, a travelling theatre was again torched and on August '81 bank hols, the model railway station at Brighton was molotoved by white youths.

What happened in Sheffield was skinhead energy and destruction at its best. During riot week, 2,500 coppers in Sheffield were put on full alert for use against rampaging skins, more in fact than were on standby during the steel strike of Jan/March 1980 when steel workers and miners tried to close down Hadfields for scabbing.

## HULL AND HELL AND . . . . .

50 miles to the N.East lies Hull. During riot week a different saga unfolded in Hull epitomizing some of the worst aspects of skin activity. In addition to wrecking the city center rival gangs of skins, punks etc set upon each other. Symbols of wealth like the Leeds Building Society plus a number of large stores, including Binns, were trashed. But excepting anti police verbals (one guy was jailed for shouting 'kill the pigs') class consciousness generally rose no higher than the Humber river bed.

Shouting football slogans some rioters nuttered ordinary people standing in bus queues. One youth threw a concrete block through a bus window while passengers were still inside.

This chaotic response not surprisingly created amongst some Hull transport workers a passing sympathy for the police. The local TGWU official with the backing of the rank and file made preparations in concert with the police and the Transport management to close down the Ferensway bus station at the center of the riots. The Hull *Daily Mail* rubbed its hands in glee as workers, management and police clasped hands throughout this mid summer week of countryside proletarian insurgency.

Over the past 10 years the Hull working class have exhibited a notable radicality, even as recently as the Winter of Discontent, which makes this understandable reaction doubly sad. They are not by nature hostile to class violence and sabotage. For instance during the '72 Dock strike in the UK some Hull dockers cut ships, moored at the disputed container wharves up river, adrift. But they didn't then go on to root out innocent crew members to give them a thrashing as local skins might have done if their performance throughout riot week is anything to go by.



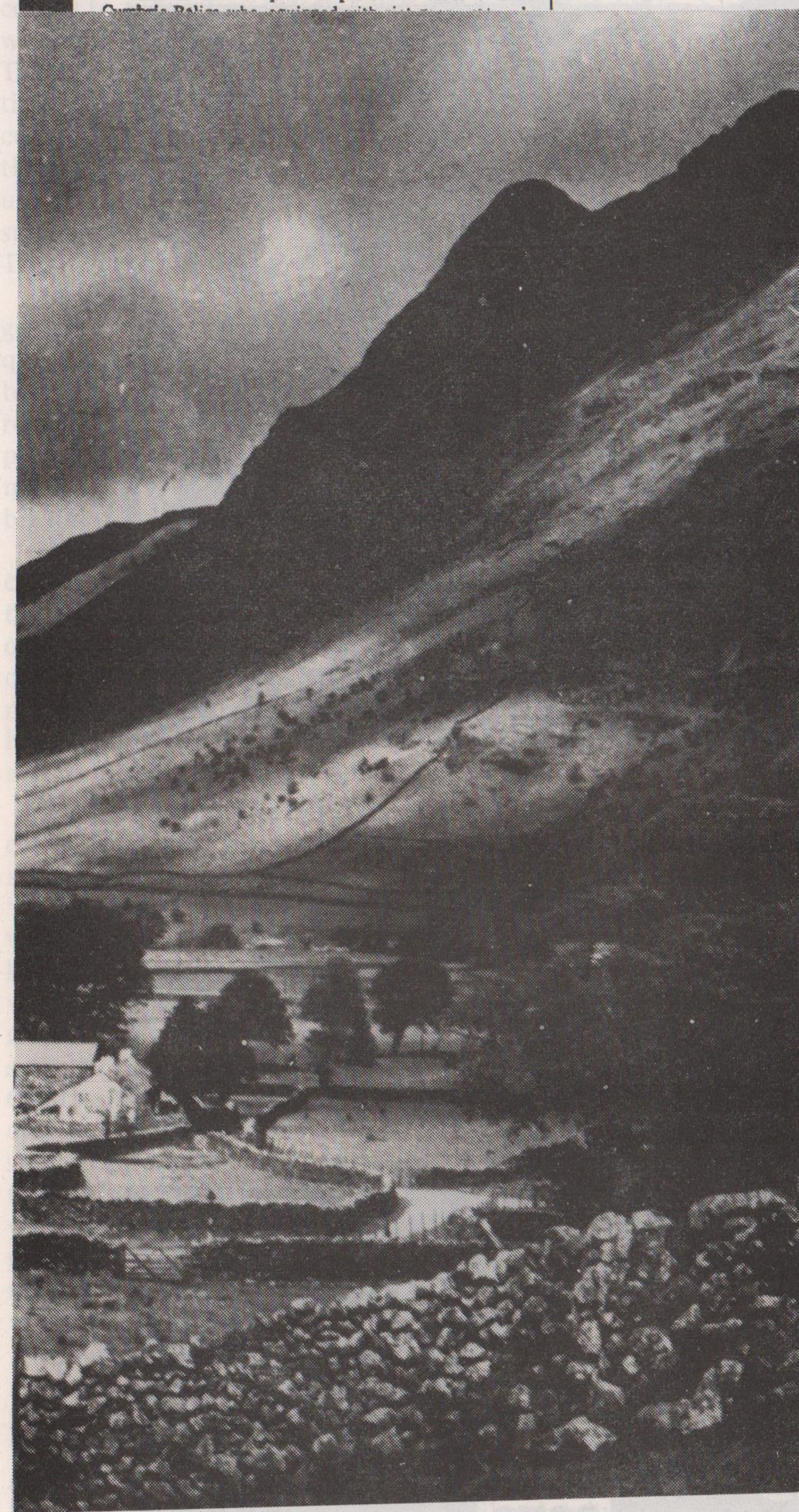
On the same day as the skinhead rampage through Sheffield in June '81, a car was smashed into the entrance of the local West Bar police station.

## POLICE PRAISED FOR SMASHING KESWICK 'RIOT'

By STANLEY GOLDSMITH

THE picturesque Lake District town of Keswick was recovering yesterday after a night of rampage by 1,000 motor-scooter riders.

Residents were quick to praise the force of 200



## Upon the Lonely Moor

His accents mild took up the tale,  
He said, "I go my ways,  
And when I find a mountain-rill,  
I set it in a blaze".

Lewis Carroll. 1856  
A parody of Wordsworth's  
romantic nature poems.

No one knows in advance whether skins will take a left turn or a right turn or drive straight on into a brick wall. There are unconfirmed reports of fascist organizations pumping skins full of drink, drugs and racist wind prior to sending them out on a dirty-dozen mission.

Some skins could in future be recruited by para military organisations like Column 88, Leaderguard and the League of St. George. The latter is reputed to lead right into the heart of this most secretive of States. Throughout the world State manipulated terrorism is growing in importance (e.g Italy — the Red Brigades, Spain — GRAPO — plus authenticated examples in France, Brazil and to a lesser extent in Chile) and there's no reason to think it couldn't form part of a counter revolutionary strategy here.

The colonial armies of the British Raj utilised terrorist atrocities and as recently as the Heath Government, agent provocateurs, (the Littlejohn Brothers) were employed to infiltrate the IRA and carry out bank raids in the Irish Republic. The names of their employers reads like something out of Burke's Peerage: Lord Carrington, the Defence Secretary, Geoffrey Johnson Smith and finally the Littlejohn's friend Lady Pamela Onslow an ex social worker. They have never denied the charge levelled at them by the Littlejohn bros.\*\*

Fascist groups inevitably gained members during and after the rioting but the media was obsessed with uncovering evidence of left wing and IRA infiltration. The hidden face of protest was invariably one or the other. The *News of the World* (July 19th '81) hysterically reported that black power leaders had made their first contact with 2 Provisional IRA leaders in Chapeltown, Leeds. Wearing balaclavas was to the press evidence enough of IRA involvement and the daily tabloids carried photos of youths wearing them. In fact balaclavas were only worn to protect the hidden face of protest from vampirish press photographers.

Finally the Special Branch, clutching at straws, unearthed a couple of terrorist suspects. Jean Weir along with an Italian girlfriend were arrested for allegedly throwing a molotov during the Brixton riots in April '81. Bractach Dubh which 'Weir belongs to had critically praised the Red Brigade in a pamphlet entitled 'Armed Struggle in Italy'. When it came to suggesting the violence on the street was manipulated by unseen hands, a refusal to condemn State manipulated terrorism outright made the job of the press that little bit easier.

\*\* There is a real possibility the Birmingham pub bombings atrocities of '74 were not carried out by the IRA. The six convicted men have always protested their innocence claiming confessions were beaten out of them. The IRA has never admitted responsibility for the pub bombings which is unusual. Forensic evidence used to convict two of the men has been discounted. A swab test revealed traces of ammonia and iron nitrates on their hands, a compound substance left by both gelignite or smoking! Both men were smokers. Like the bomb in the Piazza Fontana detonated by the Italian Secret Services ending Italy's 'hot autumn' in 1969, the Birmingham pub bombs were in all probability planted by an arm of the State. To achieve what? To disorientate Brummy's militant proletariat? During the now famous miners strike, engineering workers from Birmingham's extensive industrial belt had joined with the miners and picketed Saltley Power station. Together they had inflicted a memorable defeat on the British Government. However the bombs did nothing to dampen class struggle but they did achieve the immediate aim of the Special Branch; preparing opinion for the passing of the Anti-Terrorist Act which was implemented immediately after the outrages. In future the Act could be more fully used than at present for detaining subversives.

And what of later episodes of class struggle? If the bomb planted on the Canvey Island gas and oil terminal during the Winter of Discontent had not mercifully been defused in time a fire ball would have ripped through Canvey Island leaving maybe thousands dead. It would have in addition cremated a strike wave which included hospital ancillary workers. The bomb was said to have been planted by the IRA but a nagging doubt remains like a toothache which won't go away. Just supposing . . . ? Pro republican sentiments in the Republic (e.g. the Irish Times) though not wholeheartedly for the strikes (Ireland was itself about to be plunged into a big strike wave) never the less took pleasure in seeing the British Government squirm. The IRA is respectful of moderate republican opinion and whenever possible would prefer not to antagonise it unnecessarily — so it is highly unlikely that the Canvey Island bomb was the work of the IRA.





Skinheads behind the bars of a railway trolley on Brighton station.



Canvey Island Bomb

## The Sigh Of The Oppressed Oppressor

### YOUTH/SOCIAL WORKERS

Those 12 nights in early July '81 marked a watershed. Revolutionary potential remains both a real and distant possibility. The youth valiantly fought the coppers but when it comes to subverting intermediary bodies of the State — youth work/culture/alternatives etc are easily thrown off course. Though the special pleadings of social workers in riot situations goes largely unheeded the youth clubs have yet to be consciously attacked. Though sly kicks are frequently aimed at them only in one notable incident has a youth club come under attack. This was during a small riot in Leicester in the summer of '80 when a mainly black youth club was attacked. The incident however was not reported in the national press.

In these hard times youth clubs must find room for the growing numbers of young unemployed. They are consequently stretched to breaking point and youth workers are being sent loopy with even heavier work loads. As they cannot recruit more staff enabling them to do their job 'properly' preacher man pep talks become a victim of the cuts and static manning levels. With the result kids minds are just that extra bit liberated from the paralysing effect of youth work.

Physically youth workers are often light weights having to contend with real heavies. They are extremely reluctant to call the cops yet are often in need of protection themselves nervously selecting keys from loaded key rings, dutifully locking doors behind them to keep youth club property safe from never miss a chance snaffling fingers. In their heart of hearts how many yearn to be a strong arm Cagney outsmarting the not so angelic upstarts at their own game?

Ever since the State systematizing of social work first took off in a big way during the 1880's, social work in the name of more spiritual capitalist values has thumbed its nose at the 'cheap thrills' on offer in the market place. Nowadays the private market in youth entertainment, more expert at grabbing kids attention, is a source of competitive annoyance to youth workers. They dislike the rampant commercialism of amusement arcades and space invader emporiums where the only source of authority is the dubious money changing bouncer. Confronted with this racketeering magnet either the youth club makes concessions or risks losing all custom. But swimming with the current is also an admission of defeat and there is an unhallowed something in the spectacle of a youth workers attempting to become as slick as the next kid at playing space invaders on one of the clubs two machines. The market induced drift into backsliding ends the day the youth worker quits.

Having become more mechanised (videos, sound systems, music rooms, recording studios) youth clubs find themselves having to hire technically minded youth workers, fix-its. Employed in a less ideological capacity they tend to poke fun at their harrassed colleagues who obediently read and swear by *The Guardian*, *New Society* etc just like they've been trained to do. As pure cynicism this dismissive gesture takes some beating in a scene which is noted for its close professional naivete. Only time will tell if it is at all capable of progressing beyond mere cynicism.

There are other pressures leading the youth worker astray. Some gain the respect of kids by infringing the law in rather minor ways and generally making out they are tougher than they really are. Holding high their self esteem and the esteem of others they are easily nagged into continually proving themselves. However there shortly may come a day when on account of former braggardly actions they get pressured into throwing petrol bombs just for the sake of keeping up appearances. If caught they will quickly find out they have thrown away their job — and probably the keys to the jail.

In Britain the time has long gone when there was a manifest relationship between the owners of large scale property and

social work. There are echoes amongst today's social workers of Beatrice Webb's 'new consciousness of sin amongst men of intellect and property' but the 19th century combination of guilt and fear of personally being expropriated has greatly diminished. The moralizing function of social work has become progressively detached from defending individual property being more a question of protecting the State as the collective capitalist. Social workers today dread the onset of role crisis more than they fear expropriation of their property, which in any case is rather petty. But low rates of pay, long hours, being on call, add their weight to a significant number correctly gauging their role as merely compounding misery.

Come this potential major turning point and the greatest danger comes from honey tongued marxist ideologists of 'social welfare work'. They step in to save the social worker from a social crises of deep personal significance. Arguing the State is not a monolith built to safeguard bourgeois class rule enables the social worker to pick up the pieces and cheerily soldier on convinced, having made the switch from liberal or christian values to a marxist approach, they are now helping the proletariat. When have social workers ever believed they were doing otherwise?

Social workers cannot initiate any authentic activity themselves, while the activity of those they police gets out of hand. Yet social workers can all of a schizoid sudden flip in with the insurgents. For example a social worker was arrested for throwing a petrol bomb in Brixton in April '81. Exactly a year later he was sentenced to 3 years in nick. At the trial the judge made it clear if he had not been of previous 'good character' and a social worker the sentence would have been much stiffer. Obviously in some eyes social work still counts for something. Amongst those arrested and present at the scene of rioting were a number of teachers and professional sports people. Class pressures from below, the strains of the job etc also cause them like the social worker to act in this explosive, definitely 'unprofessional', manner.

### THE TEACHER AS INFORMER

The tensions of social work corresponding to the era of mass youth unemployment are analogous to those of teaching: increased workloads (but usually as a result of cutbacks rather than having to cope with more pupils) and more, much more police involvement. Moreover there has been over the past 8 years or so a slow but sure process of weeding out the more liberal and 'rebellious' teachers leaving behind a core of either frightened or avowedly conservative teachers. Sir Keith Joseph's pronouncement (Jan 6th '82) to local authorities to find 'better ways of getting rid of ineffective teachers' is the latest in a long line of similar strictures.

The strain of the job contributes amongst teachers hardening of attitudes and a defensive posture bordering on hysteria. To typify education nowadays as compulsory mis-education is, if secondary school teachers are present, tantamount to a declaration of war. Assembling the nitty gritty of details enabling one to form some kind of accurate picture of what is happening in schools is then halted by abusive, crass apologetics. Necessarily an analysis of the changing role of secondary teaching is fragmentary because details are lacking. Teachers keep mum about the shocking reality they are a witness to.

But the kind of policing activities teachers are progressively involved in was revealed with refreshing and chilling clarity in Toxteth. *The Times* reported that 'during the weekend riots school teachers had reported seeing not just children from their own schools in Liverpool amongst the rioters but those





**Durham police officers mix with pupils at a Newton Aycliffe comprehensive school**

WHEN THE BOOT COMES IN. . .

from schools outside the city'. That just about says it all.

Though schoolteachers needn't in private uphold the views of e.g. education committees, they are virtually constrained in practise to follow suit — or risk disciplinary proceedings and the sack. In Liverpool for instance there was a striking concurrence between Councillor Michael Storey's (Chairman of Liverpool education committee and headteacher of a school outside the city education area) opinions and those of the Home Secretary, Willie Whitelaw. 'Parental responsibility' he said 'has gone out of the window. Not knowing where 8, 9 or 10 year olds are is disgraceful. The position is quite clear. Parents are responsible for their children' (*The Times* July 9th).

Councillor Storey refrained at least publicly from endorsing Whitelaw's proposals to punish parents (never incidentally enforced by fining parents directly) but he did call a special meeting of education officers, inspectors, welfare officers and school attendance officers (once known more appropriately as kiddy catchers). Teachers were conspicuous by their absence from the meeting which had the merit of laying bare the power structure in which teachers either rest content playing second fiddle or get out. But with the rising incidence of arson in schools (c/f the wave of arson that engulfed school after school in Tyneside during the early '70s) truancy and general hooliganism, a school teacher cannot distance him/herself from the job. A take it or leave it approach was always a luxury in the teaching counter-insurgency front line ever since the beginnings of so called mass education. Today it is non-existent.

Education cuts have also caused a resurgence of powerless liberalism in 'educational' matters particularly among concerned middle class parents. The pressure exerted by this body of people is wrapped up usually with the preservation of the local State. In so far as they view education as a positive good it is diversionary, inhibiting, in a perhaps rather minor way, the emergence of revolutionary theory which must never be

confused with State education. It is also idealistic and severely elitist because it tends to equate 'information' (?) with survival chances: to reformulate Francis Bacon: knowledge is employment. On this reckoning the unemployed are condemned to remain claimants for the rest of their inferior lives because they lack 'knowledge'. It is nothing short of scandalous how the shining truths of clear as mud liberalism stand revealed as raving reaction:

However it is true that the kind of person who holds these views recoil if pushed, before this sort of inexorable logic. The same goes for their public utterances (letters to newspapers etc) on the riots, which were chosen with a snobby view to sounding respectable rather than from inner-conviction. Judged from this privileged vantage point, education should have provided the tools for the full enjoyment of leisure (failing which kids rioted for lack of adequate preparation) rehearsing once more themes that started to become familiar from the mid '50s onwards. Mass unemployment has knocked this nonsense for six and it is only naive dreamers not Ministers of State who continue to believe in this. A final word — ironically many liberal teachers who profess to hold these opinions dear spend much of their 'educated' leisure time getting rotten drunk or stoned! (There's nothing wrong with getting continually drunk or stoned in this alienated day and age. It is the holier than thou facade which is inexcusable).

It is possible to locate one major drawback in the crisis of mass secondary education. (Higher education is of no consequence here because struggle since the qualitatively different one's of the late '60s has centered on restoring grants, extending facilities and not on the outright rejection of courses, the destruction of the university and an end to the student role.) Quite simply the runaway subversion is seemingly happening without any theoretical elaboration. It should come from the kids themselves. (We looked in vain for even the merest glimmer of a message that however fleetingly might have explained the arson in Tyneside schools. Resistance to

corporal punishment in one school unaffected by arson is all we could come up with).

The inconsistency of school rebellions was also brought out in the riots. The mass truancy in Liverpool schools wasn't accompanied by a single recorded incident of a school coming under attack. Since the riots however Liverpool schools have experienced an upsurge in destruction. At the now notorious St Saviours Church of England School in Toxteth pupils 'have wrecked class rooms by fire and vandalism and turned fire extinguishers on any teacher who dared to remonstrate' (*The Daily Telegraph* Feb 23rd, '82).

To begin to put together an absent critique even in the midst of so much destructive activity is not easy. The educational system in Britain has certain specific features that set it apart from most other highly advanced capitalist countries. It is perhaps less closely integrated with vocational training than any other major industrial country. Excepting maybe pure science and basic literacy, the main function of mass education here is unobtrusively ideological and 'cultural', unrelated at first glance to the need to reproduce certain work skills necessary for the capitalist labour market. If this is the case then the revolt in secondary education contains within it the seeds of a critique which is far more complex than a straightforward resistance to being force fed for a particular job at the end of it all. Where does it lead? To what beauty?

## THEY HURT YOU AT HOME, THEY HIT YOU AT SKOOL

### CRISIS OF THE SCHOOL — FAMILY COUPLE: THE LOOMING INTO VIEW OF OTHER HORIZONS

The declining importance of school and the family, the two main institutional covers for kids almost inevitably brings the law more prominently into children's lives. With children especially in mind extra police powers had been projected a good while before the riots by the Royal Commission for criminal procedure (Jack Jones the former 'radical' General Secretary of the TGWU had sat on this commission). Its recommendations to finger print children of 10 and over were enough to freeze the blood, marking something of a watershed in the criminalization of children. If the Chief Constables get their way the recommendations will become law.

The relevance to capital and the State in putting children under the police microscope has now become of pressing importance. The massed presence of children in the riots made public to astonished onlookers what the State had been maintaining all along; children were being progressively lost to view. It couldn't add — for their own good. Over night kids became strangers filled with new powers and parents and other adults peered quizzically at them as if they'd just hatched out. Yet this — one of the most advanced affirmations children have ever made — had not gone unheralded and parents had cause to wonder at their past casualness at not setting a time when children should be back and only occasionally asking them where they were going. Even going to skool is, because of rising levels of truancy, no longer the safe bet it once was.

Aries in *Centuries of Childhood* linked the rise of school education to a 'desire on the part of the parents to watch more closely over their children'. It is this dual surveillance process which is now in such crises. Once it presaged the rise of the bourgeois family, just as loosening opaque family bonds, moving out onto a new terrain with no known reference point in the past, now signals its disappearance. Under the growing sway of police surveillance an eye as sharp as Fourier's is needed to see the potential.

Responding to the failing authority of parents, the Tories drastic solution is, first isolate the family unit before proceeding to give back its former powers. Like the 'magic of the market' this is deemed to occur spontaneously. But what really happens is this: their redrawing of the boundaries of the State, like other instances, is more a question of substituting existing bodies for other ones. What is actually taking place is

a realigning of extra parental authority rather than a return to base, replacing family guidance councils more with the courts and the police. The two in any case have never been totally separate but shit social workers are more likely in the future, irrespective of changes at Government level to be drawn into co-operating more closely with the police. Almost certainly the greater encroachment of statutory police authority is bound to put a severe strain on their woolly liberalism.

Thus parents, particularly working class parents, are not expected to assimilate the witchcraft of the 'experts' but instead hand out clouts around the earhole like there's no tomorrow. The onus of the blame still falls on the parents but the terms have changed. (The findings of a survey commissioned by the *News of the World* on rioting kids was headlined 'It's our fault children go wrong'.) They are not now accused so much of a lack of sympathy and understanding but of a failure to act with brutal promptness.

At the time of the riots there was much talk of coercing parents into acting 'responsibly'. But the idea had been in the wind for some time. Only 3 weeks before, a research project was forwarded to the Home Office Research Unit proposing a study of the effectiveness of fines on parents for controlling their children. If the amount of doggerel now piling up is anything to go by the ruling class are clearly very preoccupied with 'lax parents'.

Not all lax parents of course, only those belonging to the working class. For once the inherent bias of sociological studies is there for all to see because it all depends on which side of the class fence you happen to be on. Laxity amongst working class parents becomes acceptable permissiveness amongst middle class parents. *The Times* (July 11th '81) was sympathetically frank about this in an article titled 'Why so many children take to the streets' summarizing these views as follows: 'permissiveness in child rearing during the past 10/20 years, while perhaps all well and good for the educated middle classes in leafy suburbs — is counter productive for the families of manual workers living in inner city housing estates.'

(By quoting from this newspaper article we are not entering a plea on behalf of permissiveness. Whatever the differences both contending approaches are essentially about how best to bring up that pain-in-the-ar-se, a model citizen).

Particularly in child rearing methods, the bourgeoisie has liked to think of itself as a vanguard confident that what it has pioneered today will benefit the proletariat tomorrow. But dual standards like these means its crusading days are over because it implies one method for the rich and the other for the poor. Using children as scapegoats (and anyone else in the family who gets in the way) easily provoked working class violence is, in this way, cynically whipped up.

But this controlled experiment in a punishing society hadn't banked on the effects of a rapidly rising unemployment surpassing that of the '30s. When an unemployed parent lashes out from frustration it nullifies the rationale behind this narrow minded dogmatism. Differences in brawn aside (which matters) beater and beaten are alike in at least one respect. Both are the trapped victims of an indivisible system, losing the power to divide and rule to its own satisfaction. As more and more tales come to light of wife, baby, child and granny bashing linked to rising unemployment, State manipulated violence rebounds to the detriments of its strategists.

## INNER CITIES AS INWARDNESS

The riots do not presage an era of novel concern with the particular 'problems' of inner city areas. They come at the end of a dozen or so years of official anxiety.

The first efforts at isolating inner city areas date back to 1968 and the Labour Governments 'Urban Aid Programme'. The future PM Callaghan warned of the 'deadly quagmire of need and apathy'.

By confining problems geographically the program had a clearly divisive intent, isolating locality from workplace and the rest of society. Callaghan's statement needs to be set beside Harold Wilson's made in the same year warning of an





Wall mural in a Glasgow' tenement slum. Public pictures as the cosmetic of misery.

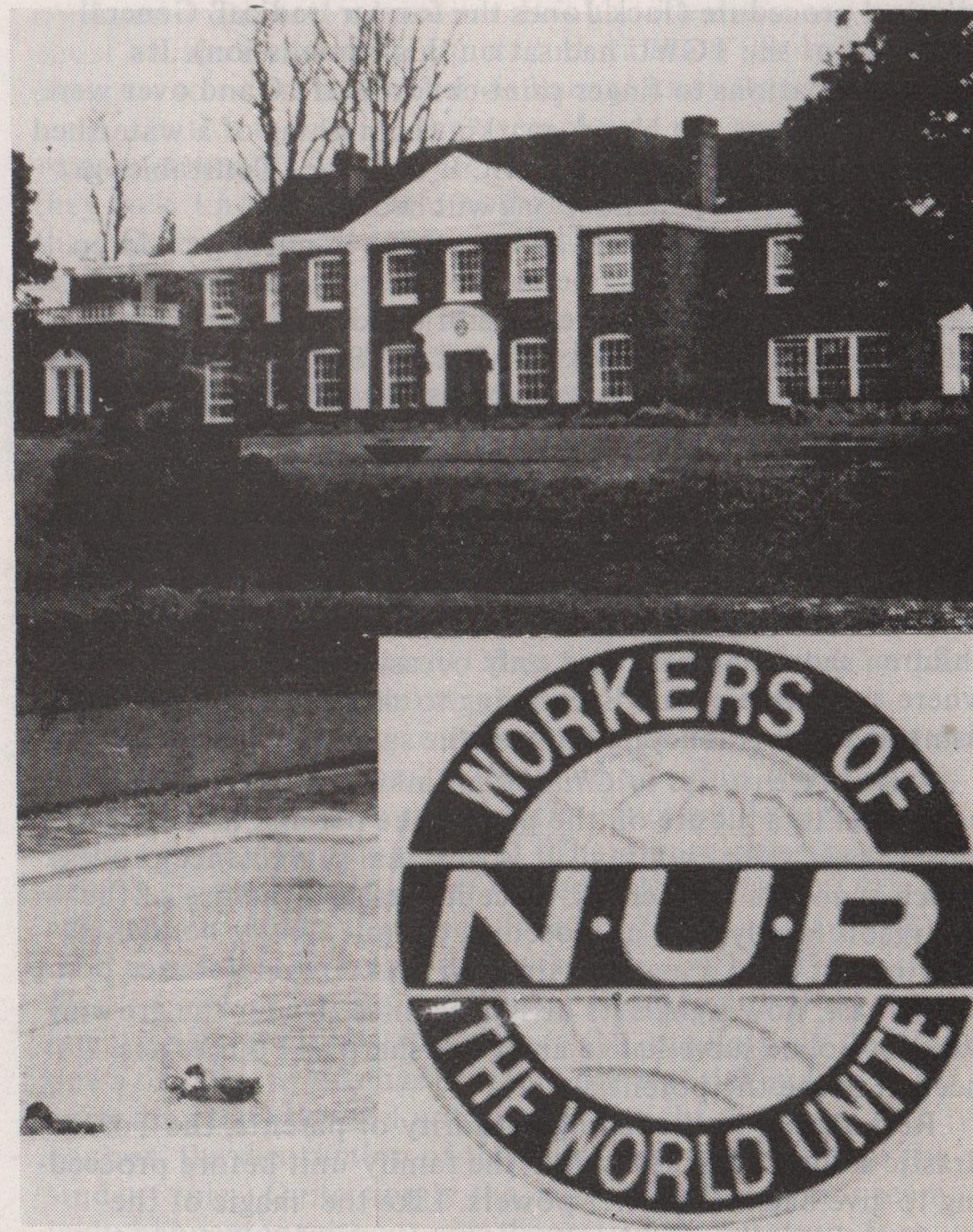
assertion of power on the shopfloor which Governments have yet to find and answer to — and never will be able to. The immediate background to these parallel and complimentary statements were the riots sweeping American cities and revolutionary struggles in France and Italy.

The great fear was that the consensus in workplace and locality which had bound the proletariat to social democratic reformism was cracking apart. To repair the consensus was given henceforth top priority.

At the level of the factory much more emphasis was placed by the TUC and management on the training of shop stewards. Courses set up to addle the minds of shop stewards included company finance, management, industrial law, labour relations etc. Since Harold Wilson first made his remark the role of the shop steward has undergone a conservative reversal. The only point in history the shop stewards movement has posed a revolutionary threat was during and just after World War I. They have ever after periodically marked time in a drift into rank and file 'chaos' they weren't able to control. Neither the State nor management can allow their activities to go unchecked even given their shop floor werewolf prestige has irreversibly declined.

At the level of the older industrial cities which had once formed Britain's industrial heartland a series of 'community' measures were planned *outside* the more orthodox channels of political enfranchisement (e.g. the local Labour Party.)

This apparently ambiguous function was attractive to '68' radicals' who were none too clear about the State's sophistication in these areas of policy making. Without doing much damage to itself, the State was able to use the catchwords of '68. Robbed of any precision, 'alienation' was bent to merely signify 'unneighbourliness'. In this way contradictions inherent to capitalist society were pushed to one side and the go ahead given to redefining inner cities in pathological terms suited to remedial treatment. (delinquency, crime, deprivation, children



N.U.R. (National Union of Railwaymen) training centre. Trade Unions to the Manor Born.

at risk, problem families, etc.)

The range of these 'unorthodox' bodies was astonishingly varied covering health, education, urban planning, housing and social services. The approach was as near total as possible: political reintegration accompanying economic regeneration.

For this purpose organizations like the Community Development Project were founded in 1969 to pioneer unconventional approaches to unemployment. As often as not CDP activities were viewed with suspicion as 'communist' by chain bearing Labour Mayors and local councillors. They need not have worried: the State has long known how to dress up overdue modernization with feigned subversion. But they did and these ossified responses only enhanced the allure of the CDP.

'Community strategies' accorded well with the historicizing tendency of the times. Potted histories of selected areas are localities were prepared. All depending, State sponsorship was either direct or more discreet. Sometimes it was a bewildering combination of both. But having shaped the overall retrospective spirit of the '70s decade, the State had little to fear from quasi independent initiatives. Like for example the Hackney writers workshop formed with the intention of encouraging old timers to write about the neighbourhood as it once was. There was more to this venture and others like it than recollection of things past\*. Memoirs like 'Coronation cups and jam jars' (1976) evoke an unfailing neighbourly good humour and stability circumscribed by the Labour Party and the Trade Unions, able to take on the chin the very worst blows capitalism could deliver. The riots of '81 vividly brought home the near total absence of comparable punch drunk safety valves today.

Local histories and the unbearable image of harmony they conveyed were a preparatory vector of communication to the local State. But they were only able to properly act as an emotionally charged stimulus to the political economy of the area if shuffled with 'alien' cultures now flooding the inner cities. That is why local community centers like 'Centreprise' in Hackney trade on the paradoxical affinity of a pre war white working class and politically stable post war images of ethnicity both about as relevant to the present as pit ponies and dug out canoes.

The principles of political economy never in the 19th century included the principal of getting to know one's own work force, their past histories, neighbourhoods etc. Or if it did it was a comparative rarity. The political enfranchisement of the masses more an achievement of the 20th century than the 19th changed all that. In so far as they constitute the majority of the electorate 'their' history is important to the bourgeoisie just so long as it doesn't threaten its interests. It is an indispensable part of the representative apparatus of Government. When consensus breaks down the historian is called on to secure the present for the past. What passed for radical local history coming straight from the horses mouth with a moral in it for today's generation was not meant to form part of an eventual digest of international capitalism. The whole aim of the project was to encourage an introverted 'community pride' covering identity, self help schemes, individual and co-operative ownership all tied in with the resumption of the voting game. The net effect sometimes is so claustrophobic it's like going around with a feather pillow strapped to one's face.

c/f 'Looking back at Bristol' — a Bristol Broadsides publication. Revealingly the central St. Paul's area, the scene of the riot in 1980 was the subject of the first transcribed interview given by a woman who had been rehoused on the Hartcliffe estate four miles from the city center.



This pastiche of naive art was painted by a youth worker and secretary of Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council after a visit to the Grunwick picket line in 1977. Throughout the 70's, the local State has patronized the artistic efforts were extolled as 'people's art', self consciously imitated and drummed into serving a cause, they lost their innocence. Like in the patronizing example about supporting a struggle for trade union recognition (NB at the height of TU power in 77) this politically calculating genre would like nothing better than to permanently tie the explosive inner cities to the stake of parliamentarism.



# Autonomy And The Seasons

Three things, all of the same sort, are merciless when they get the upper hand, a water flood, a wasting fire and the common multitude of small folk. For these will never be checked by reason or discipline and therefore, to speak in brief, the present world is so troubled by them that it is well to set a remedy thereto. Ha! Age of ours, wither turnest thou?

John Gower, landlord and lawyer, writing just before the peasants revolt of 1381.

Undoubtedly the outbreaks of rioting in '81 put the long overdue social revolution back on the agenda once more. The industrial revolt of 70-74 and the 'Winter of Discontent' of '79, pale in comparison. None of those out on the streets called for leftist inspired Parliamentary alternatives to the capitalist system which were a tacit ideological rider to the industrial revolts of 70-74. Contrary to Cajo Brendel's opinion in *Autonomous class struggle in Britain 1945-77*, the actual amount of autonomy in these essentially industrial revolts was rather less than he imagined. Making allowances for the hyperbole, it must be admitted 'Echange et Mouvement' have consistently expressed the view Britain was heading towards a crises of revolutionary proportions. In this respect most others have been less optimistic.

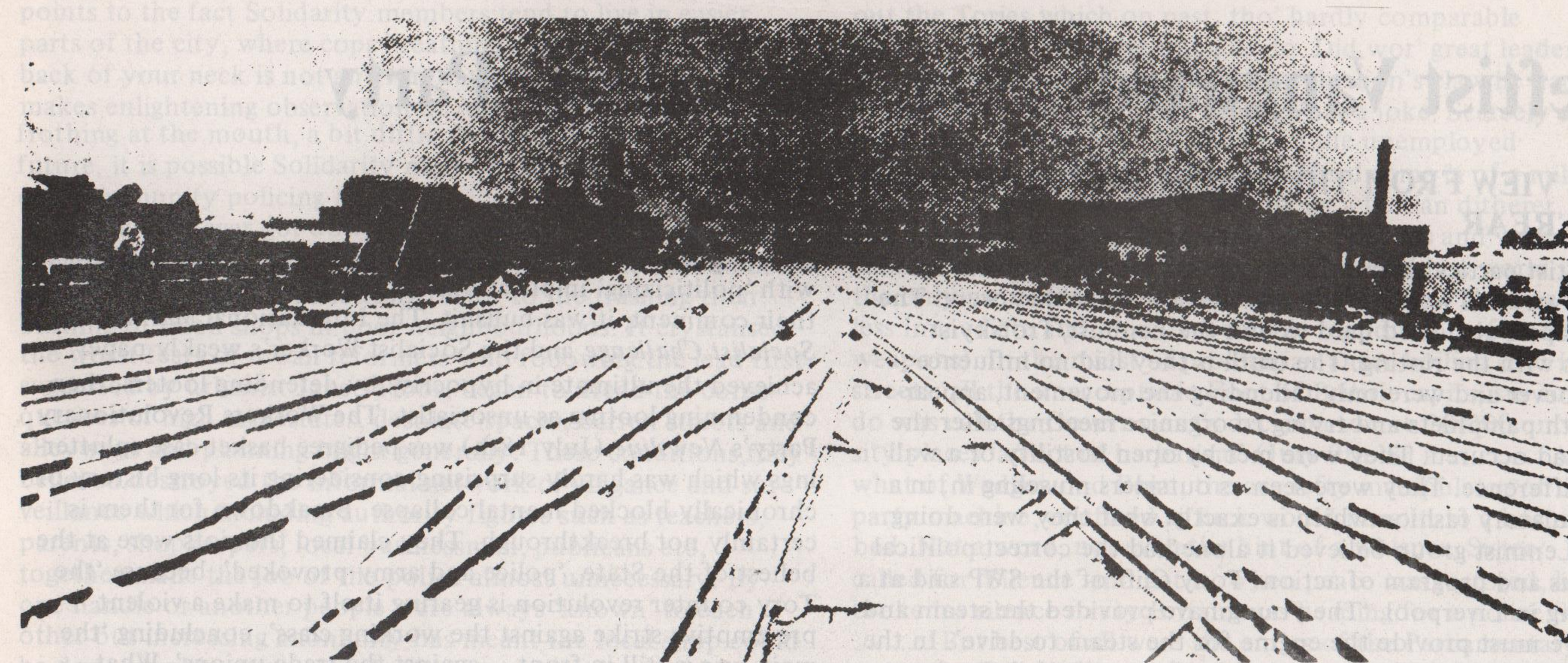
But even the strikes of '79, during the 'Winter of Discontent' never really transcended a rank and file shop steward/local bureaucrat unionism — like the ringing of Hull City by striking lorry drivers who exercised a considerable degree of control over the administration of the city. Still they were highly significant strikes. A friend estimated that well over 30 categories of workers with no previous history of conflict went



A snowman in Putney London during the 'Winter of Discontent'.



The 'Winter of Discontent' trash aesthetic engulfs the bust of Sir Joshua Reynolds in 'Fester (Leicester) Square.



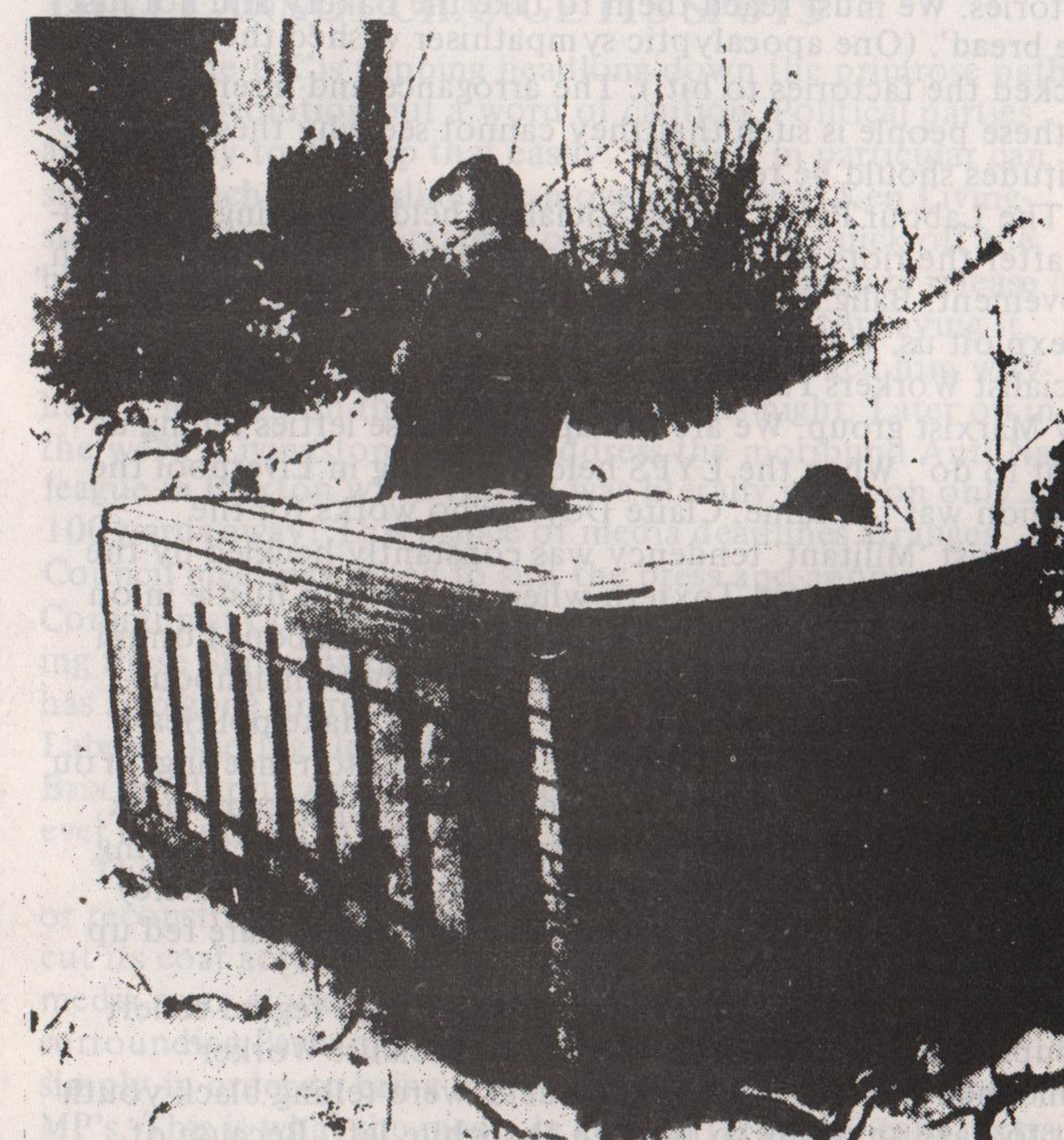
EMPTY SIDINGS. WINTER '79. BREAKING THE JOURNEY TO GET IN TOUCH.

on strike that Winter. This served to set it apart from the more industrial conflicts of the early '70s. Careerists now visibly rising on the back of 70-74 struggles maintained a judicious silence throughout those ice bound weeks when nothing much moved — including the stiffies piling up in a Liverpool warehouse requisitioned especially to accommodate the overflow from the city's morgues. Compared with the 70-74 strike wave it was rich in unusual incidents making play with the fact Britain was experiencing its worst winter for 20 years. The elements of unattended fire, ice and deep snow became during that winter tactical weapons from striking firemen to road gritters. An eerie silence spread over snowbound city streets, deserted railway sidings and the empty porticos of railway stations where the snow was allowed to whirl.

In the 'Winter of Discontent' the working class used bad weather conditions to press home their advantage. But in the winter of '81 '82 the tables had been turned. The snow and floods only added to the crushing weight of the bourgeoisie's counter offensive. There was no defiant pleasure to be gained out of the chaos. Streets were piled high with drifting snow not because of striking council workers but on account of Government cuts.

Spirits slumped unresistingly like the laden branches. The fact that steel plants in Wales were snow bound were used as an excuse by BSC to close them permanently. Unlike the winter of '78/'79 the gleam of a new order never once shone through the blocked roads, the overflowing river banks and iced over flood water lakes stretching far and wide.

Back to the summer heat and bonfires of '81. Where did the real difference lay? Those early July days were the clearest expression yet of the proletariat becoming a 'class for itself' in the UK. The youth unencumbered by trade unionism, naked and abandoned in a 'social void' that is exceedingly dangerous to capitalism went straight for the jugular, unhampered by the sabotage of 'their' absent 'worker' representatives ensconced in the State apparatus. And that's why those in power were so disturbed by the riots. 'Left wing' labour councillors just looked perplexed. At the other end of the scale, the Queen on the eve of the Royal Wedding was all bust up inside. The Queen and other Royals were reported as far more disturbed by what was happening than ever during the miners strike of '72, the 3 day week or the 'Winter of Discontent'.



TELEPHONE KIOSK. WINTER '82. AN ABSENCE OF COMMUNICATION



# Leftist Vanguard And The Labour Party

## THE VIEW FROM THE FRONT ROW SEATS IN THE REAR

Leftist parties attempting to use the insurgent youth for their own ends were rapidly exposed for what they were. The newspapers also tried hard to link the Leninist/Trotskyist groups with the rioting. The truth is they had no influence whatsoever and were only tailending the movement, appearing with pamphlets and trying to organize meetings after the riots had occurred. They were met by open hostility or a wall of indifference. They were seen as outsiders muscling in, in a manipulatory fashion, which is exactly what they were doing. Each Leninist group believed it alone had the correct political analysis and program of action. Tony Cliff of the SWP said at a meeting in Liverpool. 'The young have provided the steam and now we must provide the engine for the steam to drive'. In the age of high tech and the micro chip, these weary clapped out metaphors probably deriving from Lenin are more ludicrous than ever. Besides he obviously can't tell the difference between steam and fire. He went on in his usual florid way which he mistakenly believes is gripping the absent masses: 'Because they have not been organized the kids have been attacking shops when they should have been attacking factories. We must teach them to take the bakery and not just the bread'. (One apocalyptic sympathiser wished they had 'kicked the factories to bit'). The arrogance and insensitivity of these people is such that they cannot see why these attitudes should be resented.

The Labour Party Young Socialists held a meeting in Southall after the riots and got a rough ride from the Southall Youth Movement. Balig Sing Purewal said. 'These people come here to exploit us. We do not want anything to do with them, the Socialist Workers Party, the Workers Revolutionary Party or any Marxist group. We are fed up with these lefties telling us what to do'. When the LYPS held a meeting in Liverpool the reaction was the same. Claire Doyle who works for the Trotskyist 'Militant' tendency was constantly heckled by the youth of Brixton and Toxteth when she tried to hustle in on their action by calling for the setting up of a Labour Committee (euphemism for the Labour Party) for both neighbourhoods. She was rightly accused of trying to make political capital out of the riots. When she told a Brixton meeting, 'You have to organize to defend yourselves', the reply came back, 'We will do all our organizing ourselves'. At another meeting three members of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency got up to speak and were booed. One kid said 'We are fed up with them hanging around since it started.'

Black people are particularly sensitive with regard to left groups. The '81 pre-Carnival issue of 'Socialist Worker' bemoaned the fact the black 'leaders' were telling black youth not to have anything to do with the white left. Because of their position, the 'leaders' reasoning would in all probability be highly suspect but their conclusion is certainly right. The groups are funded by and dominated by the white middle class left. If it is true that people in positions of power in capitalist society will fight to maintain their positions why is this not true across the board? Everything about them serves to maintain their position, they abuse the white working class so there is no reason to suppose they will behave differently to black people. These groups do not present any opportunities for black and white proletarians to organize themselves to achieve their own liberation. The reality is accepting leadership from the white middle class in what is supposed to be their own best interest. Despite their anti-capitalist and anti-racist rhetoric these groups do not present any alternative to society as it stands. Rather they present a fairly accurate reflection of it in their structure and organization.

The so-called practical help of the lefties through the Labour Committees was ostensibly to ensure that arrested youth were represented by solicitors in court. As it stood, it

boiled down to little less than para-statist law centre work with 'politicizing' implications coming later. As for the rest of their comment, it was bullshit. The International Marxist's *Socialist Challenge* and the Socialist Worker's weakly paper achieved the ultimate in hypocrisy by defending looters, then condemning looting as unsocialist. The Workers Revolutionary Party's *Newsline* (July 18th) was pedigree basket case splutterings which was hardly surprising considering its long history of chronically blocked mental collapse. Breakdown for them is certainly not breakthrough. They claimed the riots were at the behest of the State, 'police and army provoked', because 'the Tory counter revolution is gearing itself to make a violent pre-emptive strike against the working class', concluding 'the main war is still in front - against the trade unions'. What drive! But at least they didn't flinch from showing their true colours, unequivocally condemning all looting and vandalism as the acts of 'gullible youth' falling for 'police provocation'. The WIRP's have the merit of being just too crude to manipulate.

Groups like the Communist Workers Organization (CWO) stemming from the old German and Italian ultra left were also only capable of writing nonsense. Having an ideology to realize they simply failed to grasp what was unique about the riots. They sounded for all the world like Trotskyists.

The CWO for example in the 'Platform of Unemployed Workers Group, predicted that 'the unemployed, discarded by capitalism today, will be dragooned into the factories to produce armaments under military discipline. *This* (their italics) is the only future which capitalism offers'. Rather it was (our italics). Increased automation and the higher technological composition of capital required in today's armaments industry combined with a reduced need for conventional armed forces makes today's situation utterly different from the '30s. (the source of all their cock-eyed theorizing).

Today's unemployed are not likely therefore to be dragooned into the war machine. Apart from staging bread and circuses, capital is at its wits end to know what to do with them. Obstinate ignoring these very elementary facts, how can the CWO even begin to create an effective unemployed workers group? Like diehard Trotskyists they even condemn looting as 'a gift to the ruling class since it leads nowhere' (Platform of the Unemployed Workers Group).

But *Solidarity's* (June/July '81) coverage of the Brixton riots didn't amount to much, unable to see that it has become a victim of views and attitudes that left parliamentarians increasingly tend to encompass. For instance *Solidarity* objected to those rioters who smashed the windows of small shopkeepers 'who did not deserve it'. Let's face it, small shopkeepers have a well deserved notoriety. Not only do they often charge more than supermarkets because they cannot purchase in bulk and don't own an agri-business but are far from averse to short changing inattentive customers. Moreover working all hours, small shopkeepers are often classic canaries. So often their deceptive chattiness is simply earwiggling which ends up down at the local cop shop.

In a similar vein, *Solidarity* went on to condemn all those who trashed 'the Community Action Office' whose work they said 'is appreciated by local people'. But is it that simple? Who hasn't heard people, drunk or otherwise, sounding off against these para statist bodies. And what they say often makes a lot of sense. In *Solidarity's* case they probably haven't because their membership is overwhelmingly drawn from the professional strata and some are involved in the 'community' racket themselves. To crown it all, there is more than a suspicious hint the police are absolved from acting like they do because they are simply doing their job protecting the commodity and the State. In inner city areas such views are a luxury and

points to the fact *Solidarity* members tend to live in easier parts of the city, where cops breathing constantly down the back of your neck is not an everyday experience and which makes enlightening observation of role structure, without frothing at the mouth, a bit difficult. Let's wait and see, but in future, it is possible *Solidarity* members could opt for the soft cop/community policing line.

*Solidarity* never got down to the real nitty gritty of analysis. It cannot be stressed too often the extent to which urban dereliction was a major contributing factor to the trashing then burning of small shops in poor neighbourhoods. It crystallised the worst fears of urban reformers who following the lead first suggested by urbanist Jane Jacobs, began to dread the consequences of high rise estates, desolate spaces, barren streets and alleyways and planning blight generally. These conditions, they believed, destroyed the informal network of vigilance and surveillance which, including authority figures such as teachers, parents, shopkeepers, local businessmen, publicans etc, together made the job of the police almost unnecessary. By one handle or another people were always 'known' to each other but increasing anonymity has meant the local shop could be done in without much risk of being made to pay the cost.

Concealed behind a veil of good intentions there always was an inherent class bias in which small business interests came first and foremost into their apparently damning indictments of urban redevelopment. These urban reformers want ultimately to approximately recreate the conditions which they assume once bound otherwise class divided communities together. To achieve this they tend to highlight and sensationalize indiscriminate street crime. But what they fear the most is an explosion of class war which has no compunction about attacking small business. This is exactly what happened on the streets of Britain's inner cities between July 4th and 13th '81.

Of course one can criticize the rioters but it has to be more imaginative than the run of the mill lefty criticism . . . Like the following.

## RIOTING IN ST PAUL'S BRISTOL, APRIL '80. SOME SHORTCOMINGS

The rioters unable to consciously get to grips with the more 'ghostly' aspects of the commodity economy, were easily pulled up before institutions whose brutality and nakedly system serving function all must have experienced at sometime or other. While shops were looted and a bank burnt in the St Paul's riot in Bristol '80, the rioters shopped short of getting the Labour Exchange. They were held back by a black ex-civil servant who had recently been employed at the local St Paul's Labour Exchange. He warned insurgents - within seconds of torching the building - that if they did so they only stood to loose their weekly giro. Old ways even in insurrectionary moments can still exert a fearful grip on events. At the very worst, the unemployed of St Paul's would have only had to wait a few days longer for their giro's. In any case no senior civil servant would have dared leave St Paul's without any welfare support in the days following the riot. The real effect would have been felt in other Labour Exchanges and Social Security offices throughout the country. The petty bureaucrats would have got the jitters and more importantly, the hideous fraud squads who harass all claimants, particularly women in single parent families would have received a well deserved slap in the mouth. Union backed blacking of the 'scrounge' squads outlined for use in '82 would not have the same impact even in the unlikely event of it ever happening. The final irony came a year later when striking civil servants, without the aid of incendiaries, in some inner city areas cut off cash aid to the unemployed. Courageous people, they preferred to do this rather than snarl up NATO defences or the Whitehall administration.

## THE UNACCEPTABLE FOOT OF BRITISH CAPITALISM

As for the central core of Labourism - the Labour Party - perplexity reigned. They couldn't even muster one call to kick

out the Tories which on past, tho' hardly comparable occasions, had been the thing to do. Did wor' great leader, Michael Foot see in those July days the lion's claw he had prophesied would smite the land? What a joke. Scarcely six months previously, he had called on the unemployed during a speech on Liverpool's Pier Head some ¾ of a mile from Toxteth to 'rise like lions'. Being a fustian ditherer, he later reserved his position on the use of CS gas and water cannon secure in the knowledge that he lived in a world where the only projectiles thrown are made of paper. (That, or the less immediate and more respectable repudiation of nuclear weapons). In the midst of proletarian anger boiling over in the streets, all the unacceptable Foot of British capitalism could do was call the Government's decision to axe 20,000 university places 'an act of barbarism' (July 9th '81) . . . . . And what of Wedgewood Benn, the ace lefty manipulator of the party machine, confined as luck would have it, to a hospital bed. Not a word, not even the hint of a whisper. Sister called for 'Silence' and got it. When peace was restored, he broke his silence to say Britain was heading for a police State. . . . . But best of all were the antics of the Parliamentary extremist Eric Heffer, author of the book *Class Struggle in Parliament* (sic)-acclaimed by the SWP. Pressed to make a statement on TV the panicked Right Hon MP for Walton, Liverpool said rioters and looters must be punished with all due severity.

## AND THE LABOUR PARTY THAT CANNOT CHANGE ITS SPOTS

True the UK is tripping headlong down the primrose path to social revolution but a word of caution. Political parties are unlikely to give up that easily. The left in particular can still do much to slip-slide the movement awry. Ken Livingstone, leader of the Greater London Council, quick off the 'bureaucratic mark as usual called for the immediate release of asians arrested in Southall. He was applauded for saying it, then barracked by other asians who bluntly asked him why hadn't he been on the streets the previous night. Later on in the week, Livingstone was to address the moribund Anti-Nazi league in Brixton when rioting was literally going on only a 100 yards away! This prince of media deadlines arranges Council meetings timed to suit the press and approves of the Communist Council of Bologna in Italy, never once mentioning these Stalinists thrashed the Bolognese insurgents in 77. He has also gone on record as saying in an editorial in London Labour Briefing, (late May '81) that the street fighting in Brixton during April was 'excellent'. (Later he denied he'd ever ever said such a thing).

The Labour Party is nothing if not chameleon like. The new or reconstructed Labour Party is just as prepared as the old to cut its coat according to its cloth. There have been several media scare stories of mobs stirred up by the 'new left' surrounding Parliament. Not however to demolish it but simply in order to bring more effective pressure to bear on MP's. This is what the media in general fatuously calls 'extra parliamentary activity'.

Livingstone's intentionally vacillating behaviour during the riots was repeated when the Law Lords ruled against London's 'cheap' transport policy. Hiding behind a smokescreen of radicalism he had no intention of defying the ruling himself. And sure enough on the day London's fares became the most expensive in the world dear Ken paid his full whack. Even a reformist 'rebel' had been tamed by office and the media exulted. He even went so far as to say breaking the law was 'not part of the British tradition' urging Londoners to pressure 'their' 92 MP's to get the Law Lord's ruling overturned in the House of Commons (*New Standard* March 22nd '82). A week or so later having recovered from ticket collector jitters he was to be heard sounding off against the Met's prospective top pig Sir Kenneth Newman, the former RUC police chief from N. Ireland. This time everyone knew it was to save face.

Livingstone's duplicity is important because he is the first of the characteristically issue conscious 'new left' to drop his mask. Respect for legality may still hold good but otherwise





The 1001 faces of Wedgwood Benn.

there is little love lost between the old and the 'new' Labour Party. Throughout Britain the old hulk of consensus politics is breaking up and the classes are drifting away from the traditional parties. It behoves in the long run a profound social crises but meanwhile new political re-alignments are being launched daily.

The rhinoceros hide of Labourism provides no lasting immunity against this frantic political experimentation. The old sub-Orwellian band of Tribune intellectuals defending a non conformist hetrodoxy, standards in art and garlanding the image of the cloth capped worker are no match for the fledgling alliance proposed by the reconstructed Labour Party. This still tentative consensus includes workers drawn from traditional sectors like coal and steel plus ethnic minorities, gays, women, ecologists, peace movement activists, paraplegics, pensioners, 'rebel' musicians, community workers, you name it. Tony Benn in his report (12th Dec '81) to the London Labour Briefing said as much. 'We should welcome radical liberals, community activists and those from the woman's movement, the ethnic groups, the peace movement and the pensioners, along with the young into our party now'.

It is a striking testimony to the power of issue politics. On the other hand Benn is also exploiting an endemic weakness for politics happy in the knowledge the task of winning over an issue to the reconstructed Labour Party has been smoothed from the start by a Statist orientation. Broadening an initial exclusivity then carries a heavy political penalty as single issues are refracted through the Labour Party/Communist Party 'Alternative Strategy' for capitalism.

Many of the new recruits were student 'radicals' in the late 60s who without a moments hesitation had joined moribund Trotskyist parties. From the mid '70s onwards most have begun to waken up to the utter irrelevance of vanguard parties derived from Lenin. There was even a hint of profounder insights: that working class uninterest in 'socialism' was more intelligent and egalitarian than the repentant vanguardist had previously given credit for. But to have continued in this vein may well have had disastrous (finally liberating) personal consequences raising searching questions about the State, power, the sort of job one was doing. As they had craftily slid around these thorny questions in the late '60s they were not likely to confront them in the mid to late '70s when the next installment of the mortgage was due. So they plumped for an

'independent' line which was neither one thing or the other uniting so to speak 'extra parliamentarism' with parliamentarism. Hilary Wainwright (joint author of *Beyond the Fragments*) has said as much in the ludicrously acclaimed 'political debate of the decade' when she and others from the 'far' left had got together with the Labour Party to thrash out their scant differences. 'The Labour Party' she said — 'lays too much emphasis on the State and on Parliament and is unable to develop extra parliamentary organizations' (*The Times* March 10 '80).

Their notion of what is extra parliamentary is intentionally vague. It can signify 'unorthodox' parliamentary methods. On the other hand the reconstructed Labour Party will lift a precious word like assembly knowing full well it has a certain autonomous resonance to promote a form of corporate assembly fudging capital and class (e.g. The London Assembly convened to discuss London's 'social problems', fare increases etc). To keep pace with growing political disaffection the Labour Party's new auxillaries must maintain a hygienic distance from political parties appearing to merge with the struggles of the underdog. The moment these struggles get out of hand the reconstructed Labour Party is nowhere to be seen reappearing with Labour Committee's etc once the all clear is given.

The new auxillaries of Labourism were the authors in the late '60s of a counter revolution of dirty little tricks when obviously bogus libertarians, anarchists etc all of a sudden put in at the safe harbours of vanguard Leninist/Trotskyist parties even then OK with career stakes. But at least these parties did not flinch from using the term revolutionary albeit in a hopelessly deformed way. The Labour Party always has. These seasoned rookies of the reconstructed Labour Party are now faced with the unenviable and contradictory task of pretending to support more clear headed autonomous actions than anything seen in Britain in the late '60s whilst sanctioning the shabbiest parliamentary voting reflex.

Meanwhile these new recruits to Labourism ranks tend not to blurt out comments they could have cause to regret later. During and after riot week they maintained a judicious silence which was neither whole heartedly approving or disapproving. The reconstructed *New Statesman* limited itself to exposing a very biased press report on the second Brixton riot which appeared in the *Daily Mirror* and in a detailed but ultimately



Painting the demagogic finger.

Arthur Scargill before a social realist portrait of himself.

light weight article, to criticizing the behaviour of the police in Toxteth.

## KING ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF WAGE LABOUR

But what of the new breed of militant trade unionist who shall henceforth provide the muscle in the reconstructed Labour Party? Men for example like Arthur Scargill former leader of the Yorkshire miners and now President of the NUM (National Union of Miners). He could from his bureaucratic throne threaten strike action if such things as pensions and the low pay for YOP schemes aren't immediately upped. During the Grunwick strike of '77 and the steel strike of 1980, King Arthur chirpy as a cock sparrer led well drilled battalions of miners into the picketing foray. There was however method to his anti-sectional conceit. He was getting miners accustomed to the idea of one big union cutting across much basic industry. When the pathetic Bill Sirs of ISTC (Iron and Steel Trades Confederation) said he was retiring the King announced he already had eyes for merging the two unions.

As an adjunct to the expansionist game the King is to be heard cockily airing his views on a number of subjects including racism. He simply cannot resist invites to appear on TV chat shows putting in a plug for the forthcoming NUM Presidential election and pleased as puff to be rubbing shoulders with show biz celebrities. Could it be that the BBC wanted this formerly brilliant strategist of the blockade of Saltley Depot in 1972 to be the new Boss man of the NUM?

Just after the riots the King seated in his Barnsley Camelot in South Yorkshire could gloat he'd prophetically predicted at the end of that artistic charade 'The Peoples March for Jobs' that violence on the scale of Bristol and Brixton 'will erupt the length and breadth of Britain' unless (always unless) 'the Government changed its policies'. But for King Arthur rioting is not the stuff of 'socialism'. He believes all anger should be directed at the Tories and at the 'Tory policies' of all the other

political parties emerging, like the SDP, into the light of day.

However even before his elections Scargill had come to mellow his simplistic anti-Tory stance. The awesome power of the miners having brought him to power could just as easily sweep him away. He is better placed than anyone to know it. Raising the temperature must in future be carried out with due regard for the King's safety. Long live the King! Many miners particularly from S. Wales and Kent had harsh words to say about Scargill when he steadfastly refused to encourage Yorkshire miners to strike during the lightening pit strikes against threatened closures in the spring of '81. And on TV the knuckle head half suggested the Yorkshire miners had stayed on their knees, solemnly hewing coal like painted black National Coal Board mannikins during the miners strikes of the early '70s. But the basis of Scargill's reserve goes back to 1979 and the Winter of Discontent and the strike wave sparked off by the Labour Governments 5% pay freeze. During these critical weeks he was neither seen nor heard. Except that is one evening when he put in a TV appearance quietly deliberately and agreeing with top management about the lack of investment in British industry. Lack of investment in industry, lack of investment in the inner cities. Lack of investment, lack of investment, lack of investment! Like an annoying jingle that won't go away these bureaucrats drone on in the same old key. What about a world without money? Is it so difficult to envisage.



# Got Any Money?

The Tory Government had by the end of Oct '81 nominated a hit squad of 25 'socially concerned capitalists'(!) drawn from the banks, building societies, insurance companies and funds (including Barclays Bank, the Woolwich Building Society and the British Petroleum Pension Fund) and charged with producing a series of reports on private/public sector co-operation. Since then they have visited several American cities including Detroit, Philadelphia and Atlanta. (All in the line of duty £2000 of smackers a piece was provided by the Government as pocket money when they visited the States).

This sham fact finding mission is sure to underline Thatcher's determination to reduce the economic role of the State still further. The reconstruction of American cities following the long hot summers of the '60s will be used as a pretext to fundamentally alter, in theory at least, the pattern of State financing which has overwhelmingly dominated urban renewal in postwar Britain.

However the clocks are unlikely to go that far back. Heseltine (Min. for Environment) has wisely kept his options open while pretending not to. In a carefully worded speech to the Tory Party Conference last year, he accepted the inevitability of central government spending if all else fails. The Thatcherite Tory faithful gave him a standing ovation but the joke was on them. They had moronically assumed Heseltine's bussing of 30 odd bankers and financiers through the devastated areas of Liverpool to be, in strict accordance with principle, the Tory Government's final word on the subject. When Heseltine eventually repudiated this error their ears were too clogged to hear properly.

Heseltine's strategic retreat does not mean the Tories are any nearer to understanding the special position of finance capital in Britain. Going to America won't help in this respect either. Though the dollar is still the world's major trading currency finance capital has never, in contrast to Britain, occupied the same pre-eminent place in America. There are for example Federal regulations restricting inter-State savings and loans. To believe for one moment those remote banking levithans that straddle the City of London are now going to sponsor, in partnership with the State, a localist 'community bank' ideology is the height of absurdity. On the contrary they have long since consigned everything in the UK outside St Paul's, Blackfriars Bridge and a very select mythology of British gentility, to oblivion.

Shortly after the Brixton riots a wealthy Nigerian businessman, Chief Francis Nyeribe came up with a pet project for stimulating private enterprise in Brixton. He has not been heard of since but at the time it made the Front Page. This hoax clutched at like a last straw by the media was also highlighted because it set a mock serious example for other businesses to follow.

Not only the moneylenders but industry was expected to make due atonement to the inner cities and regions it had plundered with such 'insensitivity' in the past. Significantly after the Financiers had reported back from the States an organization called BIC (Business in the Community) made its appearance on the British scene subjectivizing political economy still further. Again it does seem to be influenced by American examples. For instance after the Watts riot in Los Angeles in '65 a group of wealthy capitalists got together and formed 'The Community Committee' to see what could be done to save their worthless hides. They did this spontaneously but British business has to be cajoled. Sir Monty Finniston and Lord Melchett former heads of British Steel may readily put their names to ace deviant sociologist asshole Laurie Taylor's 'Keep Out' campaign aimed at 'reducing the use of custody for young people'. But British management is generally characterized by a suicidal introversion making them their own worst enemies.\*

What little dough the banks have coughed up — a mere £70 million: the Bradford Interchange alone in the early '70s

cost £18 million and a packet of crisps to construct — is based on the Urban Development Action grants which were used in the US, so apologists would have us believe, to attract six dollars of private money for every one dollar of public money spent. In fact these urban aid grants will still be funnelled through the Government. Only now bankers will in theory assess the viability of the competitive tenders put in by local authorities, business or community groups pushing to one side wasteful tribunals of civil servants accustomed to thinking money grows on trees.

To even begin to apply lessons learnt from the American experience is to whistle in the wind. When it comes to palming off the view that peace in the American ghettos during the '70s was traceable to the success of these joint ventures (e.g. the still flourishing Watts Labour community Action Committee) the British Government is a major shareholder. Differences in economic climate limp along in second place as an explanation.

The 'reconstruction' of the ghettos is looked upon too as a shining example of American free enterprise. In fact whatever change has come about is more than likely due to profligate Federal expenditure which convincingly donned the mask of American style independent entrepreneurship. Only days after the riots had subsided in the UK some reporter managed to sniff out a Watts rioter who picturesquely recalled how in the mid '60s he had only to stick his hat out of the window to hook the greenbacks whizzing past. No one living in English cities in the months after the riots can possibly match this welfare yarn. A year later the charred rubble is still there setting fire to the imagination.....

The British Government as part of the 'riot package' is pedalling for all its worth the appearance of social peace which has swept across American society since the late '60s. There is little doubt it is banking on cool short summers in American cities this year and the next and the next. (Some hope!!) By singling out the importance of derivative political strategies they can play down the much changed economic situation which will weaken their likely impact. To hope for a respite like America has enjoyed over the last 10 years or so is to hope in vain.

Twist and turn as it may the choices open to capitalism are quite narrow. But the sheer scale of its present difficulties has led to this undeniable foreboding of the imminent suspension of the laws governing capitalist accumulation. It strikes like lightning in day to day contracts, positioned somewhere between liberation and the funny farm. An 8 year old kid in Brixton's April '81 riot exchanged a ripped off gold bracelet for a can of coke just because he was thirsty. Strictly speaking it wasn't even barter because there's nothing commensurate about this form of exchange.

Even the bourgeoisie pale before their calculations. Their once superior econometric models 'understood' by the select few and always managing to end in some obscure but comforting note have been almost levelled. It's as if the 'continent' of higher mathematics had been reduced to a few intelligible ciphers scratched in the sand. 2 million unemployed, then 4 million, finally even 10 million. To even admit to this statistical probability is for economists equivalent to playing Russian roulette with an adding machine. Losing their nerve

\* Bradford cotton manufacturers formerly the vulgar butt of T.S. Eliot's derision are pawing their silk top hats by the dozen in the local Oxfam shops as mill after mill closes. Instead of becoming more capital intensive or moving over seas in the '50s and '60s, they preferred to rely on round the clock working, decades old machinery and cheap docile, mainly asian immigrant labour. Confronted as they were by the summer riots of '81 with an insurrection of asian youth who number over a third of the school population, Bradford's depleted Chamber of Commerce will go on past behaviour react with all the speed of a tortoise on crutches to inner city rescue operations to save capitalism.

they reach for the bottle and the abacus in the play pen. The Cambridge Econometrics unit recently suffixed one of its predictions with the staggering claim unemployment will only begin to fall by the year 2000. Privately they must know as well as anyone, High tech and developing automation ('capital's self contradiction in motion' — Marx's *Grundrisse*) makes this impossible.

But the most advanced extrapolation possible from the *Grundrisse* that can, in a highly schematic way, be applied to the general drift of capitalism, have no immediate relevance to Britain piled high amid the scrap metal of industrial dereliction. British monetarists may have had, before all else an industrial and social plan, one that appealed to the foulest instinct of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat but this has now foundered. Those who stood to really gain have been the financiers in the City of London — as always. Sir Keith Joseph, former Tory Minister for Industry said on June 19th '81 barely three weeks before the riots, 'there has never been so much money available in this country' locked away in banks, pension funds and insurance companies. He went on to speak colourfully of banks with 'money running out of their ears'.

This is just the sort of loose talk that gets the labour left hopping mad. Consequently they have once again undertaken to nationalize the banks and the pension funds which has always been good for a rousing cheer at Labour Party Conferences. How they are going to prevent a flight of capital in the face of such a threat is not clear. But it's a good gambit able still to reign in some of the proletariat behind an imagined 'red' nationalism. For this reason the industrial bourgeoisie aren't over enthusiastic about such schemes. They know that in the unlikely event of such a thing happening the proletariat in the interests of social peace, will preempt money that would otherwise have been available for capitalist investment.

## MONETARISM. BRITAIN v AMERICA. A MULTITUDE OF SINS OR JUST BAD HOUSE-KEEPING?

Monetarism as practised by Thatcher and Reagan may have eaten out of the same Friedmanite trough but comparisons all but end right there. In Britain monetarism is not a cultural movement to the degree it is in America. It is brutally economic unadorned by born-again Christians, moral majorities and creationists.

Top ranking Tories may in private be sympathetic to regressive sexual codes and there are backwood murmurings amongst constituency parties favouring their restoration. But such things as high street chastity centers successfully sponsored by a Republican Senator from Alabama will never open in the UK. The Tories lack the money, the will and even the pretence to a 'moral majority'.

Having a woman as PM has made it harder to convincingly argue that the proper place for women is in the home. Even in America where an unliberated first lady, affecting to not miss wearing a tiara obediently hosts for the Big White Chief, plans to repeal the Equal Rights Amendment are loaded with contradictions. How come Mrs Schlafly, the sweetheart of this monetarist kinder, kirche and kuchen movement found time to write so many books and be so active in the Republican women's federation? In between house cleaning, changing nappies, cooking and ironing for six kids? Or was it all done with a brace or two of black maids?

Irrespective of legislation either way mass unemployment does mean women are likely to be more house bound. But by the same token so are men. In fact all the pressures of unemployment ties everyone more to the home which then becomes as tense as an over crowded prison cell. This is not restoring the family unit but on the contrary straining it to breaking point. Things have come to a sorry pass when eagerly seized on evidence (Mary Whitehouse) of a teen' revival in happy families rests on such shaky foundations.

A major political realignment of the drivel that generated the 'Festival of Light' is also unlikely. Campaigns against

abortion, porn, sex n' violence on TV have in the past attracted individuals known for their continuing or former support of the Labour Party. Moral conservatism in Britain is in comparison to America a free floating commodity belonging as much to the establishment left as the right. It is neither militantly for capitalism or implacably hostile towards 'communism' (i.e. totally nationalization or State Capitalism) still bearing the imprint of its birth — in particular Thomas Carlyle. There is talk of 'communist' infiltration into the media from time to time but in Britain the typically rightist muddling of liberalism with 'communism' is a comparative rarity. Media vigilantism in the UK, parting company with its American cousin is obsessively preoccupied with the great bawd sex and to a lesser degree by violence.

Home spun virtues combined with a cracker barrel religious faith in laissez faire capitalism has traditionally been the bed-rock of the American right. The obverse is true in Britain: on the hot-tin-roof fleshpots of the unregulated market place sexual lewdness is the ultimate profiteer. Moreover in the century or so which has elapsed since the left was first cast as defilers of children etc, it has never been in this country a serious rival to *Vanity Fair*.

Getting party political backing is not the style of moral rearming politics in Britain. Even if there was such a thing as a plebiscite in Britain when it comes to legislating on morals a private members bill is preferable because it is unencumbered by bourgeois voting rights responsible for leading the flock astray in the first place. Fundamentalist movements in the States are obliged to drum up some sort of 'majority' no matter how wildly exaggerated the sums turn out to be. But in the UK the custodianship of public morals is the business of the select few harking back yet again to the elite quasi feudal anti-capitalism of its beginnings. Not surprisingly it shrinks from laying hold of the machinery of publicity treating radio and television especially as the devil's own handiwork. Lastly behind the prim and proper demeanour there is no rich ministering angel ready to payroll (or bilk, all depending) every squawk of moral indignation.

And what of creationism in a country where the *Origin of the Species* first saw the light of day? The Museum of Natural History in Kensington, London, issued a pamphlet for the public which included the phrase, 'If the theory of evolution is true' and was immediately pounced on by the *Nature* journal. However it was far from being a poplarising concession to creationism. It was simply a way of stating if fitness to survive determines the selection of the species, primitive organisms are 'excellent solutions'. So why the change in complexity? It is a scientific question reflecting the difficulties some dissident biologists now have with Darwin's theory. Not remotely is it likely to herald a rash of court cases or Government lobbying as in America.

Only in a couple of instances are extra-economic monetarist comparisons between Britain and America permissible. Both Governments have got the backs up of environmentalists. However, ironically Heseltine (Minister for the Environment) while on the one hand failing to stop farmers from ploughing up National Parks, destroying 'Sites of Special Scientific Interest' and turning the countryside generally into prairie has, in response to the riots, proposed plans to bring back nature into the cities by changing industrial grey belts into green areas. Even here Heseltine trod warily. There has been no hearty slaps on the backs pace the United States Interior Secretary Watt, for farmers preparing to plough up Exmoor. Instead of 'code of conduct' has been got up that panders to traditional folklore by charging capital intensive, agri business Tesco-type farmers with the custodianship of the hills and dales and trees and flowers. Fat chance.

Finally turning scrounger/welfare bums into devils incarnate has been endemic to both election campaigns. As a vote catcher it more than helped swing the election in Thatcher's favour. But she lived to rue the day. Rapidly mounting unemployment was lessening tension between the unemployed and employed who well before the riots, were beginning to turn a blind eye on a crumbling black economy.



# Culture And The T.U.C.

## FRAMING THE PROLETARIAT

The TUC moving with the times has started to grant full bureaucratic status to ethnic minorities, conning a few into becoming brokers of wage labour. As black equal rights charter chairman Ken Gill said, 'the structure of the union should be examined to ensure the removal of barriers which can prevent black workers from reaching union office and decision making bodies (e.g. shop stewards, branch officials, regional and national committees, national officials etc)' (*Morning Star* June 17th '81). Dressing itself up as progress, this is the essence of counter-revolution, because respect for trade unionism and other forms of external authority is declining. Ethnic minorities are being sold the lie of democratic integration into the trade union superstructure at the moment of its world wide demise. Consider the fate of the infamous TUC led 'Day of Action' (May 14th '80). In a desultory way the TUC's call to strike was obeyed by 100's of thousands of workers. But the millions of workers who instead went to work that day had not opted to kiss the guvnors arse. The clearest example, the one that best sums up the situation, was provided by that semi-insurrectionary City of Liverpool. Disobeying union instructions some factory workers toddled off to work as usual that morning only to down tools an hour later after a flair up with management. A wildcat stoppage on, of all days, the TUC's 'Day of Action'! What a paradox and one so disheartening to both unions and management. As a friend put it, the decision to work or not to work was about quits in its essential ambiguity.

The TUC can't hope to carry on manipulating proletarian anger indefinitely. All they seem able to do successfully is eulogise moments from the historic past of their failed Labour movement endlessly commemorating the Tolpuddle Martyrs, Peterloo, a watered down version of the Peasants revolt. Never once have they commemorated the excellent excesses of the Luddites, Captain Swing, the Ranters etc because they don't conform to the TUC's rule book of do's and don'ts.

Having become soap opera historians (wait for the next years installments) with a flair for pageantry they have learnt to consign the immediate past to the labour museums in the fond hope, class struggle will remain showcase material. The historically patented 'People's March for Jobs' was instantly turned into stone when Ken Livingstone even before the march was officially over, unveiled a commemorative plaque at County Hall. That day County Hall was even thrown open to skinheads who, put off their stride, bemusedly wandered the miles of corridor.

A further wonderfully ludicrous example was provided a few years previously by the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders occupation/work in: the formica negotiating table around which the shop stewards and management had sat was put on permanent show in a newly created Labour History museum in Limehouse, London.

The TUC has not lagged in acquiring some knowledge of avant garde art. They can thank ex '68ers for aiding them to move on from evening classes in oil painting. Their economic committee for the autumn of '81 ran a special 'jobs express' of 'gaily decorated' chartered trains stopping at specially arranged meeting places throughout the country. Comparison with Russian Agit prop trains inevitably spring to mind. Even before the carriages started to roll down the track, it meant sweet fuck all.

## THE THEATRE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

There can scarcely be a more telling example in recent history of the fragile veneer of organized protest. Four weeks before the Toxteth uprising, a mass demonstration attracting well over 100,000 was held in Trafalgar Square at the end of the People's March for Jobs. All the TUC bigwigs and labour left wingers were there. The weather tanned marchers were given pride of place. Applause followed them everywhere. The marchers politely returned the applause. This vast demonstration passed off in an orderly manner. There were no arrests.

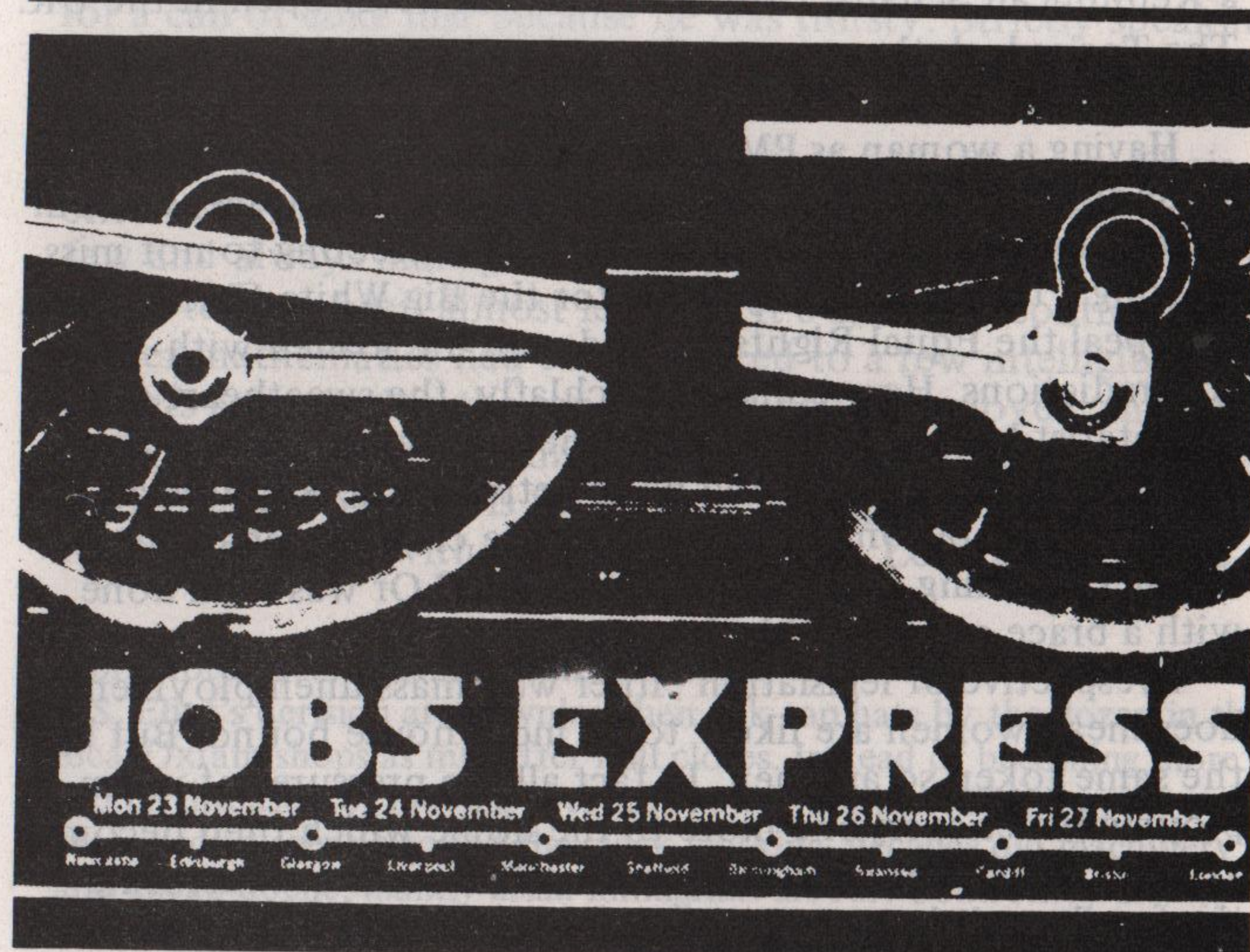
Not one even reasonable leaflet was to be found. A man with performing budgies brought up the rear. A month later Liverpool 8 was a burning cauldron.

The People's March for Jobs set off from the Pierhead on May the 1st '81 - Labour day. The original banner carried by the Jarrow Crusaders in the '30s hunger march was gingerly unfurled. Insured for £25,000 it was a labour antique and was to be used again in the autumn in another labour sponsored march in Jarrow itself. On Pierhead, the young unemployed marchers had all been kitted out in green anorak uniforms and natty backpacks. A snappy graphic symbol bearing the legend 'Peoples March for Jobs' had been designed especially. One might as well have sported an 'I love New York' badge.

In fact design aptitudes had played a major part in the creation of this theatre of protest. When drawing up plans for the March, the organizers had been struck by the visual impact, as refracted through photos of the original crusaders. (Cameras were waiting to record the moment the march passed through the village of Lavendon in Bucks, sight of the most well known photo of the Jarrow march). Then the impact came mainly through the newspapers, now there was colour telly to think of. So the advice of design teams were sort reflecting the depth of change since the '30s in trade union responses. The original TU sponsored march from Tyneside was got together on a budget of £300. Now the bill exceeded £50,000.

## FESTIVAL OF FORGETFULNESS. TRADE UNION RESOLUTIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF DEFEAT

Amongst militant labour party activists and fellow trade unionists, a conscious amnesia is a handy tool. Other than a few days madness on the streets, the summer riots are forgotten consigned uneasily to oblivion. The official view of the unemployed has hesitantly come back to prevail once more: the unemployed are weak, downtrodden, declassé creatures who shall remain so until the TU's or para statist bodies shall come to their aid. This conception of powerlessness is institutional. Really they are safeguarding their own jobs and self importance. Ruth Lister, director of the Child Poverty Action Group (Sept 27th '81) said... 'The unemployed seem to be cowed and don't know what's happening. The TU's and Labour MP's aren't protesting anywhere near enough'. This idiot must have closed her eyes to the clamour on the streets.



A return to steam trains is as unlikely as a return to full employment. This poster with as much relevance as a cave painting advertised the TUC backed Jobs Express in the late Autumn of '81.

# History repeats itself



"THE FIRST TIME AS TRAGEDY - THE SECOND TIME AS A B MOVIE STUNT." (JAMES JOYCE)



# The Lingering Death Of Rock n' Roll

*They say it's gonna die, But baby let's face it,  
We just don't know what's gonna replace it  
(Move It Cliff Richard)*

Ever since punk first came on the scene more musicians in the UK than ever have been quick to join in supporting a very ill defined socialist cause perceived as coming about, inspite of the anarchist labels, through a political transformation of society. Groups like 'The Specials', 'The Jam', 'The Gang of Four', 'Tom Robinson' etc have tagged along behind diffuse campaigns (e.g. racism, unemployment, nuclear disarmament) mounted by Trotskyists, the Labour Party left and center and the trade unions. Without exception they have been dead to profounder, negative and moreover broadly based currents which have prevented these political bodies even at the height of Thatcher's blitz from recovering their former prestige. Somewhat resembling Bianca Jagger's black sobranie dress conscious (M. Leninist) appeals on behalf of the poor of Central America, groups in the UK have been manouvered into passing around the begging bowl with one hand while laying out for a country mansion with the other.

There has been in the UK for some time a fairly general if not necessarily revolutionary insistence that music and protest have terminally parted ways. It goes from lefty rags like *The Leveller* right into the headquarters of the music press. Take for instance one recent issue of the *NME*. No 9 or 90 day wonder stared at passers-by from the newstand cover. Only the wary, slightly paranoid faces of unemployed teenagers headed towards the annual Tory conference in Blackpool. On page 4 the usual Lowry cartoon. A music Exec of Redundant Records Ltd is demanding to know where the voices of the younger generation are, the new Dylan, the Stones — where? A fawning blood sucking music scout is making excuses. The Exec. cannot hear him. Outside there's a riot going on: the voices of a generation with no credible musical accompaniment.

Cartoonists who make a living from their cartoons are invariably deeply compromised people. Lowry for instance usually prefers to fool around with the fascistoid mummery of the music biz. It says much for the state of the industry as a whole to admit the crisis is leagues deeper than faint hearted censoring of Fuhrer like manipulation, compromising pop star cults, lebensraum record companies and dazed audiences.

It is often difficult for people from other countries to appreciate just how widespread this view is in the UK. Added to which a resolve to sing in languages other than English is a way of saying, 'I'm not in the business to make money'.

Around Xmas 81/82 there was broadcast on radio a program listing 'alternative charts' hits of 1981. The Specials 'Ghost Town' recorded on the commercially successful 2 Tone label got a few bars airing which was ironical considering it shot to No 1 on the British Market Research Bureau's chart during the July days. The BMBR chart is very important to the music industry and to D.Jays, especially on Radio 1 (BBC), when compiling their playlists. But it is far from being the whole story otherwise the spectacular intrusion of small labels into the major charts would never have been possible. In part the Beebs traditionally watchful relative autonomy from the grip of big business is responsible for this.

A fair amount of air time on this particular program was taken up playing American singles, enough to make one suspect the credibility of an alternative chart depended here on much tighter controls elsewhere. Telephone conversations with punk groups in the States had been recorded for the program. Replying to criticisms that bands there were 'politically' feeble in comparison to the UK, the American musicians could barely contain their anger. 'Goddam limies' hadn't the foggiest notion what the power of the 'corporate media' was like in America.

The wide difference that now exists between Britain and

America suggests that the Anglo/American near monopoly of rock music is riven down the middle. But strong reactions reflecting the different realities are also inevitable whenever Brits and Yanks get together and the subject of music crops up. With Yanks music is still reched to have a nodicum of subversive potential, with Limies that response goes right out of the window.

## MUSIC AND NOSTALGIA. THE REPRESSION OF A REVOLUTIONARY MEMORY

As a popular music rock was in real trouble once the promise of a good life for all had elapsed into Caymen Isles bank accounts and bullet proof sanctuaries on Malibu Beach for the successful few. So long as the money was rolling in this was OK by the giants of the music biz. But it was contrary to the popular traditions of rock n' roll and not likely to remain that way for long. The music biz may have always wanted to make entertainers out of rock musicians but it then had to contend with the disaffection of the audience.

Come the early '70s and it was apparent rock music had hit an all time low. The tons and tons of good stuff from the '50s and '60s had suddenly given way to the occasional one off. There was no escaping it: rock music was deader than a Dodo and just about the best on offer was Gary Glitter's tongue in cheek fakes which became even more hilarious as the teen and pre-teen market rose to the bait.

The once important but problematical overlap between music and protest had come to a full stop. It was an unreal time. The world seemed to be settling back into its old ways and the global watershed of '68/69 had been turned into a trauma of world history. People en-masse were flung into reminiscing which somehow always stopped short of vital reflections on the revolutionary events of the late '60s. It was a lead up to nowhere and to this historicizing vein there corresponded a much commented on nostalgic revival of early '60s hits.

But no matter how hard memory of the world shaking events of the late '60s was repressed, a still unfolding class struggle was bound to effect this essentially conservative reminiscing. And in the UK, it took the form of constantly mulling over class origins, a search for roots which in the restricted sense implied here, safe guarded the class system. The main culprits were union bureaucrats, shop stewards, teachers, part-time lecturers and social workers etc coming from working class backgrounds whose structural position finally pitted them against the cause they were espousing. This contradiction some years later was eventually to work through into the punk explosion which also played on this extraordinarily long lasting demagogic response to class divided society in the UK.

The class struggles of the early '70s in Britain barely affected the music biz. It was a period of consolidation for the musical majors, a time to follow up the consequences of the quite superficial rapport that existed between superstardom and the largely working class audience. To restructure for any length of time the audience/performer nexus in favour of the new pantheon of Hollywood royalty was desperately out of tune with the changing economic climate that eventually would push the proletariat in a different direction. Only for a time could stage door johnny's be expected to look on the latter day Rod Stewart — a working class lad made good — without starting to get angry with the mother. Later Sid Vicious of the 'Sex Pistols' was to invert this relationship by pretending to shoot passive onlookers. It was simply a variation on the same old scene but for the big companies it was unsettling.

Big capital in private hands is rarely sympathetic to popular movements and when the punk/independent label explosion occurred the big companies at first reacted to it with a mixture of fear and loathing. Then scenting a profit they began to give chase. It cannot be stressed too often that punk (*as a musical experience*) was a popular rather than class movement in which the interests of musician and small capital were kept in a state of precarious equilibrium. It brought together 'creativity' and venture capital in a way the musical majors their attention riveted on declining profit margins, zooming production and administrative costs and increasing expenditure on aggressive marketing were no longer capable of pulling off. Fortunately some independent labels like Tony Wilson of Factory Records have been honest enough to admit 'you make money and something special by investing and believing in talent, not by marketing crap'.

Throughout the 70's music from the rock doldrums of the earlier part of the decade through to new wave rock has been in a situation of constant crisis. In spite of repeated transfusions, music has not been able to recover its former powers. Punk began as an attempt to destroy rock n' roll and the architect of this musical situationism (one of the by now familiar recuperations of Situationist theory), Malcolm McLaren, called his company 'Glitter Best' emphasizing the continuity between hoax and the guilty pretence of new wave.



McLaren was able to mint 'cash from chaos' just so long as publicity conscious notoriety overran more radical perspectives. He was the last buccanneer of the music biz, but rather ironically the day he was unmasked, music's claim to even a pseudo radicality also crashed. Punk had wavered as it dipped in and out of the music scene between genuine working class aggression and show case pretence. Attempting to live up to yet another immanent scandal for the sake of a few sensational headlines eventually drove Sid Vicious to murder and suicide. A sticker read 'McLaren wanted for vicious murder'.

However as an ideology of radical art punk was lethal to all who got involved in it. Never before in the history of rock music had so much emphasis been placed on not 'selling out' which implied a critique of capitalism was taking root. So

far so good. At the same time Punk's original mentors have sold out with indecent haste forfeiting all open house claims to being a mass based egalitarian movement, as individuals and groups rose into the supertax bracket and stardom.

It took time to sink in but those who had meant at least some of it felt ever so badly let down. This bewildering mixture of image and reality, astounding hypocrisy and honesty even told on some of the recording artists whose heads had been turned by fat cheque books. Poly Styrene not happy like 'The Police' with taking 'giant steps walking on the moon' fancies she has made several trips to Mars and is only now beginning to comedown.....

When rock music borrowed from more authentic R. and B. sources, essential details that place the music firmly in the context of everyday living would frequently be omitted. Punk did the same only this time by recuperating revolutionary critiques. Take for instance the fly sheet promoting the 'Sex Pistols' 'Holidays in the Sun'. The only reasonable bubble speak is the last line... 'A cheap holiday in other people's misery'. Otherwise it is a nonsensical mosaic of deservedly throwaway lines.

'Wanna see some history cos I got a reasonable economy' (????) 'I don't want a holiday in the sun, I wanna go to the New Belsen' (huh, you what?????)

'The Clash' also at a recent concert in Paris refused to publicize the plight of Libertarian prisoners in Spain jailed on raps ranging from 10 to 40 years. Yet they were prepared to devote an entire album of 3 LPs to the Leninist/Guevarist Sandanistas in Nicaragua whom in comparison haven't an ounce of revolutionary potential.

## 'GET BACK, GET BACK, GET BACK TO WHERE YOU ONCE BELONGED. . .'

Like most populist movements the proletariat was important to the new wave just so long as it never had the final say. It was amazing the speed at which the relationship between punters and groups began to turn sour once a number of punk musicians began to make it. We can recall talking in 1978 to a couple of unemployed brush hands in their late teens who only a year ago had been squatting with 'The Police'. The group had really started to make it and rake in the dough and one of the youths in particular was full of contempt referring to 'The Police' as 'cunts' (a kind of obligatory sexist put-on). His dismissal of the group was damningly retrospective because he could find nothing nice to say about them even when they were just squatters who liked to play music.

This attitude reflects some of the savagery and complexity of the social apartheid. Those who make it can never be washed 'clean' because it stems almost from an accident of birth. This subjectivity has been the basis of a workable paradox which UK capitalism has effectively applied to keep the working class in its place. Because origin is primary and structure secondary within these topsy turvy scales of class identification, it is feasible for a PM to say 'I'm working class mate' — and to a point get away with it.

The independent labels have manipulated this subjectivity to their own advantage. Once it was clear the 'Sex Pistols', 'The Clash', 'The Stranglers' were not destined to a life on the dole it made a nonsense to sing of survival drudgery. On the maintenance of this paradox depends the survival of the music industry because the consumer is continually breaking away from their unfaithful representations in search of ever more accurate expressions that catches both the intensity of their desires and everyday miseries.

To an hitherto unprecedented degree pop music in the 70's has played on class and roots. Because of its associations with reggae 'Roots' has something of a racial connotation but as will be seen class and roots as a concept of identity was, for both black and white, interchangeable, forming a part of the corporatist strategies of independent labels. When Haley's 'Roots' was first screened on British telly NME devoted a front cover of the magazine and a centre page spread to the book. To a black living in America and the Carriibbean to



know your ancestors arrived there bound hand and foot in a slave ship matters but what overriding interest can that serve in a largely white music industry in the UK? In fact the industry had just lent over backwards to acknowledge the UK's particular form of 'rootism' which by a sort of infinite regress allows a Lord (Tony Benn for example — the former Lord Stansgate) to lay claim to working classness on the basis of some long dead ancestor!!

This typically British duplicity was also present in Punk. It came as a surprise to learn later how many musicians had come from high up backgrounds, been to posh schools etc. One would think from 'The Clash's' first LP that all the group had ever looked out on was the Westway flyover in London W10 from the top of some tower block. It later, much, later, turned out Old Joe (Strummer that is) had been to a public school and Dad was a diplomat. Lack of honesty in these matters is in the UK astonishing and Americans for one find this ability to successfully cover all traces very puzzling. It tended to confirm their impression Britain is a nation of born double-agents.

The ideal of the independant labels is a music business made up of small independant producers. If they could ever get a political act together it would undoubtedly include the disbanding of the centralised monopolies of the music business. As a fraction of the bourgeoisie they do engage in struggle against their far more powerful brethren. For example Branson of Virgin Records in a statement damaging to the interests of the big companies drew attention to the way they hyped charts. Exposures like these are welcomed by the majority of musicians because more of them are likely to be represented in the record market if the practise of chart hyping is stopped. But it does not automatically mean musicians will therefore speak kindly of the independants because they are when all is said and done into the business of making money out of musicians.

It is frequently overlooked how the meteoric rise to fame and fortune of mid 50's rock musicians was helped along in the early stages by independent labels who hoped they could shift maybe 100,000 copies of a record. Pretty soon they found they could market a million — even more — and some of them like Atlantic began to enter the big league with a monthly turn-over of millions of dollars. Some of the labels like Atlantic began almost as a spare time hobby which in view of today's developments has a familiar ring about it.

## LEFTIES AND MUSIC

Though today's independants form part of a growth dynamic endemic to capitalism the changed political and social climate prod the independant labels particularly in the UK into supporting radical sounding proposals stemming originally from trade union and Labour party left wingers and Trotskyist militants. Branson for instance closed some of his record shops on the TUC Day of Action in February 1980.

The unique rapprochement between the union biz and the music apparatus is further advanced by their common involvement with mass youth unemployment. There is a certain inevitability in the way trade unions are drawn into making clumsy pronouncements on the music scene unthinkable even 5 years ago. This recognition is gratefully acknowledged by the music press and they in turn particularly the NME reciprocate by continuing to propagate hoary cliches left parliamentarians are anxious to keep alive.

These points are brought out in incidents which occurred in the 'Peoples' March for Jobs' in May/June 1980 and in the NME response to the riots.

When the March reached Manchester on May 8th 1981 (two months later almost to the day Moss Side erupted) amongst the scores of union present to welcome the marchers were a band of drummers from Moss Side who had been prevented from performing through loudspeakers by the police. A regional organiser of UCATT (the building workers union) had immediately sprung to their defence. 'It's disgraceful' he said, 'the police are coming down on their own class'. This stupid view which fortunately the people of Moss Side

disregarded is also echoed by the 'politically aware' music press.

In a pitiful article on the riots in NME journalist Chris Salewicz came out with the following assinine remark: 'the government is playing a dangerous game with people's lives, the kids lives and the policemen's lives — working class lives'. Frivolous word-smithing was unable this time to dress up the poverty of musical journalism. Waving aside Foot's doddering, Salewicz said the only constructive 'political' (why italicise?) moves' he had heard of came from the Labour party Young Socialists who proposed 'the idea of collective action through a socialist transformation of the Labour party, as the only way through and out of our problems. For sure we can't dance our way out of them. End of sermon.'

End of Chris Salewicz. There is not the merest hint of ridding the planet of commodities, the State, wage labour and what have you and it was from the same conservative vantage point that 'The Specials' judged the riots. Their record 'Ghost Town' as an advance warning ('No job to be had in this country/can't go on no more, people gettin' angry') called for further comment. 'I wish' said Lynval Golding 'the government would listen to our song. We're able to communicate with the kids at their own level. We talk to them in pubs, we know what their problems are'. The song's success in the charts had been undone in the streets. Had 'Ghost Town' the government's ear then things might have been set to rights by courtesy of the State and the riots stopped before they ever started. A depressing prospect.

Some six months later and another ex-Specials member Terry Hall (now the Fun Boy Three) was still harping on the same old tune. "Ghost Town" was number 1 in the charts and there was still riots and fights long after that, so it didn't achieve anything so far as stopping it'.

Short of social revolution stopping the riots isn't an achievement to be proud of and Terry Hall because the record never went even half way to doing this, was let off the hook. But if wishes were omnipotent 'Ghost Town' should have capped its success in the Hit Parade by clearing the streets. (Ghost Towns?) Whether he knows it or not Terry Hall is siding with all the obstacles that prevented the riots from heralding in a full scale social revolution.

## NEWS FROM JAMAICA. What 'appen?

The present wave of politicized rock and journalistic comment provides a mandate that a 'left' leaning party political structure might conceivably use to far greater effect counteracting, particularly amongst the young, a tendency towards chronic abstentionism. But it is to Jamaica we must turn to find the most perfected example in modern times of State patronage of contemporary music.

Under Michael Manley's populist social democratic regime (1972/80) reggae, though sustained totally by private capital became a focus of political patronage. Manley made it his duty to put in appearances at special reggae concerts gaining a political benefit from his overtures to Rastafarianism and recourse to patois. In the 'One Love Peace Concert' held in 1978 accompanying the riddims' were huge placards exhorting the people to 'Build Jamaica with Discipline' — 'Work Together for Self-Reliance' — 'Forward With the People's Constitution'.

These concerts may still prove to have been a politico/aesthetic experimental prototype giving a renewed lease of life through the glitterwax of art to this 'battle for production' analagous to Stalinism. Needless to say the revolutionary contents of these festivals are nil.

But the ease with which Manley and the PNP (People's National Party) manipulated reggae musicians meant forfeiting some of their radical claims. The rush to patronise reggae by Manley and the PNP more or less coincided with a draconian IMF loan leading quickly to a further fall in working class living standards (during the 8 years of 'democratic socialism' the cost of living increased 320%) which lost Manley a lot of support. Manley had tried hard to manipulate the



The above sleeve cover is an example of dingbat recuperation of the riots put out by Scottish Oi group 'The Exploited'. This directionless mess of quasi fascism and anti fascism, thrown together with a visceral yen for violence for its own sake, gets nowhere fast on 45 rpm. Reasonably lucidity,

*I'm filled up with aggression  
Want to smash your television  
Saturday night you watch TV  
Saturday night does nothing for me.*

*gets mixed up with Storm Trooper allusions, a celluloid Hitler, memories of McLaren's 'Belsen was a gas' and just in case you're completely lost by now it ends with a final clarion call for 'CLASS WAR'!!*

more corporate aspects of 'black consciousness' in Jamaica (including calling himself 'Joshua') but in the last analysis even reggae, religious and racial mystification were unable to make good rising working class discord.

Behind the tough exterior, reggae has a party political soft core. During Manley's premiership proceeds from reggae musicians performing at these politically inspired concerts went towards social work and job creation schemes. In fact the politics of reggae has for a long time been taken up with the management of the unemployed — and its special message for the unemployed has always been to 'simmer down' (the title of Marley's first record — a tranquiliser for Kingston's rude boys).

Without seriously affecting reggae's doctrinal credibility, Jamaican fault finding has on the whole been far more of an open secret than on the UK scene. There is in Jamaica an organised interface between unemployment and political gangsterisms (prior to the election in 1980 as many as 700 people, the majority of them poor were killed by armed gangs of JLP —) Jamaican Labour party — and the PNP) which provides a platform from which reggae musicians without losing face can call for peace.

In contrast the experience of unemployment in Britain is altogether far more social and let's hope it stays that way. Black Uhuru appalled at the speed youth in Eglinton (Canada) Utica Avenue (New York) and Kingston (Jamaica) reach for the holster are compelled to recognise Brixton youth 'leave their 45 Smith and Wesson pistol'. For the present the absence of guns and gun toting political partisanship on the streets of Britain means it is less easy to manipulate violence and social questions can come more out into the open. Enough finally to make nonsense of Black Uhuru's concluding line: all the .ds want to do is 'go to school'!!! Besides the unique varieties



One Love Peace Concert Spring '78. Bob Marley with the Jamaican PM and leader of the Peoples National Party, Michael Manley and the future PM and leader of the Jamaican Labour Party, Edward Seaga.

of social breakthrough now being chanced in Britain such lyrics fade into sermonizing nothing — and what remains is the unsatisfying aesthetic of the music qua music.

## A ROCKING BLACK ECONOMY: A MODICUM OF RESPECTABILITY

Like no other phase of rock music, new wave drew on the experience of unemployment and a refusal to even contemplate doing the few wretched badly paid jobs still available. Within days it was known as 'dole queue rock' providing a shop-window on unemployment. It spot-lighted in particular unemployed school leavers giving them a measure of incorporation into the circus not achievable to older often chronically unemployed and unemployable people who had 'settled in' to a lifetime on the dole. Being unemployed and a musician represented, between signing on, a sort of vagrant populism awaiting valorization into a gob soaked star.

When new wave broke it was in government circles beginning to sink in that mass unemployment was here to stay. Means had in the long term to be found to alleviate the stigma of unemployment. But with the Tories election victory in the short term, the unemployed were to be harrassed and made a scapegoat for all of society's ills.

Choosing to stir things up like this meant the Tories were unable to apply the lessons that could be learn from this free-lance experimental sound lab into how best to manage the unemployed. Even so the odd shoestring recording studio can now be found at the back of youth clubs. And social workers any day are a more durable creation of capitalism than Thatcherism.

Monetarists in the UK had no stated artistic preferences but they were bound to doubly dislike new wave because of



its past association with the black economy. Records were being pressed and financed from out of the black economy even if signing on and doing the bizo in the seediest job imaginable on the side, was an exaggerated creation of punk mythology. Unemployed punks constantly ran the risk of being bust by the fraud squads at gigs. There was one particularly mad example when a group was bust playing at the local labour exchange Xmas hop.

Up to approximately this point the Labour Party and the Trade union apparatus had despised the black economy regarding it as a cesspool for scabs. Now they had cause to change their mind. Bad taste aside the ideology of punk could with few exceptions be fitted into a leftist framework and with every RAR (Rock against Racism) carnival and gig, new wave gained in respectability. This unprecedented contact with a mass 'socially conscious' art was a vital stepping stone in trade union tolerance of the black economy — or shadow economy as it was politely rechristened.

Having to stretch a point or two does not mean the TU apparatus and Labour party dominated local State in the major towns and cities are prepared to let the black economy run riot. But they would like to keep it in political reserve by progressively linking it up with subsidised community-based industries, co-ops and training initiatives geared to solving local unemployment. They hope against hope all will become eventually self-supporting — perhaps on the day the TUC 'Programme for Recovery' is implemented and begins to take effect.

This eventual objective is not intrinsically alien to the present Tory government. The focal point of the bitter wrangling is the amount of government expenditure needed to save capitalism. In fact the Tories have granted to the black economy a de facto legality if it can be shown a person is drawing benefit for as long as it takes to get a viable business off the ground. Self help must be paid for and a pop group that makes it from the dole queues to needing the services of an accountant is part of that mould.

## 'YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LUCKY YOU ARE — BACK IN THE USSR'

State regulation of the conditions of small business is a product of centralised management which has grown immeasurably since World War II. But it is still a far cry from the economic and ideological constraints that the State Capitalist regimes of the East bring to bear on the activities of small-scale business.

The Eastern bloc has not so far effectively co-opted rock music, unemployment and the refusal to work with anything like the West's success (though the refusal to work in its essence can never be recuperated). There it is a much more explosive combination where riots at rock concerts, unless dealt with promptly can easily spill over into a more general rebellion (e.g. East Berlin 1978). Moreover pop groups don't possess the economic and ideological freedoms their counterparts take for granted in the west. Short of a major shake up it is virtually impossible for rebel musicians to double-deal the proletariat by flaunting, as they take their leave of it, all the insulting trappings of success.

## WHEN THE MUSICAL MODE OF PRODUCTION CHANGES.....?

A thorough going critique of music, one that doesn't skirt around the difficulties is hard to get going. To dismiss everything that has happened since the mid 50's as the diabolical work of musical conglomerates out to ensnare the proletariat just won't do. Rock music has possessed from the mid 50's onwards a mass following which no other art form has ever achieved. Yet rock is inescapably caught up in capitalism's heady distancing mirror system of representation and contradiction which its largely proletarian audience reacts to in a relevant manner.

But so far there have been few attempts to analyse rock music as a specific branch of capitalist production. The music and the rock artists have hogged the limelight while managers,

record producers, recording engineers, financiers have gone about their business unobserved.

The few existing examples are at best ambivalent and ruined by a failure to hit hard. Charlie Gillett in his book on Atlantic records rightly says the 'book is about songs and money' but he then goes on to pussy foot around praising Atlantic as a 'record company with character — not a faceless corporation' extending even into Atlantic's New York office which is 'lively and efficient — compared to any other bureaucratic office I had ever seen'.

Perhaps this is what is meant by the 'soulful corporation'? Gillett's book can quite legitimately be read as a plea addressed to other music corporations like RCA, Capitol, EMI etc. imploring them to mend their ways. There is not one even tell-tale hint in 'Making Tracks' that musical companies with the rest of capitalism must be abolished.

## MUSIC'S SUPERCESSION.....

More than any other art form music gives off a sense of life bringing into play, sex, love and body rhythms. To even contemplate severing Hendrix — that music equal of Charlie Parker — from currents tearing America apart in the late 60's is unthinkable.

Musical venues rarely provide a cathartic release of energy and when the clubs close the real business of the evening commences where the music has left off. Beside what happened *outside* the Dalston discos in May/June '81 and the club 200 in Balham in July '81, the notorious gig by the 4 Skins at the Hamborough Tavern is a nasty irrelevance.

In the first of a series of urban riots to hit Britain, the Carnival riots of '76/'77, frustrated expectations of fulfillment and the provocative presence of the police contrived to produce an explosion. They made as great an impact on the 'black community' as on 'white society' because it was at once apparent to many people that West Indian youth born in this country despised the traditional Trinidadian merry go round in the streets of Notting Hill. Appeals from the organisers to stop 'wrecking carnival' went unheeded and crestfallen steel band floats and nerve shattering sound systems called it a day and went home sorry they were prevented from playing through to the early hours as they had done on previous years.

Unlike the police and the plate glass shop windows there was never any question of the music machine being directly in the line of fire (tho' rumour has it, on occasion it nearly was). But for the bands and owners of sound systems the gnawing realisation they had been unceremoniously pushed aside was hard to stomach. Even if it was still pitched at a pretty low level, they had been made the object of a critique that almost by default included music.

There is an even chance that at least some of the young blacks taking part in the Carnival riots also belonged to mobile sound systems. Some use it as a means of topping up dole payments and often are remarkably unassuming people. Though they are involved in music the artistic ego is not for them having acquired a take it or leave it attitude to music.

This casualness is amongst other things a product of technical factors relating to the increased mechanisation of music eroding the status of manual dexterity on an instrument.

Co-incidentally the greatest impetus to this development has come through the evolution of reggae in Jamaica where the part played by electronic processes in the recording studio has pushed live performances more into the background. Dub grew from the mobile discos and sound systems. King Tubby, one of the first innovators, was originally by trade an electrical engineer. Shot through with massive voltages of reverb and echo, the essentials of bass, drum, keyboard and vocals were dropped in and out of the mix in random sequence. Small wonder then that black kids in the UK lean more towards sound systems than to becoming themselves performing artists. In contradictory ways they are already leaving behind the concept of the artistic individual.

There are now so many inter-related technical and subjective factors pressing towards the supercession of

the musician and the music industry. The making of music is becoming available to all. And for many years, like few other 'folk' traditions, rock has reserved a special place for the 3 chord wizard. But the 'cult of genius' and sales combining as never before, lifted the chosen few to a higher, much more well off plane, where they alone were the music masters.

It was an inevitable sequel to the gross capitalisation of music involving something approaching a signing away of common property rights. This conveyancing was made possible through the connivance of professional musicians set on making a superlative career out of music. Professional musicians who in no time at all like to regard themselves as such goddamn important people with special privileges, already are the targets of derisive comments but it still needs to be made much more explicit. For the moment the pro's main line of defense is to pull the populist wool, something all professionals do once their role is in jeopardy. Hence a critique of music is organically connected to recovering other functions which capitalism has withheld from the proletariat. There must be a huge demolition job on music. Only when the planet is rid of commodities will music cease to fall well short of our desires but then can we be sure it will be called music? Until that beautiful dawn down with musicians! And while we are at it, down with all art and artists. It has been said before but its comeback is long overdue.



Race not class. A typical ANL (Anti Nazi League) Tableau from 1978. A liberal campaign for liberal minded professionals, the ANL was set up in 1977 by a detestably middle class crew after the success of the National Front in the GLC elections. The founding statement was drawn up by Ernie Roberts, ex-CND campaigner and former assistant Gen. Sec. of the AUEW, Peter Hain then a Post Office Workers Union research officer, and organiser of 'Stop the '70 tour' opposing the South African cricket tour and Paul Holborrow, former teacher, freelance journalist and member of the SWP. Taking it to the limit even one time could not be more alien to this lot. A year earlier RAR (Rock Against Racism) had set up shop in response to David Bowie's camp fascism and Eric Clapton's bad mouthing of black musicians. RAR was founded by Larry Lensman a designer (NB) and the two organisations started to work hand in hand as finger wagging anti fascist but not anti capitalist musical tents were pitched next to the likes of Brian Clough (the real manager of the NF — Notts Forest) and Arthur Scargill. The flogging of anti fascism — the badges, the posters, the instantly recognisable ANL lollipop with the red arrow symbol deeply affected more TUC backed campaigns (like the 'People's March for Jobs').



# Crime And Punishment

*'Modern prisoners are imperfectable since they are perfect. There is nothing left to do but to destroy them'. Victor Serge: 'Men in Prison'. (1914)*

## IN THE SLAMMER AND THE KEYS THROWN AWAY

The sum total of those arrested and imprisoned at the end of the riot week reached over 2,500. Initially they were going to be accommodated in overflow army camps like Rolleston which had been used to house prisoners during the recent prison officers pay dispute. Though not exactly 'veritable concentration camps' as Tass (July 14th '81) would have it, if the prison officers had still been in dispute the camps would have been run by the army. The Act (The Imprisonment Temporary Provisions Act) was passed 12 months before in 1980. It looks suspiciously like a step in the direction of a military State even though prison officers disputes are likely in future to break out once more. In December 1981 for example the screws because of overcrowding refused to take any more short term prisoners sentenced by the courts. Pressure had softened up the hard boiled screws who casting about decided the arguments of the formerly hated prison reformers best suited their 'industrial' action. However the quality of this mercy is measured in droplets ready as the screws are to send prisoners to army camps to serve their porridge.

## WHITELAW, THE BEAKS AND MOB RULE

As was only to be expected pressure on the Tory Government to introduce special riot packages during and after riot week was particularly intense. They had after all been elected on a law n' order ticket. However the Home Secretary, Willie Whitelaw had been forwarned many weeks prior to the rioting that the prisons were fit to bust and that a further influx of short term prisoners could prove catastrophic. Even before the first stone was thrown, Whitelaw had got ready the 'overflow' army camps which he then proceeded to pass off as the Tory Government's response to the clamour coming mainly from the media for new measures to deal with the rioting.

There was much talk for instance of reviving the Riot Act which had been on the Statute book ever since the days of the rampaging London mobs in the 17th century and repealed, incredibly, only in 1967. Under the terms of this Act anyone arrested on the scene of a riot was presumed guilty and access to a jury denied automatically. Tories with ministerial posts have for the moment backed away in haste from introducing such draconian measures but this should not blind us to the existence of powerful ministerial currents favouring increased sentencing powers for magistrates (responsibility for administering the Riot Act was left mainly to magistrates) and squashing the right to opt for trial by jury in a higher court for a whole number of offences.\* It might be said of Thatcherite Toryism that reform and the blackest judicial reaction chop and change repeatedly in the same pickled brain cells.

However even for Thatcherism, pragmatic considerations have had their sway. Solely because of conditions in UK prisons, Whitelaw alone had to perform a penal 'U' turn even for short term prisoners who had served one third of their sentences. The plan was thwarted by Judges and magistrates who warned Whitelaw they would increase sentences to compensate if ever the proposals because law.

\*Note: Since this was written a modified Riot Act of sorts has been proposed by the Law Commission. The three new statutory offences of riot, affray and unlawful association can be bent for as much as it takes to get a conviction. For example if three people should heartily agree on the need for determined resistance to some injustice and attempt to convince others they could wind up doing five years. These proposals are not as arbitrary as the original Riot Act but they're getting warmer.

Faced with the might of the judiciary, Whitelaw's retreat back to square one only served to underpin the instantly recognisable 'independence' of the British judiciary which is altogether such an anomalous feature of the legal system in the UK.

The ease with which individuals can end up in stir in Britain is for many a person living in the UK a continual nightmare. Hence features on prison life put together by liberal minded prison reformers are read and watched by masses of people with a fascinated horror. (e.g. The BBC TV documentary inside Manchester's Strangeways nick regularly drew audiences of 8 million. The programme obviously did not call for any unconditional, revolutionary demand for the abolition of prisons). Add to the scales the fact that Britain has a prison population in excess of any European country and one must be face to face with the most notorious example in modern bourgeois democracy of judicial insularity, pigheaded obstinacy and ignorance.

In truth the Tories promise of stern measures to deal with the rioters was all piss in the wind. That was left to the care of the judiciary holed-up in their jealously guarded territory which is as the Tories would have wanted it originally, as they were set on restoring a hypothetical 'civil'/'political' division associated with laissez faire capitalism. It is the greatest irony of Tory rule that they have been steam rolled into attempting to wring changes out of a sector of society they revered among the most.

The sentences meted out are frightened. 8 years here, 5 years there and just for trashing or torching with molotovs. Truly if the 'Angry Brigade' — despite their terrorist illusions — had been active in the 80's they'd have got 50 years each. Those that have been consigned to the slammer have received little publicity apart from snippets in the more 'concerned' newspapers.

A high proportion of the rioters coming up in court were unemployed thus doubling their chances in any case of jaundicing, prima facie, magistrates and judges. It is commonplace now to link the work ethic to the rise of industrial capitalism but the relentless persecution of the workless especially among the judiciary has far older roots in Britain.

Marx devoted a chapter in 'Capital' entitled 'Bloody legislation against the expropriated' which still makes harrowing reading. In it he describes how from Tudor times beggars expropriated from any means of subsistence were branded, striped, lashed and imprisoned. The backdrop to this torture was the genesis of ground rent in the countryside. Various statutes belonging to a recognisably capitalist legal system set out in grisly detail what the local judiciary was empowered to cut. It would be silly to suggest that statutes passed in 1530 had a direct bearing on vengeful judges sitting in session during the summer of '81. But equally habits die hard (especially in long lived institutions like the British judiciary) and the judicial frame of mind lingers on. Any explanation of the atrocious prison sentences must, in part at least, be traced back far into the venerable past. To the day the first ear was chopped off to be exact.

In modern day Britain workers in comparison possess a far greater immunity from prosecution and haywire rulings affecting powerful groups of workers (Denning and co.) tend to be over-ruled double quick in more realistic courts of appeal (usually the House of Lords.)

The bourgeoisie have been scared shitless of introducing legislation to curb industrial disputes (e.g. the Heath's govern-

ment ill fated 'Industrial Relations Act') ever since the traumatic weekend in July '72 when five dockers were bundled off to Pentonville nick. On the Monday morning, following a breathless example of 'judicial' fiat they were released under a legal loophole. We might be wrong in accrediting this piece of legal pie in the sky to an attempt to storm Pentonville prison and a wild cat general strike beginning to sweep like a prairie fire through the UK.

Even though the unemployed cannot use the industrial weapons of strikes and occupations of plants more could have been done to save arrested rioters from the wrath of the judiciary. In order to publicise the plight of those imprisoned and awaiting trial public buildings could have been occupied. But no inner city neighbourhood assembly with some degree of permanence arose from the ashes and any proposals along these lines were hemmed in by lack of a public forum. When for instance in a very different setting striking workers at the Ascon company in Vigo (c.f. 'The Poverty of Unionism' in *Wildcat Spain Encounters Democracy*) rioted, trashed banks, stores, torched cars, built barricades etc, they did so under the cover of an assembly led strike where in spite of manipulation by the strike committee and unions, the shortcomings and successes of the actions undertaken were openly discussed.

When a society is ravaged by recurrent crises like Britain, the judiciary and penal system will be among the first of the State's guardians to feel the strains. That is why to defer to tradition and hope for the best as Whitelaw did when confronting the judiciary is unhistorical. They are a different breed from what they were in the 19th century because the underlying situation has dramatically worsened and Britain is likely over the coming years to be faced with a revolutionary upheaval.

Once this happens, the law loses its pretence to equity (necessary for its continued legitimation) and becomes increasingly arbitrary. Violent hiccups appear within the normal framework of bourgeois judicial rule. Combined with a growing police licence (even to kill and be excused on the grounds of 'justifiable force' in the case of the school teacher Blair Peach not to mention the much publicised dubious deaths of Jimmy Kelly, Liddle Towers, Barry Prosser and others while in custody) the system of 'civil liberties' once the proud boast of the British ruling class and which many political refugees like Anarchist Johann Most to his cost, took for granted is now lurching crazily sideways.

Though the punishments handed out to the rioters were exemplary and constitute a break with the traditions of 'fair play' normally deferred to by the British legal system they still form a continuum with the system. British law is notoriously based on precedent having the demeanour of a higher political power able to undermine statute law passed in Parliament if it should offend the judiciary's anachronistic code of right and wrong. The recent Law Lords ruling abolishing London's cheap fares policy dusted off as legal justification a quaint 19th century law requiring public transit systems to pay their way as part of their 'fiduciary duty'. In the rest of the world it is accepted all major city transit systems run at a loss.

There have of course traditionally been safeguards in its procedures simply as law, to check that the inherent wilfulness of British law does not get out of hand (special judges conferences for examples where notes are compared). Failing that in the case of sentencing 'aberrations', the Lord Chief Justice might have responded, as on other occasions, to declarations of conscience smitten outrage, provided they came from respected pillars of the establishment. But none of it was brought into play over the sentencing of rioters. It marks a watershed in law as practised in the UK and a sickening foretaste of things to come. Behind the robes, whigs, baronial manners and legal pedanticism of this idiosyncratic lot of geriatric bigots, eccentric mystics, and truncheon fetishists a weakness for sadism has finally slipped the leash.

## THE PEOPLE'S DISPENSARIES FOR SICK JUSTICE

There are plenty of countervailing forces around trying their level best to check that the Big J(ustice) doesn't run

amock. The bottom rung, if you like of the alternating judicial ladder tho' it includes influential bodies like the Parliamentary All Party Penal Affairs Group. Actually a report by this group (*Young Offenders — A Strategy for the Future*) was published, on the dot (July 7th 1981) during riot week. The report called for a reversal of the trend towards locking up more and more 'young offenders'.

The report's appearance was at the time all but drowned beneath disciplinarian howls of outrage but it isn't true either to say the gates were flung wide to an absent welcome. The same can be said of similar groups (e.g. The Howard Group for Penal Reform). Briefly their main aims are reform of the legal system, community policing and continuing to preach the gospel of non-custodial sentences, in order to reduce the prison population. It is all done with an eye to circumventing 'random law enforcement' before it is too late.

Fortunately the normally deceptive radicality of their congruent statements was shown up by events to be quite explicitly not revolutionary. A case in point. The General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties, Patricia Hewitt, was moved to write to *The Times* (July 16th 1981) condemning just about every injustice in sight — C.S. gas, mass screening of the population in N. Ireland, rubber bullets, water cannon, riot acts, curfews. But trouble in the streets for once made it clear which side of the fence the NCCL was on. 'It is appalling' the Gen. Sec. of the NCCL wrote, 'that police officers should now be facing petrol bombs'.

The illusions of these pressure groups flow from their conception of law as inherently able to 'fairly' manage profound social crises'. A national body of lawyers, the Legal Action Group, condemned for instance proposals to introduce a new riot act. A new riot act it said would 'have serious implications for the criminal justice system which needs to be more not less fair at times of political and social unrest—'.

All historical experience points way to the contrary and what happened in the courts recently in Britain ain't no mis-carriage of justice. 'Fairness' is the property of stable bourgeois regimes because there comes a point when class conflict reaches a point of no return and the bourgeoisie is left to restore the rule of capital with every means at its disposal. At these moments getting the consent of the proletariat is an unpayable for luxury.

The ultra legalistic statements (re — the above), that radical lawyers have a tendency to come out with are historically blind for other reasons. Radical lawyers are a product of the tensions between the two basic classes of society. Depending on the degree to which the neutrality of law is accepted as common currency they stand or fall. They stand between the two main classes having a firm anchor in neither. Their concept of the law as neutral to some degree, must inhibit genuinely revolutionary class struggle. The judicial apparatus is after all a State apparatus. To insist on the increased vigilance of the law ('more fair not less fair') is merely a way of sensitising the State, not a prelude to its abolition. When laws are broken en masse and authority openly defied in every nook and cranny, the State is disintegrating. When it gets to this stage law is pushed to the brink of annihilation, being replaced with the developing momentum of proletarian social justice. Caught in the crossfire the radical lawyers are only likely to dither, raising an ineffectual finger of rebuke at the excesses of contending sides as they become daily more tragic figures.

There was one outstanding example of this in the days following the Brixton riot in April 1981. Several papers mentioned that Rudi Narayan, the black lawyer who had helped defend the Bristol rioters was given a rough reception in Brixton when he attempted to capitalise on the events there. According to the Anarchist twice-yearly 'eXtra' the Brixton Defence Committee dropped the demand for a general amnesty of all arrested and fearing trouble, called off a demonstration. Narayan never once made it clear in public whether he was opposed to the proposals or not. The law was, it seems, the law. The severity of the law against blacks helped make Narayan. The severity of their response is exposing him for what he is.



By definition, no police force is ever socially neutral: all that can be altered is political allegiances. The Tory Party has traditionally been the party of law 'n' order and long before the election of '79 they made certain the police were with them promising to improve wages and fringe benefits and to increase the numbers of police. However it wasn't merely a campaign of economic inducements. The Tories undertook to back the police to the hilt reinforcing the simple-minded bigotry and prejudices of the force by promising greater immunity from criticism. (However, police unilateralism is by no means party political; it has been growing 'unchecked' for years.)

The Labour left wants to reverse the tide while the Tories are hell-bent on leaving the centralised apparatus of repression alone while dismantling as far as possible centralised economic control. But both parties are in their differing ways for a centralised State as is their 'new' offspring the Social Democrat/Liberal alliance. The Labour left intends to nationalise (i.e. centralise) all leading industries and banks while devolving as much as possible the task of political legitimisation which includes the issue of community policing.

At the moment, the Tories are wilfully ignoring these indispensable safeguards. If properly handled they might save Britain from social revolution. By pigheadedly trampling them underfoot the Tories are reaping a whirlwind.

The Labour Lefts are out to undermine the power of the regional Chief Constable and the Police Commissioner in London, seeking to veto the ultimate accountability to the Home Secretary which reduce the locally elected police committees to an empty charade. Wow! Heaven must be within our grasp to dare such things.

Just after Brixton, Ted Knight, the 'notorious' leader of London's Lambeth Council in April '81 said that he wanted to see the entire Metropolitan force disbanded and 'replaced with an organisation answerable to the working people'. Sounds radical, don't it just!

Labour politicians in the UK have a history of revolutionary statements made on great proletarian occasions. Ramsey McDonald called for the setting up of Soldiers and Workers Councils in the wake of the Russian Revolution. Red Ted's statement is of the same order. It is a tongue-in-cheek response to a popular mood. If Red Ted was at all logical he should also call for the 'disbanding' of the local State. As the highly placed boss of Lambeth Council, he is unlikely to do this. In fact he, alongside all other Labour Councillors is struggling to *extend* the local State against the unprecedented onslaught of centralised government.

His comments on the police must be judged in this light. What he wants to see is the restoration of 'civil' hegemony in policing matters exercised through a liquorice assortment of various committees. As he has his own 'leftwing' axe to grind these must include shop stewards committees, local union branches, works councils etc. — in short, workerist bodies which get in the way of the proletariat abolishing itself as a class.

Shifty characters like Ted Knight won't flinch from using rioters as cannon fodder to achieve their ends. Lady Smiley did just that in Liverpool on the day before the detestable Royal Wedding.

This life peer with the unfortunate title of Lady Simey of Toxteth seemed about to gamble her job as Chair of the Merseyside Police Committee on a fire risk. People in Toxteth she said, 'ought to riot' and sure enough, police sources reported a 'large-scale disturbance' within hours of her statement.

It was the desperate act of a bourgeois democrat, not a specimen sample of an eminent Lady about to chuck it all in. She made plain in an interview that she was 'worried about policing methods but I can't take the matter up with our Chief Constable. *This is the flaw in our society*' (our italics).

Much has happened since Lady Simey made this statement. The Scarman report came and went but his recommendations did have some effect. Statutory control by police committees

has been thrown out but increased consultation and a variant of community policing is now the name of the game. Shortly after Xmas '81, foot patrols were back on the beat in Toxteth and the first to enter the district since the summer of 1981.

So Lady Simey has after all got something of what she wanted. But her gain has been, in the eyes of the people of Toxteth especially, loss of notoriety for her, because it is an open secret she has fought a behind-the-scenes campaign to protect Chief Cop, Ken Oxford. As a member of the police authority said, 'She could have had his head on a platter. She has actually tried to keep him on. She didn't want the mob to think they could get a reward like that for rioting.'

Disband the Special Patrol Group? There has been no end of demands for just that, especially since 'Operation Swamp' in April '81 has been much publicised as the final straw that lit the camel in Brixton. But what's to stop these elite police thug brigades from merely pretending to shut up shop? A lot of police work is after all cloaked in impenetrable secrecy. Moreover if the Labour Party once in power cannot check the rioting it's unlikely Police Chiefs will consult the brothers and sisters before going in for the kill and 'please, comrade chairperson, may we be allowed to gas them'.

This type of aforementioned rhetoric is a preparatory noise. The louder the noise the more any incoming Labour Government (if there's ever to be another) will feel it incumbent to alter the Police Act of 1964 creating (who knows?) in its stead a more overtly party political police.

Sketches as to what form this could take have been drawn up by the fledgling GLC Police Committee chaired (typically) by Paul Boeteng, a middle-class, black barrister. Boeteng, in addition to monitoring police behaviour, has other empty-headed political ambitions. Like his arch rival and comrade in arms Rudi Narayan (who, attempting to parachute in over the heads of the Brixton rioters, got a fully deserved mauling) he thirsts to be a black Labour MP.

As against the near fascist proposals of Manchester's Chief Cop, Anderton, these bureaucrats look more towards the liberal, sociologically loved example of John Alderson, Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall. Alderson is retiring to take up a Cambridge fellowship but that may only be temporary. His ideas have received enormous publicity and Alderson and Scarman regularly pat each other on the back. Cornwall's top copper is firm-set on conjuring from the upturned policeman's helmet an illusion of poetically liberal bucolic gentility which appears to carry such authoritative weight in Britain. When he got protestors to peacefully quit the proposed site of a nuclear power station in his constituency he did so with all the charm of a country gentleman dressed in checks and tweed shooting hat, a model of propriety and politeness. At the same time Alderson lets it be known that he was brought up amongst Yorkshire miners and fancying himself (!) much influenced by their egalitarianism. If this 'revolt' emphasising locality against the growing centralisation of the police force (reduced in geographic area from 117 to 43 between 1969-74) is even temporarily to succeed it will need to muster more than a tradition bound deference, even in policing matters, to a small is beautiful village bobby ideology.

As for the TUC they are pressing for more coloured coppers. Significantly at the same time, they are also demanding more coloured teachers for inner city areas.

The greatest challenge for the philosophers of community policing (the Devon and Cornwall constabulary actually does employ philosophers) is stemming the drift into random law enforcement which rapidly escalates into widespread uncooperative hostility to the police. By putting coppers back on the beat intent on getting to know 'their' manor, they help roll back a process which changes a mugger into an unapologetic social being. Community Police, by being selective in their approach isolate the mugger or burglar lessening in this way the chances of a generalised explosion brought on by indiscriminate policing. With the escape route to transcendence cut off more effectively either a mugger (say) reforms or stays a mugger caught up in an escalating spiral of crime and violence in between lengthening spells in the nick.

The fate of revolutionaries vis a vis community policing is



Alderson's country swamp operation?

pertinent to the above scenario. The support community policing receives from social workers, community workers, radical lawyers and guardians of civil liberties etc, also isolates genuinely revolutionary critiques against which they then pit the combined strength of their dislike.

This is not as far fetched as it sounds. The headlining John Alderson to loud acclaim has made a show of weeding out Special Branch files in his constituency. Files on anti-blood sports campaigns, anti-apartheid activists and political undesirables who were seen having a jar with Benn have been thrown into the dustbin. An intelligent move because what's left behind is a hardcore of files certain to include the names of more consistent enemies of the State and capitalism. Not only is the State educated as to who its real enemies are but veering off to take down the names and details of anyone caught raising a finger is stopped.

On present form the Special Branch is trawling its nets so wide and deep that only a few sprats are lucky enough to escape. But screening the population like this also tends to be much more trouble than it's worth, devaluing its importance as a policing technique and creating amongst the people at large a healthy antipathy to the police.

One further point. The subliminal effect of community policing is to internalise the violence engendered by capitalist social relations. Allowing little scope for real expression violence turns psychotic. In sum community policing makes social despair more unpalatable by allowing flowers to adorn intolerable prisons. Do your nice local copper a favour please. BEAT YOURSELF UP.

## HANDSWORTH

Handsworth, Birmingham, with a large black and Asian population is the one spot where community policing has so far made the most strides. During the early '70s the cop shop regularly came under siege and if it hadn't been for the pioneering hip pacification treatment the explosion would have equalled Liverpool. Chief Cop David Webb, like Alderson, is now quitting the force in utter disillusionment with its cod-eyed outlook, to become hopefully the local MP (most likely Liberal/SDP). On the day Toxteth erupted a festival was held in Handsworth attended by 8,000 people. According to *The Times* reporter (July 1st '81): 'The spirit was as amiable and peaceful as a village fete'. It was jointly sponsored by police

and community groups and the chairman was none other than the superintendent of the local nick. Programmed 'roots' festivals are part of the conciliatory baggage inseparable from the soft cop approach and many locals and reggae musicians boycotted the Handsworth festival. Yet five days later, Handsworth blew and the police station came under siege. Though the kids yelled for the head of David Webb, the outbreak lacked the ferocity of either Toxteth or Moss Side.

Community policing is now the in thing to advocate. A glib panacea for all our troubles in all probability, it will only be a marginal addition to strong arm methods. Once rioting starts up community policing is of no avail. Six months after the first bout of rioting, European style riot squads, equipped with CS gas and plastic bullets and estimated at 11,000 strong evolved out of the police support units set up originally to deal with civil defence in time of war. No matter how much they might borrow from America's experience and Mitterand's reform in France, only when things have calmed down will the paraplegic Dixon of Dock Green scarecrow be wheeled out once more.

## TORTURE AND SAND CASTLES

Even a strained combination of the two is possible if the appointment of Sir Kenneth Newman to the post of Commissioner of the Metropolitan police in London is anything to go by. This difficult to swallow cocktail was first mixed in Northern Ireland when Newman as Head of the Royal Ulster Constabulary from 1976 to 1980 reorganised the force into the best equipped, most sophisticated police force in Britain. During this time he presided over the notorious Castlereagh interrogation center where terrorist suspects were tortured. For light relief in between these scenes of medieval barbarity, 'Blue Lamp'(!) discos were also organised attended by tens of thousands of Catholic and Protestant kids, and hand-picked coppers especially trained in social work took slum children away on outings to the seaside . . .

It is finally being rammed home the extent to which N. Ireland has been a training ground. Newman admitted as much when he first took over the job as head of the RUC: 'I did have it very much in mind that British police forces might well be faced with similar problems in the years ahead.' Newman has conveniently reduced the problem to one of policing minorities and he has obviously not got the size of the class





Hastily got up riot gear? Spring '80. This photograph appeared in *The Times* next to an article on the number of police held down by the Hadfield picket in Sheffield during the steel strike.

question in Britain. He was appalled that the RUC could do nothing to police the Ulster Workers strike of 1974 and the lessons he learnt in N. Ireland may turn out to be damn all use. Still tactics developed in Northern Ireland were deployed in the first major incident of 1982 in Notting Hill Gate London. It looked for a brief ten minutes as if the police had withdrawn killing the momentary rush of blood with boredom. Then in they came — the heavy mob — the first real engagement of the 'immediate response units' modelled on similar units in N. Ireland. Within minutes it was all over bar the cleaning up.

However, the authorities weren't suddenly in the summer of 1981 prepared to throw away the last remaining distinctly British approaches to policing. Assistant Commissioner, Pat Kavanagh (*New Standard*, July 20, '81) said: 'It is the public and the press who have been ahead of us in demanding things like water cannon and better shields' and McNee, the then London Police Commissioner declared he was opposed to a French-style riot police. It was left, perhaps inevitably to Jim Jardine, chairman of the Police Federation (the coppers' union) to get really heavy, sinking £30,000 in an advertising campaign calling for the restoration of capital punishment. However with the exception of the police murder of David Mower in Liverpool, run over repeatedly by a landrover both sides tacitly drew the line at killing. It was fit and right to bash each other's skulls in and set coppers alight. But when it came to actually killing each other, a deep-rooted 'civic' respect for human life was intangibly present in the fiery street air.

#### LAUGHING POLICEMEN?

During riot week the police force was stretched to breaking



Hastily got up riot gear? Riot week July '81.

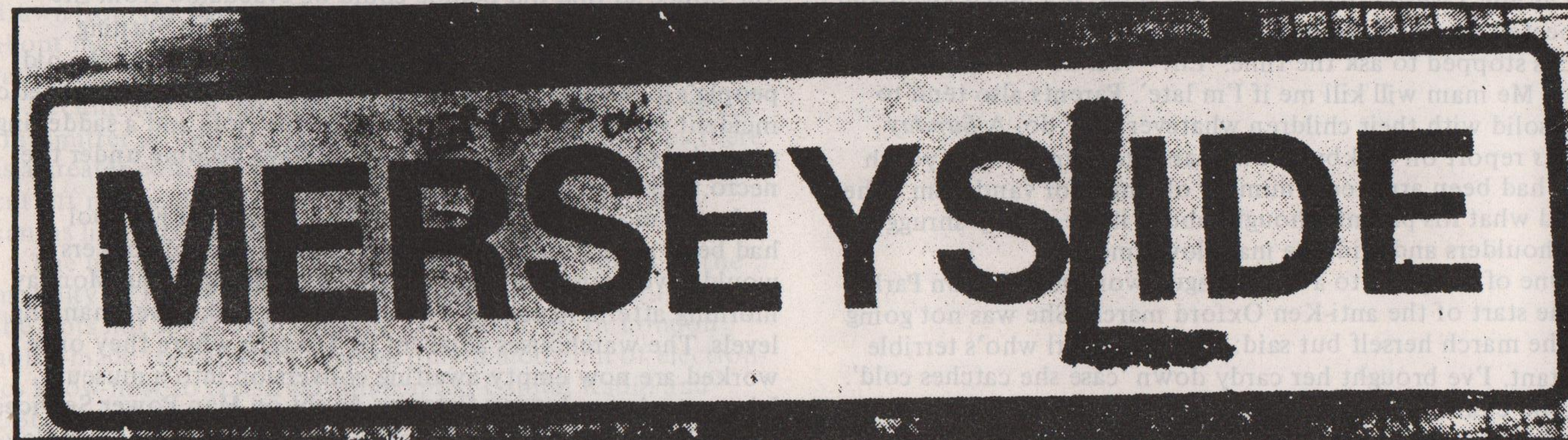
point. On the first night of rioting in Moss Side, Manchester's Chief Cop didn't favour, as he claimed, the cool approach. He literally didn't have enough police to deal with the rioters because many had been called away to the battle for Liverpool. Sir Robert Mark had to admit, 'in all but the biggest forces some hours will inevitably elapse before a reserve force can be concentrated to deal with an unforeseen emergency' (*The Observer*, July 12th, '81).

Although the riot movement spent itself within ten days, at the end of that time the police were knackered. Constantly on duty or on immediate recall, many collapsed in tears with the strain, some even falling asleep on their riot shields. As a factor contributing to yet further demoralisation this will in future have to be born in mind. It is for instance already claimed that police turnover in the UK on account of crack up is higher than in any other profession. Why? Surely it's because they're constantly deployed against demonstrations, mass pickets and flying pickets and this deeply troubles those cops who still have some shreds of humanity left. In fact during the riots, strains within the force were beginning to show. On the one hand carpet slippers and Chief Constables safely tucked away in their plush bunkers, on the other, the ordinary copper dead on his feet, the target of endless flack.

To keep up their spirits, the cops in Liverpool joked about this. One cop had finally snapped and taking to his heels had collapsed in a doorway. 'On your feet lad' he heard a voice saying. 'Sorry Sarge' he replied, 'I just couldn't take it any more.' 'You mean Inspector' came the reply. The huddled figure looked up. 'Blimey', he said, 'I didn't know I'd run this far back.'

That beery, red-faced old time British institution the laughing policeman never had to joke like this before.

## The Strangled Embrace



The rioters caused the Pound to fall something only powerful sectors of the working class have succeeded in doing. But there was no instance of rioters *directly* calling on the employed working class to join in, bringing the strike weapon into play. The bridge must somehow be made and employed and unemployed must be prepared to meet each other over a pint of home brew, maybe a box of matches and a cement mixer. Although the riots were more destructive and extensive than those in France in May '68, they lacked the clarity of the French insurgents and when the smoke cleared there were no occupied factories to be seen.

In the nights of rioting, a spontaneous coming together, particularly in the Northern cities was definitely a distinct, if distant possibility. Rioting took place next to industrial complexes in cities like Manchester and Hull. Moss Side isn't that far from the wound down industrial estate of Trafford Park (still amazingly the biggest in Europe) and tactically it might have been better to go there than suggest moving on to loot the Arndale center situated in Manchester's city center.

In Leeds, a fatigued police force could have been pushed back over a mile or so of industrial old bones and planning blight separating the city centre from Chapeltown. However Leeds is the commercial and financial capital of the region, insulated even in the '30s from the surrounding catastrophic levels of unemployment, so it is unlikely the rioters would have met with a ready response. (Incidentally in Chapeltown a sex shop was torched and flaming rubber dollies floated into the warm night air — although it wasn't quite women's lib because many other commodities were coming in for the same treatment.)

In the south the action in towns like High Wycombe and the Medway towns in Kent wasn't really high enough to make any immediate impact on industrial workers. And London is so vast and disparate and so unlike any other English city that comparisons are futile.

#### THE MERSEY BEAT 20 YEARS ON LIVERPOOL 8 — COPPERS 0

If the Old Bill were petrified in London, in Liverpool the scuffers got the hiding of their lives. Friction with the police is not new in Liverpool. Some 20 years ago, it was said the police were more like an army of occupation. It was said that the three worst police forces in Britain were Belfast, Birmingham and Liverpool.

The Scuffers conventionally refer to Liverpool youth as 'the bucks'. This does not necessarily refer to anyone who has a reputation for violence. It means common. In its widest sense it refers to accent, dress and general life style. It is a term of pure class contempt and most likely to be used by people from the upper working class and lower middle from whom most police recruits are drawn. They are the people most anxious to disassociate themselves from those elements in the

working class they see as not respectable. Thus justifies a permanent open season on them.

This applies to young whites but blacks are treated with even greater contempt. Here racism compounds class contempt. Because of the high level of petty crime in Liverpool 8, the police follow the usual pattern and regard all youth as criminal elements and because they regard them as a lower form of life any sort of brutality and harassment is justified. As one kid put it: 'we hate them and they hate us, it's as simple as that'.

Conditions in Liverpool 'the Bermuda triangle of British Capitalism' and the particular nature of the Liverpool police have combined to produce the most intense urban violence on mainland Britain since the 18th century.

Many youths involved in the riots had been involved in mugging anybody from old age pensioners to Liverpool dockers with the Thursday night wages packets in their pockets. There's no point in pretending otherwise. Attacking any business is commendable but unfortunately people living above the row of shops in Lodge Lane were also burnt out. They deserved better than this. However neither in Liverpool or Brixton did people whose places had been burnt down show any animosity to the rioters. They seemed to sense the rioters were merely poking the fire. One member of the Liverpool 8 Defense Committee accused top cop Ken Oxford of incompetence in not have police at hand to prevent 'the buning of our Lodge Lane'. Our feeling is that this person was pretty ashamed of what happened in Lodge Lane but preferring not to grasp the nettle tried to shift the blame.

This negative emphasis was all *The Guardian* could see bemoaning a lack of class consciousness which would have stamped on that paper if it had been fully matured. 'Surveying the scene, counting the costs, the saddest thing is that the victims of much of the destruction were ordinary citizens of the area. Though a couple of chain stores were attacked most of the shops destroyed or looted were owned by local people living on the premises and struggling to make a living. If the riots had had a political character one might have expected a more direct attack on the symbols of capitalism. Capitalism has destroyed the social order in the inner cities but no real class identity has emerged.'

Traditional, smug, self satisfied such is *The Guardian* and contrary to their opinion (which was later corrected by a concerned academic) some of the targets were consciously selected and for good reasons. The Racquets Club was torched because as one black youth said, 'My father used to tell me it was where the judges went to dine after they had sent black people to prison. It is like a hotel for the people who run Liverpool'. An antique furniture warehouse was burnt out owned by Swainback a former Tory councillor who had shown hostility to black youth in the area. One youth questioned by a radio reporter while the riot was in progress said, there was no reason for anyone to be frightened. 'We do not hit



family homes' 'What about the garage on the corner, people work there' - 'Yeah but they don't own the place, it's owned by Shell'.

And Liverpool 8 has a strong and close family structure and as any Liverpudlian knows 'Me Mam' is a much loved and respected figure. A *Daily Star* journalist said a child hurling bricks stopped to ask the time. 'Eh! - I'll have to get home soon. Me mam will kill me if I'm late'. Parents also tend to stay solid with their children whatever they do. A *Sunday Times* report on Kirkby a few years ago mentioned a youth who had been arrested a number of times for vandalism. When asked what his parents thought about it, he simply shrugged his shoulders and said 'me mam loves me'.

One of us spoke to a middle aged woman in Sefton Park at the start of the anti-Ken Oxford march. She was not going on the march herself but said: 'I've got a gerl who's terrible militant. I've brought her cardy down 'case she catches cold'. A good example of family disintegration as feared by the Tories if ever there was one. These comments are not intended as a defense of the family; it is simple the case of Liverpool 8 that the family does not conform to the nice respectable middle class ideals of Jill Knight, Tory MP for Edgbaston who was much moved at the time of the riots to say: 'The family has been derided, debased and weakened by trendy permissiveness but it is the cornerstone on which a nation's strength rests. In a good and loving family a child learns unselfishness responsible and respect for other people's property. He loves his parents, cares about making them proud of him and is strongly deterred from behaviour which will distress or disgrace them'.

Above and beyond all the issues and separations, in Liverpool there's the irrepressible scouse humour which adds real spice to all proletarian revolt there. After the riots a scuffer stopped and searched a kid and found a brick in his pocket. The kid came back . . . 'that's not a brick officer but a deposit to put down on a telly.' Although this joke was born in the Liverpool riot, it rapidly found its way into northern club-land humour and finally wound up as a TV crack on a fairly sentimental Alan Bleasdale TV documentary on Liverpool a few months later. Ripped off from its source, only to improve the image of Bleasdale's hip populism as smart alec playwright.

A MERSEYBEAT SOVIET?

What happened in Liverpool during the early hours on Monday July 4th amounted to the greatest missed opportunity industrial Britain has probably known. The police were clearly losing the battle. The rioters were moving towards the main arteries of communications. (Lime Street, Pierhead, the Mersey Tunnel) used by 1,000's and 1,000's of workers. If the police in terror of their lives hadn't fired CS gas around dawn contact would undoubtedly have been established between the rioters and early morning shift workers. Camaraderie between employed and unemployed is more out in the open in Liverpool than in any other English city and the explosive ingredient of an aroused working class might well have proved near lethal. To then have gone on to loot, even arm in arm, the shopping precinct on the site of the old St John's Market would have been a diversion. With the police utterly beaten and disarmed, the entire city would have lain at their feet. A local 'soviet' unique in the history of soviets might well have materialised. It would have thrown into the public forum in no uncertain manner issues like the break-up of the family, the right of kids and tiny tots to self determination, the refusal and growing irrelevance of work - all issues which were hardly present in the past experience of soviets. Considering the galvanic effect of the riot on the rest of Britain this example could easily have been followed elsewhere. The day this happens (or something like it) revolt is turning into revolution.

During the riots there had been limited examples of working class intervention. The fire brigade in Liverpool refused to intervene 'against the community' and allow their hoses to be used by the police. Like fire brigades elsewhere, they had been stoned by the rioters. It says something for their

class consciousness that local fire brigades refused to become, under intense provocation, an arm of the police force. Also even in the thick of the fiercest rioting on Upper Parliament St rioters talked to ambulancemen and made a truce with the police so that old people could be evacuated from the Princess Park geriatric hospital next door to the burning Racquets Club. (Later it was discovered that some of the old people's lockers had been looted.) This inexcusable and pathetic incident was not in the least typical of the riots and a saddening reminder of just how maimed people have become under the necro weight of capitalist dominated daily life.

In the months prior to July 1981, strikes in Liverpool had been at an unusually low ebb. Still Liverpool dockers would have been returning to working on that glorious Monday morning after a ritualised 24 hours union strike over manning levels. The warehouses adjacent to Toxteth where they once worked are now empty awaiting conversion into a museum, leisure center or luxury flats (no doubt on Man Power Services Commission grants). The majority of dockers are now employed in the container port of Seaforth down the Mersey estuary but they still meet in the stadium in the city centre.

Later in the week, Thatcher had the cheek to foist the blame for the high levels of local unemployment on the Liverpool working class. This lady really is for burning. It wasn't the coolest thing to say and for the second time in a week the Liverpool working class didn't respond in a fitting manner even though they are quite steadfast in their belief that capitalism is running Merseyside into the ground.

'ALL THE PEACE MAKERS TURNED LAW OFFICERS'

On the Monday night social workers finished what CS gas had started the night before. The Merseyside Community Relations Council toured the riot areas in vans with loud-hailers lent by the police asking the crowds to go home. Home to what? At best telly, a spliff, a few cans of ale, at worst to desperation, tranquillisers and endless numbing bed. This mockery of what real community relations could be was no different from the united appeal of Liverpool church leaders. Considering that social work arose out of church relief in exchange for humbling penitence it is hardly surprising. As for the Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, the Rev D. Sheppard, that oh so understanding liberal, ex England cricketer, he would do well to ruminate on the rioters transcendence of cricket outlined in Brixton later in the week when cricket bats looted from sports stores were used to spar with police batons.

STREET FIGHTING MAN.....

The rioters were very well organised. Within the space of a few hours, the rioters became skilled and tactical street fighters inventing techniques as they went along. In Liverpool, they covered the road with oil between barricades which could then be covered with petrol and torched once the police had made a successful assault in the first barricade. At the same time people made petrol bombs in the back of vans as they travelled around the cities. In Nottingham, Inspector Colin Sheppard was moved in awe to say.. 'there was no end to the imagination of the mob used to vent their feelings on the police' (*Daily Telegraph* July 14th 1981) adding, they were 'Nottingham's blackest ever days'.

.....PLUS RADIO AND CB

The use of radio as a guerilla medium has been a new and all but unprecedented speciality of insurrectionary revolts over the last few years - in particular Italy 1977 and Britain 1981. In both countries come the moment of revolt radio broadcasts in Italy and CB intercom in Britain were snapped back into focus. Trouble in the streets halted the drift into merely being exotic, ear-catching supplements to the established news media and run of the mill telephone conversations.

The Mao-Dadaist 'Radio Alice' in Bologna had any number of taped 'subversive' cultural infills combining music, poetry and comment that were used as sandwiching between phone-in

programmes. It is a well known fact more commercial radio stations play top 10 hits during peak hours to harness listeners. But during the Bolognese events the cultural bull-shit (a mixture of commedia dell'arte, cultish 'artistic' parallels drawn from the Russian Revolution and mind blowing illusions about multi-millionaire pop musicians) was laid aside and the radio station used to inform insurgents of police manoeuvres.

Technically CB has more democratic potential. It is also a transmitter as well as a receiver. With radio programmes there is a greater editorial control. A flick of a switch and a caller is cut off mid sentence. And it is never possible to instantly canvas listeners for their opinion on the matter.

The use of CB during the riots must also be linked to the mobility of the rioters. They came in from miles around to the riots hot spots even utilising car hire firms. In London home-made transmitters needing only a modicum of electronics know-how to construct interrupted Capital Radio and LBC with messages like.. 'This is a warning: there's going to be a riot on the Kings Road.' As a spokesman for the Independent Broadcasting Authority said, 'there is absolutely nothing we can do about it.' This development does seem to suggest infinite possibilities. Like jamming broadcasts with material transmitted from the back of moving vans making it doubly difficult for Home Office radio spies to pin them down.

This dismantling of the State monopoly of the airwaves carries its own penalties. Assuming CB does become accessible to everyone what's to stop police and other authorities listening in and becoming as proficient as anyone else in CB jive? As a consequence of the riots and many related incidents the police are now being told to learn the 'language'. This is why CB glossaries and dictionaries are self defeating because 'CB' must constantly be on the move if it is to retain its subversive potential. But always being one step ahead could easily result in the total privatisation of the language. In this event opposite extremes meet because CB was fast becoming anyway a 'safe' one up exchange of unfathomable secret codes. As one enthusiast put it 'If I'm talking to someone on CB and he's using the slang words I don't know he might as well be talking Serbo Croat for the good it will do our conversation' (letter to CB magazine).

To overcome this, close networks of friends who have been told beforehand of changes in handles could become important. On a Warwickshire council estate recently a rent collector had failed time after time to gain admission to households owing back rent. Eventually someone snitched. Rigs had been installed in flats to warn tenants of his approach. Now the rent collector has been equipped with his own CB so he can also pick up any advance warning. Next time he won't be put off by people pretending not to answer the door. But it's possible to get even. By inventing a secret code known only to trusted tenants the rent collector will be thrown off the scent.

Though now legal there are well over ¼ million illegal CB radios in the UK broadcasting on forbidden wave bands. The government has outlawed them claiming they block vital messages which for instance hamper ambulances from functioning properly. This may on occasion have happened but the converse is also true that in the event of an accident, heart failure etc, help might arrive sooner.

No-behind concern for the 'public good' there was a real fear CB freaks might block police radios. This happened for instance when more police recently were unable for some time to alert the fire brigade to save a factory from burning down. Their radios had been blocked by a breaker calling himself 'Yankee Bucket Mouth'. Later it was discovered the fire had been caused by an arsonist. 'Yankee Bucket Mouth'? The police weren't sure but 'YBM' had better sign off double quick.

There's plenty new under the sun but CB lingo when used for subversive ends renews in London a much older tradition recapturing the forgotten essence of cockney rhyming slang. The days of the much feared London mob in the 17th and 18th century, Government spies were sent into proletarian

quarters to earwig. The quick witted cockneys improvised a constantly amended parallel language to avoid unwelcome eavesdropping.



# All Quiet On The Frontline?

An uneasy calm has settled on the streets. But the press will have it only minor rumbles continue in the major battle zones of the inner cities. It's more — much more. The inner cities fizz like never ending fire crackers. Despite all the talk of community policing and liaison committees the cops are as heavy as ever resembling an army of occupation. Sirens blare continually, lights flash and cars race past at top speed while down some darkened mews or alley a van load of police wait menacingly. Is another polymorphous urban explosion in the offing? One thing's for certain the cops are not likely to be caught by surprise like they were in the summer of '81. At the slightest sign of danger a better trained police force equipped with all the necessary riot gear moves in immediately to seal off the potential trouble spot.

## SSH — THERE'S A RIOT GOING ON

The police are also giving a hush hush policy of their own devising a twirl. A local cop shop in Bedford, a town 30 miles north of London came under seige in late March '82 but the police suppressed all news of the event for a couple of weeks. As far as we know Bedford was free from trouble last year. The same also happened on two occasions in Notting Hill in London once over Xmas and the other in early April. But when on the third occasion when barricades were erected across several road the incident was too big to be ignored and was immediately reported on the radio and in the press next day.

However Scotland Yard's Press Office have been keeping their lips buttoned up for a long time. Either that or the media didn't want to know or more plausibly didn't want others to know, electing to report only the 'good news'. To corroborate what we stated much earlier on it has just (April '82) come out in the press that firebombs were hurled in the Welsh mining valleys during riot week. This astonishing piece of news has been kept in the information lock-up all that time! Just how close *is* Britain coming to revolution?

But is a Toxteth of the factories laying waste to all the horrors of capitalism likely in the immediate future? The workers have taken note of the riots alright, slotting them alongside their own struggles. During a recent occupation of the British aluminium smelter factory at Invergordon in the Highlands of Scotland a laid off worker suddenly interrupted a T.V. programme to say Brixton and Toxteth had shown the way forward. No one within ear shot protested. The workers terrain is however warrened from end to end by trade union power ever ready to drag breaking-away workers back to the negotiating table and the last century. Most of those living in the inner cities are free from this encumbrance and therefore still able to go straight for capital's jugular without getting sidetracked along the way by kiss-my-arse representation.

The employed working class must respond to the 'new' situation brought into relief by the riots. As a block the Liverpool working class has again been the first to recognise this. But before they can blow at all radically they must first blow out the unions and procedure laid down by the unions. It must be done definitively. Over the past few years at very crucial moments when literally minutes and hours mattered, the workers time upon time have handed control over to union delegate conferences — usually through the mediation of the stewards. Psychologically they have just not been ready to act on golden opportunities. Thus undischarged anger becomes two days later mute, pent-up desperation.

During the union led steel strike of Spring '80, steelworkers in S. Wales instead of going directly to the local pit heads to extend the strike, postponed their action until ratified at a later date by local union meetings. A week later might as well have been a century. The atmosphere of tense expectancy passed and solidarity melted into thin air. The miners (actually against the wishes of the Welsh N.U.M.\*) didn't come out as expected. One passionate plea by striking steelmen

addressed unswervingly to pit head coal miners might have saved the day. Discouraged the dockers then lifted their ban on imported coal, not wanting to be left out the headlong retreat.

A revealing postscript to this mess was provided by the rugby match played shortly afterwards between England and Wales at Twickenham. Commentators and spectators described it as easily the most brutal match they had ever watched with serious injuries occurring even in the first minute.

Again at British Leyland in late October '81, the initiative was lost in what promised to be the most important strike for years. So many intangibles were posed by the threatened 'strike' taking it well beyond the run of the mill dispute. The manager of B.L. Michael Edwardes for instance may well have implemented his threat to sell off the plant. And pressure had reached bursting point on the shop floor.

## CRISES MANAGEMENT

As the name implies crises management has involved drastic changes in management methods, as the last vestiges of gentlemanly protocol which had helped keep the lid on industrial relations were brushed aside. (Maybe it needed a ruthless S. African to do this. British managers have been noticeably slower in following suit). As one worker in Leyland put it 'Call it the need to keep our dignity if you like — But we think our very rights as free men are at stake in B.L. now.'

The utter insensitivity and tough guy take it or leave it approach which had been such a winner in the last 3 wage settlements finally rebounded — as it must. When foremen went up and down the line at Longbridge threatening to sack those who failed to clock in the following day there was nearly a mass walkout. John Barker the local transport union official in Birmingham admitted union officials had to 'use some restraint' to stop workers walking off the job there and then.

This incident happened nearly two weeks after the Chief Executioner had sent a crude letter to any workers threatening to sack anyone who went on strike. But as always faced with a cataclysm, the final bulwark supporting capital is the damn unions who were able to delay the workforce long enough for management to recapture the initiative. During the three weeks run up to the union appointed deadline, Longbridge management upped bonus payments to record levels to divide Longbridge from the other smaller plants scattered around the U.K.

Heraclitus said 'those who submit are governed by blows'. After B.L. workers in late October '81 had agreed to a wage rise paid in buttons a S.A.S. (Special Air Services) inspired militaristic operation was immediately mounted against the workers of Lawrence Scott in Manchester. Helicopters were flown in over the heads of the pickets to collect machinery destined for use in Polaris submarine pens. The cops had been forewarned. Locked outside the gates all the pickets could do was look on as imitation S.A.S. Action Men ran all over the factory — and Britain took one further step towards a banana monarchy. Immediately after the Moss Side riots while the embers were still smouldering workers occupying the factory had been evicted by bailiffs wielding pick axe handles and hammers. Who dares doesn't always win because had this dawn raid been carried out against the inhabitants of Moss

Footnote: The Welsh N.U.M. might appear in this instance to be in advance of the workers. However workers increasingly resent being told what to do. At a Northants Weetabix factory earlier this year the workforce were told to come out on strike by 'their' union. The workers steamed up as fuck by this high handed decision immediately called a mass meeting to discuss themselves whether or not to go out on strike.

Side the reaction would have been swift and terrible. The response of the employed working class could be more lethal but they must overcome their present, lack lustre showing. Their destructive power at the moment only resides as a threatened memory.



An incident from the early seventies.  
**EXIT THE DRUM**

Lawrence Scott is a subsidiary of Mining Supplies in Doncaster. Once flying pickets from the Manchester factory installed themselves outside the factory gates in Doncaster after the swashbuckling raid the manager just crumpled up. He could right there and then have easily used the law on the pickets. But something had happened in the meantime to really put the wind up him. If he dared as much as lift a finger against the pickets the local miners had promised to come to their help.

But back in Manchester outside of the immediate reach of the S. Yorkshire miners, the manager in February '82 supported by a fleet of lorries and scabs smashed through the pickets once and for all. The rest of Manchester's engineering workers turned to look away — perhaps to watch *Coronation Street* instead. 10 years ago thousands of them were occupying factories in and around the Manchester conurbation. Determined now to show who was t' gaffer once and for all, Lawrence Scott's sent the bailiff's mammoth bill for breaking and entering to the workers.

But north of the border the fist of fury thought it judicious to wear mittens. Shortly after New Year '82 two factories belonging to British Leyland and the Plessey electronic multinational were occupied in the small town of Bathgate. Though the BL workers abandoned their sit-in, the Plessey workforce composed largely of women stayed put ignoring the interdict to vacate the premises. The occupation was a popular one in a town where unemployment was heading for over 30%. Local people were constantly dropping in, leaving behind them bags of groceries etc without saying a word. As the workers of Central Scotland were putting their money where Manchester's mouth was, the Court of Sessions in Edinburgh thought better of it and declared the occupation legal. But not before helicopters had circled overhead leading to fears of an SAS-style raid to seize the £650,000 worth of capacitors held in the factory.

There have been a number of factory occupations since then — just as the bourgeoisie feared. The biggest has been in Coventry where a subsidiary of Massey Ferguson was occupied twice in two weeks until ordered to vacate. A noticeably quickening tempo of class struggle amongst the employed working class is apparent since last summer. Nurses, operating theatre technicians and hospital ancillary staff are threatening to strike together for the first time. Let's hope they are the first leaves of a proletarian spring, summer, autumn and winter because something big is getting ready to push through the perma frost of capitalist accumulation.

Even if when these words are published there has been a major reversal, since '79 the working class has by and large been frightened into survival sickness.

## EVERYTHING STOPS FOR TEA 10 YEARS ON

The situation is overall far more fraught than in the early '70s. The details of class struggle, worth fighting over, must be inserted into this changed perspective.

In 1972 ten workers in Coventry cheekily downed tools and went out on strike all because they had asked for, and been refused, bigger mugs of tea. They looked as if they didn't have a care in the world, but in fact many of the struggles dating from this period were hard fought.

The significance of such details was determined less by the logic of capitalism than by the workers' lively, infectious resistance. (The idea caught on and strikes spread to other factories.) Going on for ten years later, the situation is much altered. The tea break strike at BL in December '81 was a last ditch stand by workers forced onto their knees by a management determined to wring from them every last ounce of productivity. This is not to say that workers have during that time become the passive objects of capital's counter attack. Rather it means high spirits have been progressively abandoned to a grim war of position in which every inch of ground is bitterly fought over.

As a reminder of the bourgeoisie's longevity, immemorial details are, more than in every other comparable country, paraded fetishistically at the level of the State in Britain. Once these emblematic tokens are either discarded or drawn into class struggle they become further reminders of the gravity of the crises. In 1979 during the 'Winter of Discontent' the unthinkable happened: Beefeaters at the Tower of London downed pikestaffs and went on strike. Early in '82 as part of the Government's cuts the Navy's time-honoured rum ration was withdrawn. . . .

Strapped down like in Madame's dungeon, very occasionally the workers break free in a fury of destruction that compares well with the riots. In December '80 BL workers at Longbridge went on the rampage wrecking cars on the assembly line, and surrounded the management block known locally as 'The Kremlin'. The same thing happened with John Knott (Trade Secretary) when visiting Portsmouth dock yards in the late summer of '81: he risked being stoned to death. This was not jeers and rotten eggs but *the shape of things to come*.

Losing your cool like this is the flip side of crisis management. The bosses are no longer satisfied with a lock-out



instantly threatening to wind up business once and for all. But is it a wind-up, a calculated gamble, or do they really mean 'business', or more correctly none at all? During the ASLEF stoppages recently there was talk of tearing up the railway lines and covering them up with macadam and concrete. By sharing lifts in cars people were getting to work OK and it was argued to do this would be a chastising lesson in self-reliance to BR's workers. But the train drivers called British Rail's bluff and the board backed down. However in every other case it has not been put to the test. Would Sir Michael Edwardes have auctioned off BL if the workers had not done his bidding? Around 10,000 tons of machinery is being sold to buyers from abroad each week. Some of it, like the looms from the Courtauld factory, is the most modern plant available anywhere. The dominant impression is of a fire sale to beat all, but this may only be the wrapping to divert attention away from the de-nationalisation of British industry. Of the 50 or so major firms in Britain 40% of production is now located abroad.



All because of the conflict between craft and industrial unionism Sid Weighell of the NUR and Ray Buckton of ASLEF are usually bitter enemies. They are seen here riding on a rinky dink train at a toy fair in Harrogate, Yorks. Once anti union proletarian assemblies spring into being on the railways flinging switches on toy train sets will be the only contrivance left to the bureaucrats of British Rail.

Given this situation it is important workers, when combating free ranging multinational enterprises, aren't split along nationalist lines. If struggle is to reach even greater heights of lucidity the multinationalism of the rioters must be honoured in the factories. Equally if the proletariat is to combat the drift into the gotterdammerung twilight of the bourgeoisie the stakes must be just as high, positing right from the start an unnegotiable new world beyond the one that now belongs to capitalism.

At the moment the hardest conflict to live with is that between worker and worker. However the whys and wherefores of this almost unique situation must be placed in their proper context.

Strike meetings like the recent ones in Ford's or BL are ending in uproar and bitter recriminations. With the vote almost evenly split down the middle a display of hands can quickly turn nasty. The clenched fist then usually signifies a

readiness to knock the shit out of your opposite number on the shop floor.

This ferocity is a welter of conflicting tendencies, and not merely the last swipes — as the Tories like to pretend — of a dying trade unionism forced like a rat back into the corner. For example, the recent assaults on shop stewards in Dagenham (Ford's) must have caused unease in Government circles because they were carried out by workers who were pissed off with the stewards for recommending acceptance of Ford's pay offer.

The Tories are victims of their own propaganda. They had cast the unions as the real villains of the piece responsible for 'shop floor anarchy'. At the last election it had proved a powerful vote catcher and when, to take just one example, Derrick 'Red Robbo' Robinson, the Communist Party convenor, had been sacked from BL without even a skirmish in November '81 the Tories hailed it as a milestone and a victory for the new 'mood of realism' allegedly sweeping through industry.

BL management had estimated — fuck knows how — that Robbo had been responsible for £200,000,000 worth of lost production. They omitted to mention that Robbo had probably saved the company that amount when throughout the Labour Government's last term in office he had spoken out against strikes (in particular the tool-makers' strike) in BL.

In view of the contradictory stances Robbo had adopted over the years his dismissal should have given rise to misgivings in anyone less muleheaded than the Tories. Even the crudely reactionary tabloid the *Daily Mail* had to acknowledge shop stewards had 'proved useful lightning conductors defusing issues on the shop floor before they got out of hand'. What's more, employers had 'turned more and more to shop stewards for communication with their workforces' because the 'small numbers of full time union officials simply could not cope' (November 4th '81). Yet the Tories have pressed on regardless with their plans to minimise trade union hierarchies by making a show of wresting power from the head offices and shop stewards and placing it in the hands of the members.

The Tories blinded by ideology haven't got wise to the fact the lunatics were only able to take over the asylum in an interregnum. Shop floor tranquillity over the past two years had, in addition to the high levels of unemployment, depended on a complex admixture of reaction and radicalism in which the main ingredient is a shared dislike of unions.

Anti-capitalist/anti-union hostility has still to attain a decisive level of coherence and maturity. In particular it must disassociate itself completely from the present wave of capitalist intolerance of trade unionism in some countries. Following the 'Winter of Discontent' when the community of interest between big business, the State, the nationalised sector and the trade unions fell apart the Tories had been quick to exploit the situation by shabbily laying the blame for it squarely on the trade unions.

However, many a worker who had been in the thick of the struggles that had suddenly swept Britain between 1970 and '74 knew differently. They had suddenly after the mid-'70s woken up to the fact the unions and shop stewards apparatus were playing by far the major role in the suppression of class struggle (the moment of the 'social contract' con trick). The effect was shattering — some junked being stewards and convenors altogether, taking to drink, or perhaps unenthusiastically attending pottery classes and generally mechanically going through the motions of living. However as a rule the pseudo conservative disillusionment with the representative apparatus was in the absence of more pertinent conclusions unable to go even part of the way towards accepting a conservative political identity. Equivalent reaction at the level of issue politics and community politics were also apparent though not necessarily at the same moment in time.

It is against this background that the aforementioned violence must be judged.

Misdirected fury by creating needless enemies and hardening attitudes can be counter productive. However the violence that has recently broken out in strike meetings may serve as an apprenticeship to direct action which rejecting

intermediaries and representatives instead of stopping at the factory gates goes on to envelop the whole of society.

These barely controllable outbursts of anger are an accurate measure of the urgency of the situation. They are an inevitable response to the tearing, grinding, heart stopping psychological climate of crisis management leaving the workers with no choice other than to accept or take giant steps of their own leading to a decisive showdown. Starved of alternative options the unions have no stomach for such end games.

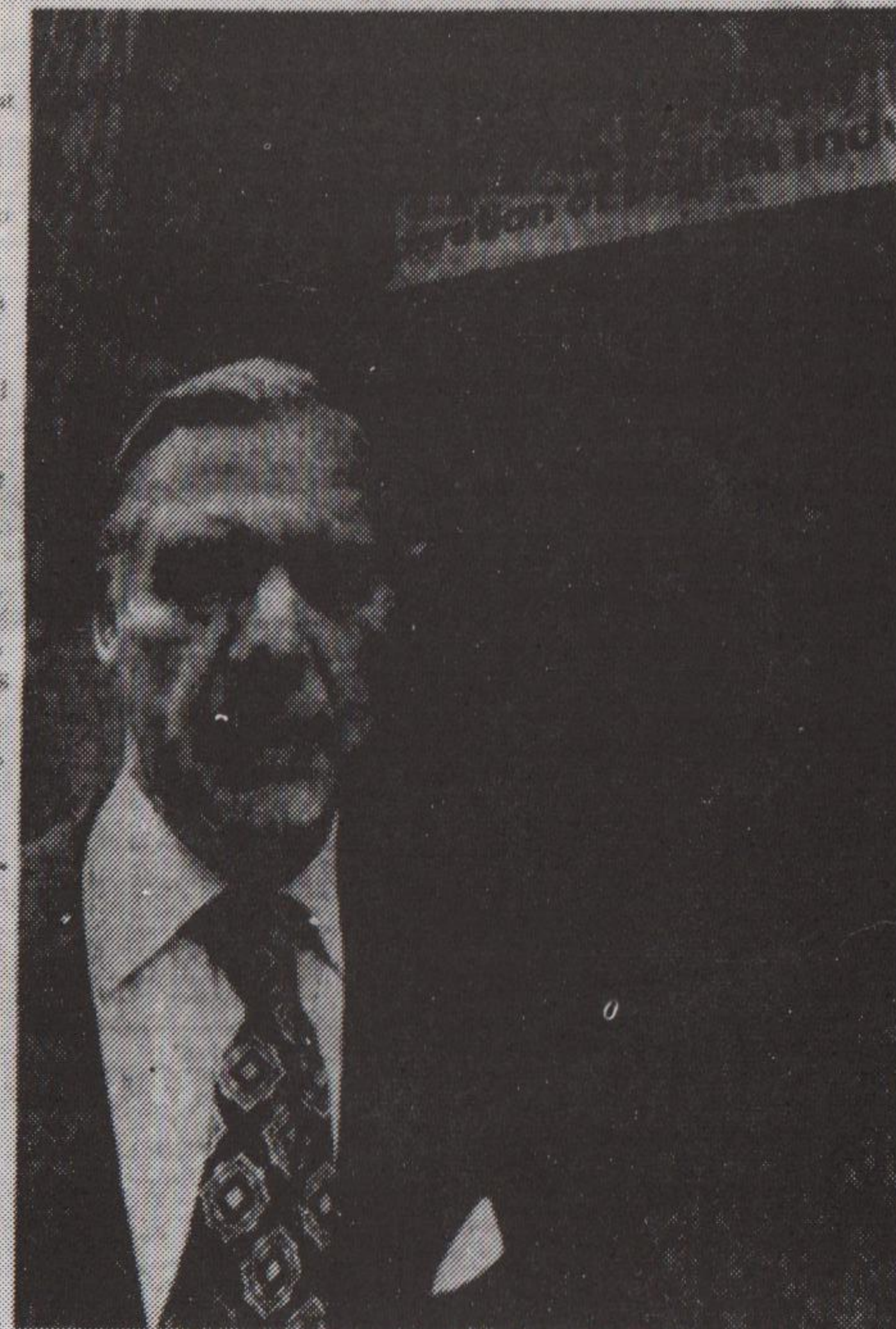
Weakening and discrediting the trade union representatives apparatus has met with little working class disapproval. This has lulled the Tories and considerable sections of British management into a false sense of their own security because they haven't been able to create anything like a durable proletarian bodyguard organised everlastingly around government and managerial dictates. Much depends on the ability to sustain the friction between the employed and unemployed, allied to which is the fear of unemployment itself. But when and if a breakthrough comes the Tory loonies along with the rest of the capitalist asylum are likely to pay a terrible price for having dared to cure workers further of the habit of looking to unions to represent their interests.

But for all that Tebbit's (Secretary of State for Employment) Employment Bill is not as green as it's cabbage looking. Unlike Heath's club-footed Industrial Relations Act of '69/'74 it proposes to make unions liable for actions taken by shop floor trade unionists unless the 'corporate leadership' repudiates them. The unions are not likely to do this because of the serious risk of unofficial action. As for the fining of unions, Heath's original act showed it left the workers cold. No matter what, a version of this act will eventually come into force.

## 'I know companies will do all they can in the fight to bring inflation down.'

"For at least 5 years the CBI has been warning after warning about Britain's rate of inflation and its great dangers for our society. Because the rate in Britain has been much higher than our main competitors it has become harder to attract investment and so harder to provide jobs. And because of this Britain has lost the power. That is why the CBI was glad to see the Government finally decided to act. We made no bones of the fact that action should have been taken far earlier and we think more will need to be done — further cutting of public expenditure for instance — before we can really be safe from its dangers. Nevertheless the Government have acted and I know companies like all they can in the fight to bring inflation down. For industry this is the first essential step for economic recovery for all of us if it's the first step towards a more prosperous future."

*Campbell Adamson*  
Campbell Adamson,  
Sector General, Confederation of  
British Industries.



## Inflation. We can

This ad issued by HM Government was used to sell the social contract in the period of the last Labour Government. On the left Len Murray, Director General of the Confederation of British Industry, on the right Sir Campbell Adamson Gen. Sec. of the Trades Union Congress.

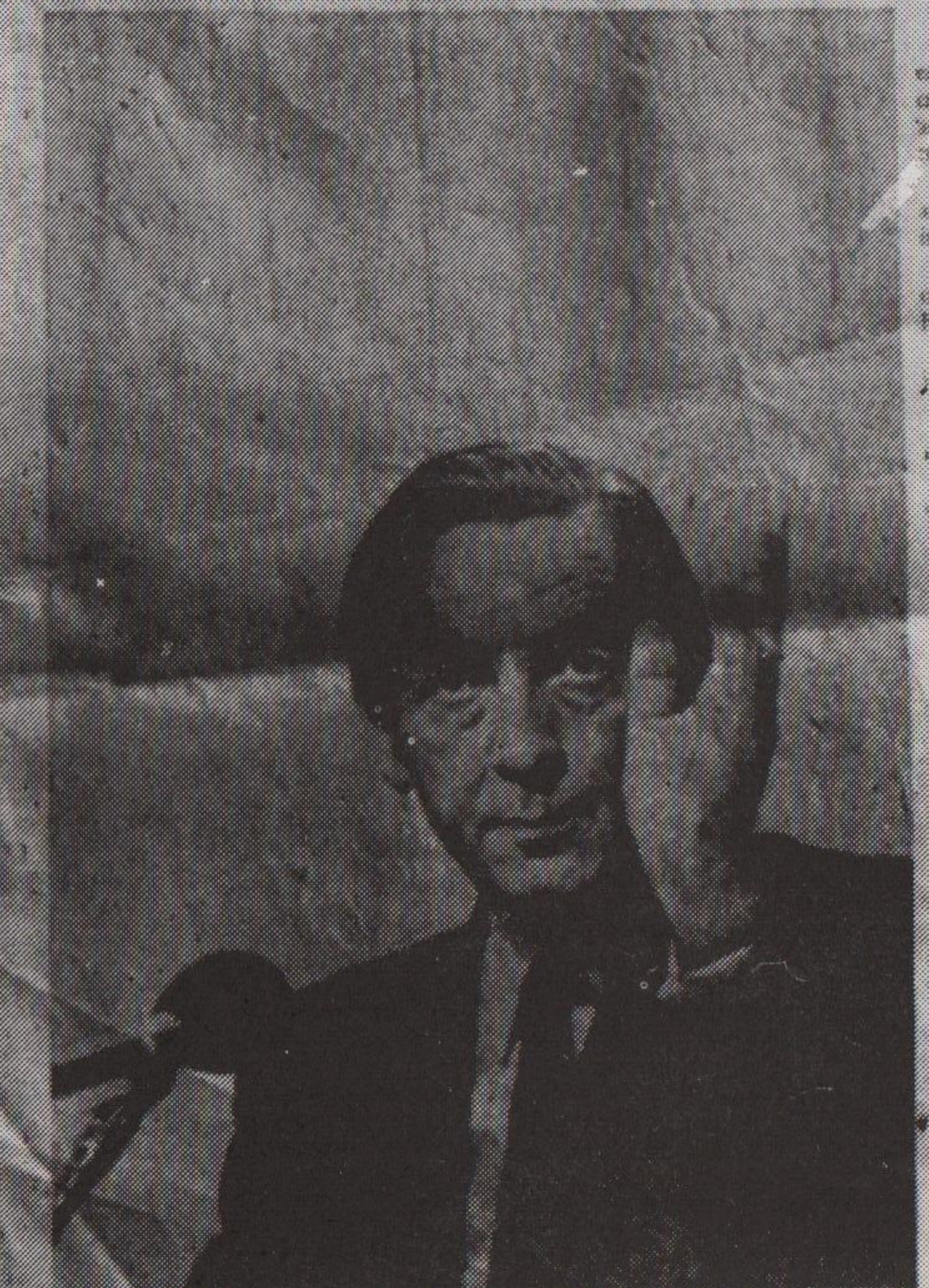
## AS YOU WERE: THE CHANGING FACE OF TRADES UNIONS

As in most other countries high levels of unemployment have meant a decline in union membership. This provides union leaders like Alan Fisher (NUPE) with a handy excuse when asked to explain why unions are unable to exert much influence on Government policy. After having knocked frantically at the door of No. 10 the previous Tory Prime Minister Heath in '72/'73 had finally invited the unions in for consultations. And boy, did he need them! But if it's the last thing she does Mrs Thatcher is determined not to do the same. Granted she is a tougher nut any day than Heath, but the unusual docility of the working class has postponed the day of reckoning when a subdued Mrs Thatcher could have well begged the unions for assistance.

The unions make a virtue of weakness. The truth is they are still immensely strong but unwilling to exercise their power other than through legal parliamentary means. They are mightily afraid of stirring up their members to implement the TUC's frankly capitalist 'Programme for Recovery', preferring to wait on a Labour Government to do it. The TUC knows full well the working class once aroused is not going to stop at the TUC alternative policies to save capitalism. But if aroused, again these arseholes will have to attempt to lead an essentially leaderless movement in order to try and divert developing autonomous energy away from its real goals.

The memory of the early '70s and the '78/'79 'Winter of Discontent' is still fresh in the mind of union bureaucrats. During the intervening years an ethical universalism (the

## 'The need to beat inflation is one thing we all have in common.'



"Inflation at the present rate is eating away at our standard of living, causing more unemployment and leading back investments in new machinery and new jobs. The TUC and the trade unions are backing the Government's anti-inflation policy. This decision was reached overwhelmingly at our Congresses at Blackpool a few weeks ago. We know we have to beat inflation before it beats us."

*Len Murray*  
Len Murray, General Secretary,  
Trades Union Congress.

## beat it together



TUC's 'moral policeman' of '76-'78) supplanting what on the continent would pass for the equally bourgeois 'general interest' had served as the antidote to class struggle. Different 'interest groups', i.e. contending classes, were encouraged not to act selfishly but to think of others instead. This difficult balancing act appealing more to feelings of right and wrong than mystified calculations on the continental model was master-minded by the joint Labour Government/TUC Chief of Staffs with the latter playing the role of supreme commander.

Then along came the 'Winter of Discontent'. The TUC tight rope snapped. The ethics of public service including ambulance staffs and gravediggers were henceforth no guarantee against mass strike action. The various unions involved were unable to disown the strikers for fear of the consequences but knowing as a result Labour would lose the election.

But then under Thatcher a strange thing happened. The trade unions took up the plea-bargaining puppy-begging approach so recently overthrown. It meant in the short term deferring to Thatcher but in the long term it was a defence



Before being reprieved in 1975 the Shelton Steelworks in Stoke on Trent had been threatened with the chop for four years. During this time a career minded local theatre director bullshitter, Peter Cheesman of the Victoria theatre in Stoke, the General Manger of the plant and members of the action committee got together to save the plant. Cheesman is seen here taping interviews for a local documentary on the plant called 'Fight for Shelton Bar' which was duly staged before TV cameras and the chair man of BSC, Sir Monty Finniston. The one person in other words that really counted in this 'living theatre' of duped steel workers.

In the play, workers blast furnaces and local management were stuck together as if with superglue and all past battles belong to war-time not to class struggle. The difference between what the theatre director said in justification and what the general manager said can be just about tucked under a finger nail: 'Above all Shelton Bar is its people, a deep rooted, living and richly successful human community. That is one of the reasons it makes a profit.' (Peter Cheesman theatre director) - 'The occasion produces the man. It is a great lesson if you can engender team spirit and loyalty to the job in hand, and these men (ie action committee) can be incredibly good at grass roots level. In many respects they made the job of management easier. Our aims were exactly similiar.' (Derek Field General Manager)

against their members' real interests; a preparation for the day they will be called on to police a re-edition of the 'social contract'. Appearing to shame the nation's conscience is good practice for when they have to try and put the workers to shame.

This ethical universalism tailored to fit the TUC corresponds to an advanced degree of integration in the State only temporarily held up by Thatcher and her cronies. However it also arises from the growing importance of white collar workers as opposed to the declining importance, relatively speaking, of industrial workers in the TUC make-up.

Following the mainly industrial revolt of the early '70s recruitment of white collar grades including low ranking bureaucrats gained in leaps and bounds greatly changing the TUC public image. The main unions involved (the GMWU, ASTMS, the civil service unions) turned to account the reputedly more comprehensive views of bureaucrats/white collar strata eclipsing the narrow sectionalism of industrial workers.

Hegel in his theory of the State had placed great store by low ranking bureaucrats, believing every citizen could become an official: as long as this lasted the bond between State and society was secure. So was the panlogical Idea enshrined in the State. There are an infinitely greater number of low grade civil servants and the like around today than in Hegel's time and mechanisation and humdrum routine has destroyed its former status. But equally they are under pressure to set a progressive 'intelligent' example proving there are still plenty of 'frills' attached to the job. They are both the hammer and the anvil. The trade union movement has capitalised on this split personality (cultural pretensions included) to extend its sphere of operations.

Formerly it had been in the interests of both unions and management to ferment a reactionary willingly-put-upon self reliance amongst industrial workers in particular. As a heroic myth, ascribing supernatural powers to labour, it had merged up to a point the identity of worker and capitalist around sacrificial slogans like 'Britain's bread hangs be' Lancashire's thread'. As an outlook it was too trade conscious, censorious, 'uneducated' and introverted to enable it to cope with the newer concerns pouring in upon the trade union movement (music, racism, the women's movement, unemployment etc.) and inadequate to its recently acquired universality as 'a second parliament'.

## **"WE SHALL NEVER WORK OH SEAS OF FIRE" RIMBAUD YOP's: SOCIAL AND LIFE SKILLS AND JOKE/JOB CREATION**

The TUC has not as it did in the 30's turned its back on the unemployed, opening for example centres and organizing marches. NUPE (National Union of Public Employees) has made efforts to recruit the young unemployed on government YOP (Youth Opportunities Programmes), schemes stoking up the fire only to throw water on it. At around the time of the riots young people were brought out in ineffectual strikes in the North East and North West while those who played with matches eventually found the light.

Through the mediation of Further Education Colleges, many unemployed teenagers pass through YOP courses designed to teach the euphemism of 'social and life skills' (SLS). These courses represent a clear break with school and if anything points to the failure of schools to provide the 'right attitudes' to work. In an interview given to the NATFHE Journal (National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education) June/July '80, Frank Ward, Head of General Studies at South Shields Marine and Technical College said... 'we tried to create an atmosphere that was patently not school - while maintaining some of the constraints of the normal working situation'.

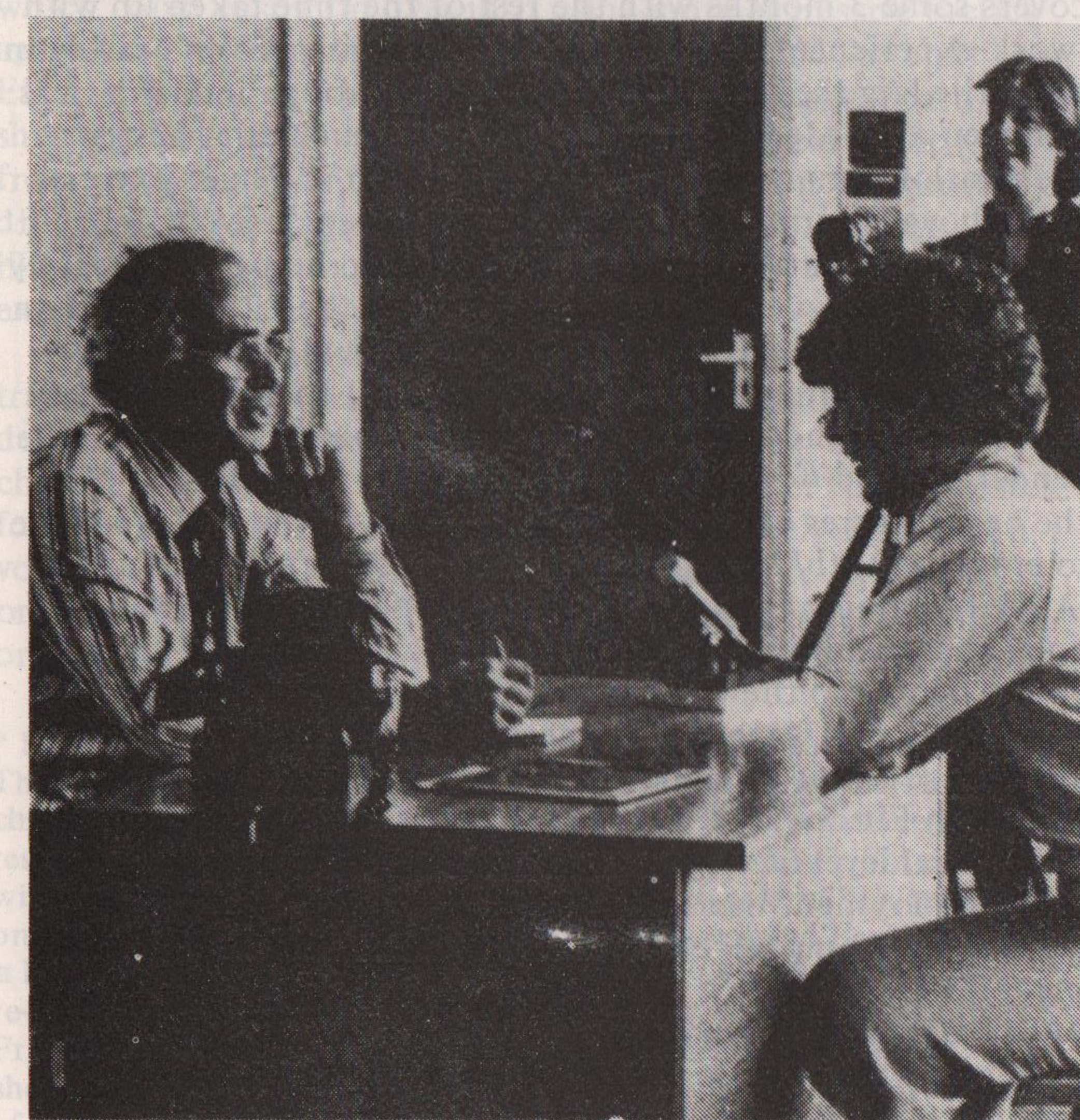
The rapid extension of YOP/SLS courses provides the most blatant example of the intrusion of behaviourist principles (so in favour with the real owners of capital) into education the

UK has seen. Unsurprisingly it is unaccompanied by fanfares to Eysenck and Skinner because debate for or against is conceived as belonging to the remote and authorized world of the university which FE (Further Education) colleges more responsive to the whims of the bosses regard as only for the 'clever'.

The basis of this philosophy which in the confines of FE Colleges must pass for incontrovertible realism can be summed up in a nutshell: the Bosses are always right. Even so learning how to kiss arse is done with flair and subtlety which disguises the crude authoritarianism at work.

'The curriculum is constantly changing and each group of youngsters chooses its own topics over and above the core. Teaching methods are non traditional; the teachers say they never use the word 'teach'!!!!!! In particular students are encouraged to criticize each other, video taping for instance mock jobs (or joke) interviews which are then played back to the whole class. The communication skills workshops which includes the video equipment contains, if the truth be told, the hardware of detection through which the all-seeing eye of the Boss is able to monitor conduct by winning the early collaboration of future employees.

At the South Shields College, the Staff dealing with the SLS part of the YOP programme come from a variety of backgrounds including youth and social work, careers counselling and industry. Unlike colleges in the South East their class of origin tends to be more exclusively working class. Proud at having landed a teaching job in an FE College, tutors especially in the North may, every so often, look up to a regular 'Times' reader as an earthly divinity. But that closeness with the youth they teach born of different levels of feelings of inferiority has its limitations. It has been found necessary to lift adults with requisite skills out of the dole queues and appoint them as group leaders in YOP schemes. They then become a key figure in the Government's wage cutting operation. Because they understand enough of what life is on the dole, shared experiences are used as a lever to ram home the Government's intentions. ("Group leaders have been recruited from the unemployment register, and this practise has brought in men and women who understand and sympathize with the young people, and can talk to them in their own language" op cit).



Is everyone as really as happy as Sam on the Social and Life Skills course at the South Shields Marine and Technical College?

## **THE UNEMPLOYED PROFESSIONAL**

Unemployment especially in Britain is unevenly hitting sections of society brought up to think such things could never happen to them. With the Official Receiver working overtime, the skids under whole tiers of middle management, droves of skilled workers out of work and the numbers of graduates looking for non existent professional employment at an all time high, things are looking up for that great leveller, the dole. To counteract this tendency the MSC (Manpower Services Commission - a post OPEC State sponsored unemployment body) tries its unlevelling best to drive a wedge between the mass of the unskilled and semi-skilled and the numbers of unemployed professional and skilled workers. Hence for some the dole gin-trap is carefully sprung, staggering over a period of time the shock of proletarianization.

Failing to find permanent employment in their particular field, professionals are given a chance to branch out. Thanks (no thanks!) to the MSC there are a growing number of short term contractual jobs on offer which in one way or another involve overseeing unemployed youth especially in the performing 'arts' (ugh), sport, archeological digs etc.

"Appropriate qualifications" are not waived so much as bent and when applying for these jobs being unemployed is a stipulated condition. The unemployed pro can only hold out against these inducements for so long before he or she is unceremoniously picked up by the scruff of the neck and whisked through the deskilling process. This far from pleasant but necessary experience generally takes place behind closed doors in the presence of a URO (Unemployment Review Officer) at the local SS Office. Once this happens the unemployed pro can expect henceforth to be continually harassed by the State because their claim to special consideration has just been brusquely torn up.

The MSC looks to unemployed professionals to provide a lead in other ways. In 1980 a pamphlet commissioned by the MSC from the National Council of Voluntary Service appeared. The pamphlet entitled 'Work and the Community' looked as though it might be in praise of idleness but a second glance showed this to be totally untrue. Banishing the stigma of unemployment for ever, the report argued, was long overdue but chronic unemployment is no excuse for not sharing "Beveridge's view of the evil of unwanted idleness".

The report's distinction "between the term 'unemployment' and 'work'" is really a cryptic way of saying unemployment benefit should be earned. Through the optic of this perspective, Beveridge's cold as charity distinction (and it is not by chance that Beveridge's name - the architect of the post war Welfare State - crops up) between deserving and undeserving poor is used to prejudice the unemployed. To qualify, in so many words, for 'deserving status' the unemployed must, the report hints, be willing to do voluntary unpaid labour.

The report has something other in mind than giving the front door a lick of paint. It means to lay hands on the free labour of the unemployed for "neighbourhood services co-operatives, community producer and consumer co-operatives and other community originated work and employment activities" as a substitute for cuts in "social services". The only trouble being "in inner city areas - a tradition of voluntary effort is often absent". It is just possible that at this sticking point the unemployed professional can be relied on to fill the gap, providing an example for others to follow.

The report became the basis for the MSC Community Enterprise programme set up in April '81 to deal with the numbers of long term unemployed nearing half a million. Now under Tebbit the programme is being dragged kicking and screaming into realizing its philosophy of unpaid community work. Why protest so much? Tebbit is after all only sticking closely to the letter of the report.

The ex-professional can with some effort become other. They are in any case, depending on the length of time unemployed, shoved in this direction by the State. Under these conditions an ethic of public service cannot linger on



indefinitely. Providing he or she remains on negative ground the ex-professional is well placed without being able to pull any punches, to expose and clarify the pernicious games of capital and the State.

## QUIET FLOWS THE TYNE?

Some of the most comprehensive YOP innovations started life on Tyneside. It was one of the first areas to introduce '21 hour benefits' enabling unemployed youths to attend up to 21 hours of FE (Further Education) without forfeiting their social security. The quantity of experiment particularly to self interested empire builders connected with the unemployment industry savours amid the theatrical plenitude, of human fulfilment. The area has for Jack Grassby, trade union NATFHE Liaison Secretary at South M and T College 'learned to use unemployment creatively' (!) But a more disillusioned and accurate view was expressed by the MSC's Regional Representative for Special Programmes. When asked what was the point of an extensive programme when so many kids will only wind up back on the dole, he answered that, at the least, it prevents violence on the streets.

The YOP strikes in the Tyneside and Consett region experienced during the summer of '81 helped defuse an anger that could have been as intense as Liverpool. The extensive YOP programmes must have had some impact on minimizing the rioting in the region. In fact the blanket YOP schemes pioneered by these seemingly impregnable Godfather-like Labour Party citadels where every unemployed school leaver even in 1980 was within six weeks 'offered' a place on a YOP course, must now appear as a prototype that the Thatcher government, in response to the riots, applied to the rest of the country. Even the newspapers were frank enough to admit that unemployed school leavers would now be 'under considerable pressure' to take up YOP places by Unemployment Review Officers. The same could have been said of Tyneside which anticipated under the auspices of the Labour Party dominated local State, the national trend by at least 1 1/2 years.



... These secretaries employed by GEC have nothing to smile about. At £25pw and £31pw respectively this apology for a wage is only fractionally better than YOP or the Dole...

## JOB TRAINING IN THE 80's: THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE

The Tebbit Plan is another example of knock kneed foot dragging centralization thrust upon a Government caught unawares by the summer riots. Looked at from a distance, Government strategies form a schizoid mixture of subservience to dogma followed by hesitant backsliding, rescue operations requiring more State centralization, not less. When Tebbit announced that 16 Industrial Training Boards were to be abolished he was placing the responsibility for industrial training more firmly in the lap of industry. At the same time he has created the space for the MSC (Manpower Services Commission) to assume responsibility for apprenticeships when he guaranteed from September 1983 a year's training to all school leavers who fail to find a job.

It is timed when fully operational to just about suit an incoming Labour or SDP/Tory Party Coalition Government. This is good news for us because all parties will have a hell of a job attempting to convince the masses of unemployed school leavers that the cheap labour 'abuses' will stop. When YOP schemes were few in number it was possible for the MSC and especially the trade unions to clamp down on firms with 'suspect teenage employment schemes' which used 'trainees' as cheap labour substitutes for older workers whilst claiming MSC subsidies.

Monitoring went against the grain of Government policy but once the schemes were extended following the summer riots, the unions openly relinquished responsibility for monitoring the schemes while continuing to prominently sit on the MSC board. Now that YOP is to be replaced by a desultory, generalized 'training package' which looks set to continue the 'misuses' of YOP programmes, the unions will be placed squarely in the firing line. 'Misuse': it's such a nice neutral term chosen carefully by MSC and trade union apologists to hide the horrible truth. In the 12 months to June 1980 5 school leavers were killed on job training schemes, 25 had limbs or fingers amputated (Government cuts?) while a further 2,000 were victims of industrial injuries. Most were not entitled to compensation because they had, out of ignorance, disregarded safety regulations. And not one of them received a penny in sickness benefit!

On present calculations the training part of the Tebbit plan covers some 3 months with the rest of the time taken up with 'work experience' (sic) on employers premises. Even bearing in mind the large scale deskilling sweeping through industry, it is not even a speeded-up apprenticeship so much as at best a preparation for an apprenticeship. Really it is a mass exercise to slash wages primarily, but by no means exclusively, in unskilled occupations. School leavers are to be paid the measly sum of £16 per week — a drop of £7 from the £23 received on YOP schemes. It is also considerably less than the dole and Tebbit's plan intends withdrawing the right to supplementary benefit from school leavers who refuse 'training' schemes. The tender hearted *Economist* finds "these are actually two of the best features of the scheme (making) youths less expensive to employ" (19th/25th December '81). Tebbit's White Paper 'A New Training Initiative: Programme for Action' is bluntly open about wanting to "bring about a change in attitude of young people to the value of training and acceptance of relatively lower wages for trainees". This may appear to be directed solely at bringing down apprentices' wages, the highest in Europe, but its real purpose is to help bring down the general level of wages. This scheme, like Thatcher's series of unemployment measures hastily got up in response to the riots, really comprise at one remove a very drastic statutory incomes policy from a Government pledged to keep the law out of wage bargaining.

Because these apologies for training schemes are being applied to the mass of school leavers it seems fireworks will shortly be used to back up verbal resistance to this super exploitation. Hopefully it will this time involve more directly the employed working class. It will mean vaulting a few hurdles because the pressure of gully-low paid youths performing work or even attempting to perform work

normally reserved for much higher paid adult workers acts as a barrier to unity.

Just what the Government ordered, only this time the unions because of their participation in the MSC, have been manoeuvred into overseeing the process. How unfortunate. About to lose a lot of control over entry to particular trades they must try and placate the fears of time serving workers while preserving the two tier wage structure neatly dividing teenagers from adult workers.

An unenviable position and one which will strain to the limits trade union jiggery pokery. They must be looking back nostalgically to the good old days when at the slightest sign of danger they had the option of withdrawing into their tortoise-like carapace.

The Tebbit Plan, unlike the earlier Finniston Report on Industry\*, was not conceived as an answer to skill shortages which afflicts British capitalism even with massive unemployment. The Institute of Mechanical Engineers in August '81 on anecdotal evidence (just how primitive can UK Inc get?) found that skill shortages were developing in its sector. At the same time 68,000 jobs in mechanical engineering were hanging by a thread supported by a short time working compensation scheme. Rather than attempt to rectify this situation in the interests of capitalist regeneration, Tebbit's plan represents a continuation of the good old fashioned principal 'the devil finds work for idle hands'.

What the hands should be doing in relation to the training needs of capital was never really at issue. No one pointed to the riotous apprentices in Zurich and Berlin. All the hullabaloo in Parliament following the riots about lack of training was more a requiem on the failures of social engineering to keep the young off the streets than a belated fanfare to capitalist technocracy.

## GRAY POWER AND YELLOW UNIONS

If the young have to be kept off the streets, the old have to be encouraged to die.

The growing number of elderly people living on pensions has also begun to attract the TUC's attention. It might look as if the unions are lending their industrial muscle to help the aged wring more benefits from the State. But the real motive lies elsewhere. In the past few years pensioners have started to flex their own muscles evolving informal self-help schemes which could easily tip over into using more aggressive tactics against e.g. the worm eaten bully boys from the Gas and Electricity boards who can condemn pensioners to death by shutting off supplies of heat. By demanding greater allowances from the government, the TUC is pre-empting moves in this direction which might easily have unforeseeable consequences like the refusal to pay and the local Derby and Joan club with exploding pension books.

As the TUC extends its range, it starts to infringe on areas traditionally dealt with by voluntary organizations. TUC demands are beginning to sound like appeals on behalf of charities choosing to sting the conscience rather than threaten force. At the same time newer organizations relying a lot on volunteers ('Task Force' etc) refer constantly to 'workers organizations' (sic). In the not-so-distant past most voluntary organizations would have preferred to break their teeth than

\* Footnote: The Finniston Report was more or less suppressed by the Thatcher Government because among other things it was an implicit challenge to the notion that the British worker johnny is bone idle and responsible consequently for the "crisis of profitability". Finniston with the interest of industrial capitalism at heart, placed the emphasis on much greater investment — getting Government and Banks to stake a lot more in UK Inc, — stepping up training to hi-tech sectors and re-evaluating the class status of engineers in the UK, where, like in France, they would be classed alongside managerial functions. It showed in other words that Britain does not reflect the requirements of modern day industrial capitalism and that it was about time it did so because "real economic decline now stares Britain in the face". Although Finniston's arguments are those of an intelligent technocrat a failure to update Britain, will also undoubtedly be a factor in precipitating a revolutionary crisis one that has already well transcended the perspective of a technocratic State capitalism.

say this.

Taking a more overall view of the situation, these developments within the TUC are linked to the growing unproductive sector of the proletariat whose wages, pensions, dole money are exchanged against revenue. A majority of the 'working' class now resides outside of productive industry which is why unions cannot continue to act in a negligent fashion. Left to themselves these sectors are too dangerous as the inspiring example of the riots demonstrate.

## AFTER RIOTS BLUES . . . PRESSURE . . . PRESSURE . . . PRESSURE . . . PRESSURE . . . PRESSURE

Finally what happened to the kids after the July days? A change has been noticed by a number of people. There definitely are more teenage nutcases to be seen wandering the streets wild eyed, brows furrowed perhaps performing some mysterious handmime or just talking gibberish.

Sure, they were there before but the sound and fury and expectation left many more looking all washed-up. Hopefully not for long. Conditions generally are just too bad for cynical careerism and a killing nihilism to even temporarily appear to get the upper hand. Anyone who lived through '68 and the decade or so of reflux afterwards knows how deadly that can be driving the more sincere to despair and suicide.

But the signs meanwhile are good.

The brief experience of solidarity has survived defeat.

The influence of events like these is incalculable. They never are over and done with just like that. Two unemployed teenagers — Sean and Raffy, topped themselves in Widnes on the banks of the Mersey. Condemned on telly as hooligans by their ex-headmaster they were avenged by their mates who torched part of the Head's shitty school.

Some youths are individually taking it upon themselves to avenge others. There is something pitiful and sorely troubled about these incidents which in other respects bring to mind the filial reprisals of 19th century anarchists. A youth was given 8 years detention at Her Majesty's Pleasure after attempting to shoot her with blanks during the trooping of the colour. Several weeks later a youth was picked up outside the gates of Buck Palace with a 'loaded' airgun. Both had given ample warnings of their intentions and it subsequently proved difficult to unravel class consciousness from crackbrained cries for help as details of their 'case histories' emerged.



Photos like this appear continually in the press to empathize the working class popularity of legislation to curb flying/second picketing. Odds on bets the lorry driver seen here attempting to black jack a miners picket in the early 70's was himself an unpaid administration of supplies determining what moved and what didn't during the lorry drivers strike in the 'Winter of Discontent'.



# Bollocks To Theory?

How worried should we be about the absence of theory in Britain? It is doubtful if any other country has advanced so close to the brink without ever affirming a need for theory. Nor is it easy to say why this should retard a proletarian movement which is in all other respects so advanced. Yet this uneasy feeling something is not quite as it should be just won't go away.

As it turned out the rioters were more served by 'instinct' than reason. Like the Italian insurgents of '77 they gave as never before short shrift to the 'left'. Unlike the Italians, they seemed unable to go beyond very angry though near sighted denunciations of manipulative practises. No real effort was ever made to generalize the struggle but most everyone, particularly in Liverpool, in a quite casual easy-going way, was free to join in. Deeds substituted for choruses of "class unity".

Altogether there was a near total absence of graffiti. Nowhere on the smoke blackened gable ends could graffiti be found remotely approaching the penetrating, retrospective yet highly topical refrains of the Italian spring, ("Let's retake life", "rest assured I shall not suicide, Italy 77", and "we are realizing culture suppressing it" etc). There wasn't much either in the way of flyers and agitational broadsheets. The best pamphlet to appear in England was "A second blast of the trumpet against the capitalist nightmare". In France a similar uprising would have produced a deluge of leaflets — nevermind the near inevitability of wall-to-wall graffiti. In spite of a much changed situation a direct line of descent from May '68 would be instantly apparent to most people there.

In Britain nation-wide uneavals glance only fleetingly across the oceans and national frontiers. Localized fury never aspires, even if in name only, to a genuine internationalism. Yet home grown class struggle in the UK attracts a lot of attention elsewhere. The wave of strikes that engulfed the UK between 1970/74 were commented on the world over but the UK proletariat remained indifferent to the impact abroad. In 1981 a few weeks after the July days placards were fixed to the backs of lorries in Berlin proclaiming "Manchester, Liverpool, London, Berlin", while graffiti appeared on walls in Spain demanding a Toxteth and Brixton there. And one of the best leaflets to come out on the UK explosion was produced in New York under the name of "Barbarians for Socialism". It is highly insulting to say the UK proletariat cannot see farther than the end of its nose, yet the quality of comment coming from outside Britain continues to mount up putting to shame most theoretical efforts to get to grips with class struggle here.

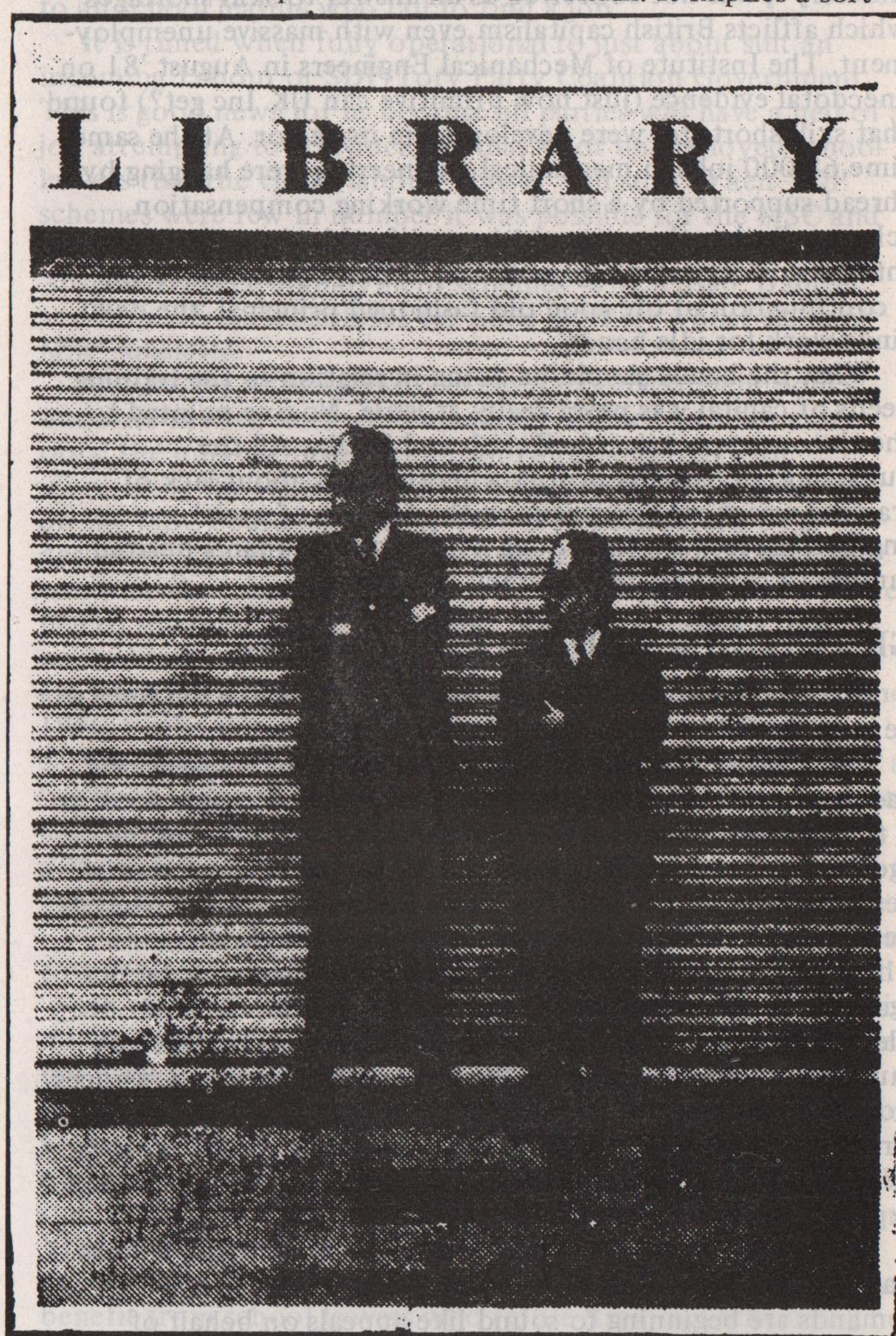
A troubling, maybe far fetched image sometimes flickers across the mind's eye. The UK in the not-so-distant future has been turned upside down from one end to the other. Young, old, black and white, employed and unemployed have by stages become involved yet not even a muted call for its international extension can be heard above the din of multi-coloured little Englanders.

Naval watching in the UK is however very distinct from US isolationism. Historically both have been ill at ease with the Pax Britannica and Pax Americana electing to let the rest of the world go to hell if needs be. However in Britain, it has traditionally taken root as much amongst the centre/left as the outside right (the left Labour Party MP Dennis Skinner prides himself in the age of mass travel on not possessing a passport). And it is not in the main aggressively racist like some extreme isolationist movements in America which tend to fear New York and Washington more than they do the world outside. Hence immigrants softened up by exposure to this condescending but sympathetic ear attuned to their plight, are more likely in turn to be vulnerable to the narrowing influence of left wing little Englanders.

Once upon a time it might generally have been supposed God was an Englishman but not one speck of this pompous self esteem has brushed off on proletarians living in the UK who dares attempt a searching analysis of class struggle in the

UK or elsewhere. An utter lack of confidence in these matters easily tips over into a do-nothing paralysis born of inferiority. Which is a shame but before branding it as cowardice we need to know why.

Part of the trouble arises from popularly held misconceptions which automatically confuses theory with academia and paid-up intellectuals. Because the latter have such a high standing in Britain, higher even than businessmen in the pseudo-bourgeois scale of value so typical of the UK, they tend to be bracketed (and rightly too) alongside 'them'. Now 'them' has a special inflection in Britain. It implies a sort



## STRANGER THAN FICTION

*Hours before the 3 days rioting in Derby word had gone out a library was to be the center of attack. Over the last year or so libraries all over the UK have been invaded as unemployment shot over 3 million. The generally snotty nosed staff are determined to prevent libraries being turned into informal community centers where the unemployed can gather. Tending to treat everyone who uses the library as unemployed their superiority and condescension knows no bounds arousing the hostility of every library user. It's a bit like the arguments for community policing all over again. Rather than risk a Toxteth of the bookshelves libraries for instance in Gateshead on Tyne, are becoming part of the institutionalized strategy for the management of the unemployed. Punk groups for example are allowed to perform on the premises during opening hours. Meanwhile a local library in Gateshead is popularly known as 'Colditz'.*

of archetypal snobbery against which the opposite, equally exaggerated extreme is alone safe from contamination. The trouble is all theorizing is consequently suspect though this onesided reaction hasn't seriously handicapped the proletariat yet. But it could well do so in the future and prizing theory away from past attempts to pull the wool might save lives and prevent disaster.

At the moment to step beyond a quite narrowly demarcated territory criss crossed with razor sharp but fragmentary observations, defiant witticisms and knockabout fun is to risk exclusion. Gentle ridicule and less frequently a mockery bordering on plain viciousness clouds any attempt at revolutionary theory which is only allowed to go so far before it trails off into embarrassed silence. Britain's immobile but also moving class-in-itself social apartheid oscillating from one moment to the next between self reliance and lack of confidence hingers on this increasingly precarious balance. But for the time being there's simply no getting away from it: in comparison to France, Spain, Portugal and Italy, the UK is theoretically underdeveloped though it remains on the practical plain quite extraordinarily rich. It is also true that here and there workers in the UK are becoming theoreticians and excellent ones at that. Let's hope that tendency gets bigger and wider until theory in action becomes an unstoppable force.

The most hectic periods of class struggle always leaves time for reflection but it is far from immediately obvious that lessons have been learnt in the UK. But learnt they must be otherwise class struggle in the absence of any mechanistic providence may not keep to such an unswerving course for much longer. There is for example not one instance of a genuinely collective theoretical creation that can stand comparison with the assembly statutes of the Barcelona dockers in their strike of 80/81. And because it was an assembly, others from outside (including foreigners) were given the right to speak and enter. (There have, in parenthesis, recently been joint assemblies of the employed and unemployed in Spain). What finally emerged was a revolutionary tract subsuming trade demarcations (the basis of trade unionism) with the wider realities of class. In the UK the only comparable examples were the occupations of Plessey's in South West Scotland and the Fisher Bendix factory in Liverpool in '72. Following the example of Plessey's, the workers of Fisher Bendix created an open assembly ("our struggle is your struggle") where wives, children, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, dogs, cats and lovers could come along and have their say. But it also remained something of a Liverpool family affair and it is doubtful if for example foreigners disseminating revolutionary material and opinions would have been made all that welcome. Still Liverpool has repeatedly defied all expectation.

When comparing the riots in the UK with those in Berlin parallel deficiencies are again apparent in a shared movement whose centre lies outside the point of production. In the aforementioned riot in Berlin, loud speaker vans reeling off the names and other business interests of real estate speculators (including incidentally, the German trade unions) could be heard urging demonstrators from one swank apartment to the next. The apartments were systematically being stoned. In the UK, this extra dimension of clarity was sadly missing. The riots in Britain were, to be sure, more exclusively proletarian than those in Berlin and far more deadly, But after having made due allowance an antipathy to all theory did seem to cramp horizons.

It cannot be said too often: Britain and the rest of the English speaking world desperately needs to set up a radical publishing venture. The need is especially urgent in Britain considering how close the country is to a gigantic explosion, or, catastrophe if things don't turn out right.

If the employed working class doesn't in the near future respond in a revolutionary manner, a death's head psychosis could lie in wait on every street corner. If fresh headway is not continually being made the floodtide of rioting could get dammed up and start to flow in the other way. And if this happens it's no use the workers blaming the bourgeoisie when

their own passive toleration of the circulation of commodities and the State is just as much to blame. There are no eternal truths that make the success of the social revolution certain in advance. The goal of an everyday life liberated from capitalism has to be fought for at every stage. Lack of clarity could mean "the common ruin of the contending classes" (Marx). And that today amounts to trillions bending down and kissing their ass goodbye forever.

**'WE ARE WITNESSING THE SPECTACULAR REARMING OF OUR GREAT ENEMY, THE STATE, SOMETHING THE WORLD'S RULING CLASSES DO WHEN THEY WANT TO GIVE AN APPEARANCE OF SOLIDITY TO THE DECOMPOSITION OF ITS FOUNDATIONS.'**  
(poster on gaoled Spanish Libertarians, 1981)

No amount of window dressing — and there wasn't much of that — can alter the fact that the State in the UK is now making long term preparations for an insurrection. There has recently been two disturbing developments related to the growing power of the para-military. The first consists in offering to young employed from inner cities the chance to get in some army experience. The second involves a revival of the Home Guard (called now the Home Service Force) to guard key installations such as telephone exchanges, electricity transformers, oil pipelines etc, 'against Russian wartime saboteurs'. In short, using the threat of a 3rd world war fomented by the super-powers as a front to put down indigenous insurrection. The army stresses it is not really looking for teenagers (no doubt they are too unreliable) preferring ideally to take on ex-servicemen and ex-coppers. Defence officials emphasised there was absolutely no intention of calling out the new Home Guard to cope with 'civil disturbances' but it would be the height of stupidity to think otherwise.

The lessons of the riots have begun to unevenly sink in all quarters. The State, quick off the mark, is making preparations for its defence well in advance of a potential proletarian onslaught. The proletariat has to take note of this and anticipate some of the problems in advance. Poland has been a testing ground for some of these problems and a clear warning you can fuck around with the system just for so long. Out comes the big stick eventually. The Polish telephone operators for instance, were caught napping by the coup. So the telephone communication system was easily immobilised by the military. Have telephone operators in the UK thought what the consequences might be if telephone exchanges are ringed by armed thugs? Unable to make physical contact with the outside they will be exposed to the most frightening forms of intimidation from 'their' armed guards.

Lastly the advertised holiday with the army for the young jobless marks a turning point in the Armed Forces' involvement with unemployed youth. Ever since the Boy Scouts, the army has settled for making its influence felt in an off duty capacity. The volunteer recruits won't (for the moment at any rate) receive weapons training but they will be subject to army discipline and salutes and more likely therefore to respond positively to an army takeover if it should ever come to pass. It is too early to say what sort of youth is likely to be attracted to this cut price offer. But it could well appeal to repressed, still tentative authoritarian undertones in some of today's youth sub-cultures.

**'MALVINAS PARA LOS PINGUINOS'**  
**'VICTORY TO THE SHEEP'** (anti war slogans)

In the exceptionally severe winter of 1886 unemployed building workers and others rioted in central London. Engels condemned the 'opportunism' of William Morris and sundry who saw in these unemployed battles "the first skirmish of the revolution". They were, according to Engels, the work



of desperate riff-raff on "the borderland between the working class and lumpenproletariat — ready for any 'lark' up to a wild riot à propos de rien". Drifting back into the East End the unemployed numbering some 20,000 rattled off a chorus or two of Rule Britannia.

This other seaborne 'national anthem' has once again been heard wishing the fleet well as it sailed for the Falklands/Malvinas or rather the Penguin Isles. On a London bus a graffiti read 'Skinheads fight for your country, go to the Falklands' and the number of applicants applying to the naval recruiting office in High Holborn zoomed up. When asked on a radio programme if these included unemployed skool leavers, a spokesman with a kilo of plums in his mouth answered "We are not a recruiting office for unemployables."

This cold water reply sets limits to the hot blooded nationalism of the phantom spray can writer. Together they reflect the potency and limitations of this ad hoc response to the conflict in the S. Atlantic which the State has used to the utmost, tapping both popular imperial residues and the legacy of anti fascism deriving from World War II. Set beside other memories retrieved from the historical deeps, Maggie Thatcher on the even of the Mark No 1 Task Force setting sail opportunely quoted Queen Victoria. "Failure? The possibility does not exist." However against memories of Drake and other expeditionary forces sent to sort out some corner of a far flung empire, were mingled allusions to the Dover Patrol of the second World War and an anti fascist resistance.

Behind the irrelevant and anachronistic facade of territorial imperialism or righteous anti fascism, the hidden purpose of the war is to disorientate the proletariat. Never at any time in the past has the fleet so explicitly put to sea to prevent the proletariat from setting sail in its own drunken boat. To the aft of the unexpected show of strength mounted by the Task Force lies the fear of riots, strikes and a dissident youth whose aggressive energy needs to be nailed with official blessing to the mast of a hooligan patriotism. The unrelenting media swamp operation has drowned any mention (until June) of three days of heavy rioting in Liverpool, and has only partially succeeded in jamming the trouble in the health service, the support striking miners have already given nurses, and the promise of more aid to come from steel workers and water workers. A national dock strike was narrowly averted and massive trouble on the railways threatens. Apart from the hospitals these struggles are not about higher pay, raising questions of class solidarity, unemployment and the erosion of working conditions (e.g. the Wandsworth refuse collectors strike against competitive tendering).

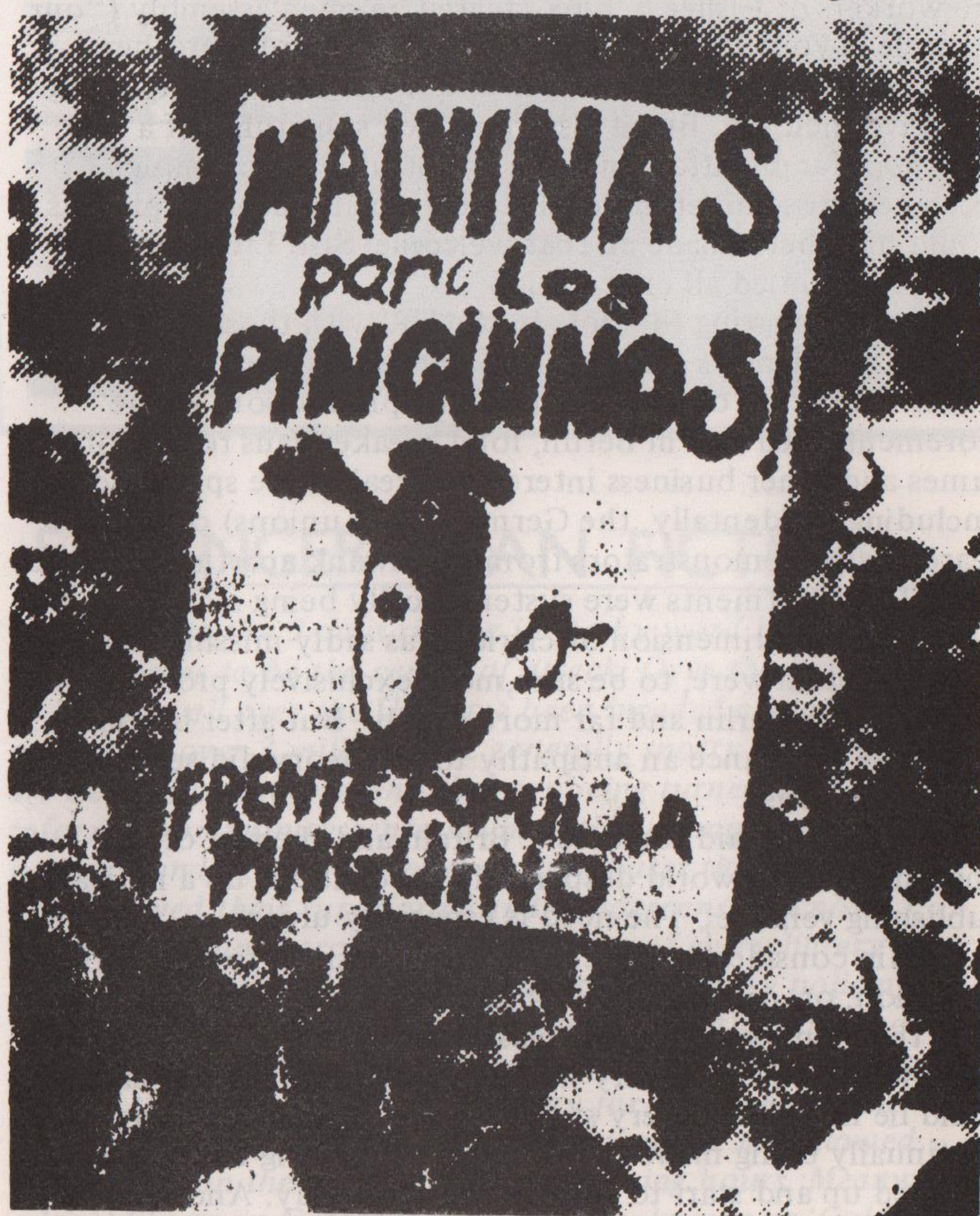
Counteracting the drift to class unity is the British Bulldog divisiveness created by the S. Atlantic war. Suddenly racial, regional/national differences have taken on an importance once more. Military success has mesmerised many a skinhead. A year ago they ached to trash rich suburbs and were putting out feelers to young blacks who look on the Penguin Isles as just another piece of land. Irish proletarians who over the last few years have never made a big thing out of being Irish, lowered their voices, wary lest anyone think them unpatriotic and northerners became somewhat 'suspect' as 'socialist' by the 'loyalist' south. All this old divide and rule crap has reared its head again but now without any substance to sustain it for any length of time.

The war in the South Atlantic had from the British Government's point of view to be sold as a just war. This is the key to the anti fascist rhetoric, references to D-Day landings, the longest Day, Poland 1939 etc. But the real effect of this propaganda will be felt in Latin America, not in the UK. At a stroke Thatcher ruined the US/Argentinian axis. As the former US Assistant Secretary of State William Rogers said: "We face the erosion if not the dismantlement of the entire inter-American system." Thatcher however is supremely unaware that she might actually be fomenting revolution in Latin America. Formerly, British expeditionary forces were often as not despatched to put down popular rebellion. Now it is the reverse: success for the British military means fanning the flames of social revolution abroad.

Lacking a world view of likely causes and effects, the business in the South Atlantic is a parochial throw of the dice. It has in the UK been a spectator's war, conveying an impression of effortless conquest meant to overawe the proletariat and restore the confidence of the British nation State accustomed to falling flat on its face. This was the pearl behind the successful storming of the penguins massed on South Georgia and the ludicrous despatch sent out by the Commander of the Fleet to Queen Liz. The only concession to anti fascist sentiment — excepting the rhetoric — has been the capture and bringing back of Capitano Alfredo Astiz, the notorious Argentinian torturer. All in all there are built-in limitations to the manipulation of the anti fascist heritage in the UK which the State seems to recognise by not making much of. A tradition of armed guerrilla resistance to an indigenous fascist regime lending itself to manipulation by Secret Services through acts of terrorism is lacking. This rules out any slavish imitation of the Italian-style 'strategy of tension' though the British State has not been averse to using terrorism when it saw fit. The British State has to extemporise ever anew, unable to hit on the right formula for containment. Penguin Islands were a gift horse alright, but how much more mileage can be got out of these remote islands? Interest wanes with victory and mass attention is beamed back from the South Atlantic to the social war within.

Insistent prodding shall keep alive the memory of these events. Threats, real or imagined, of a renewed invasion and bombing raids are going to mean the garrisoning of British troops on the Islands for some considerable time to come. A flotilla of boats large and small are likely to be kept on the ready in the South Atlantic. Cuts in naval expenditure shall be temporarily postponed and the rundown of naval dockyards in Chatham and Portsmouth (scenes of rioting in '81) leading to the loss of 40,000 jobs deferred for a while. One third of the navy, prior to the conflict, was due to be scrapped and some 40 of the jolly jack tars who put to sea were clutching redundancy papers. 1000 professional soldiers were also, due to be laid off. No future but signing on the rock 'n roll.

The navy was however going to bear the brunt of the cuts. Naval high commands threatened with imminent eclipse (minus subs) are staking their survival on this nostalgic



'Senior Service fag packet Armada silhouetted against westering guns more evocative of World War I than the nuclear/missile age. The rebuilding of the lost ships, the maintenance of an 8,000 mile supply line and the enormous cost of the war nearing two billion pounds will be paid for out of increased taxation and a further reduction in the social wage as money available for health care is snapped up by the armed forces. This is bound eventually to exacerbate still more the social crises which just goes to show what a one-off adventure this has been. In the not so distant past, jingoism and gun boat diplomacy had to be paid for with increased welfare expenditure and domestic reform — the reverse of what is happening now.

The subversive process within has gone too far and bread and water phrases like 'peace with honour' will do little to set back for any length of time the beginnings of a revolutionary unity and totality, the like of which the British proletariat has never experienced before.

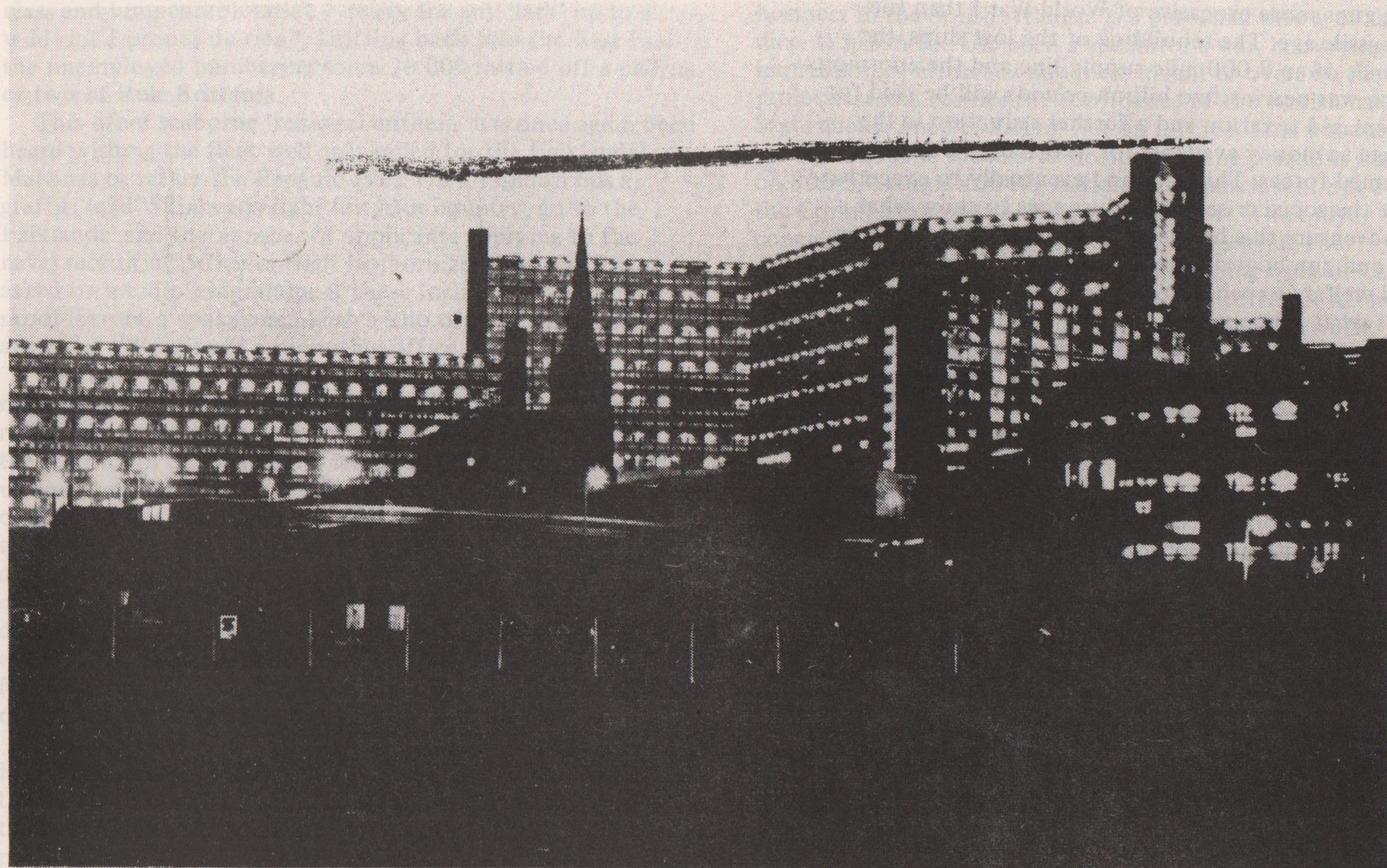
The summer riots of '81 were the foretaste of the future for us. One day sooner or later the roof is going to blow off the UK. Faced with an assertion like this most people in pubs, streets, supermarkets or at work tend to nod their heads. The old phlegmatic reassurances that "it can't happen here" has finally gone — let it be forever.

Wolfie Smith  
Speed  
Tucker and June  
(1982)



When will King Coal and the old King Cole burn merrily together?





**SHEFFIELD: DARK SATANIC HIGH RISE.**  
Though only thirty five miles apart both towns were scenes of riots.



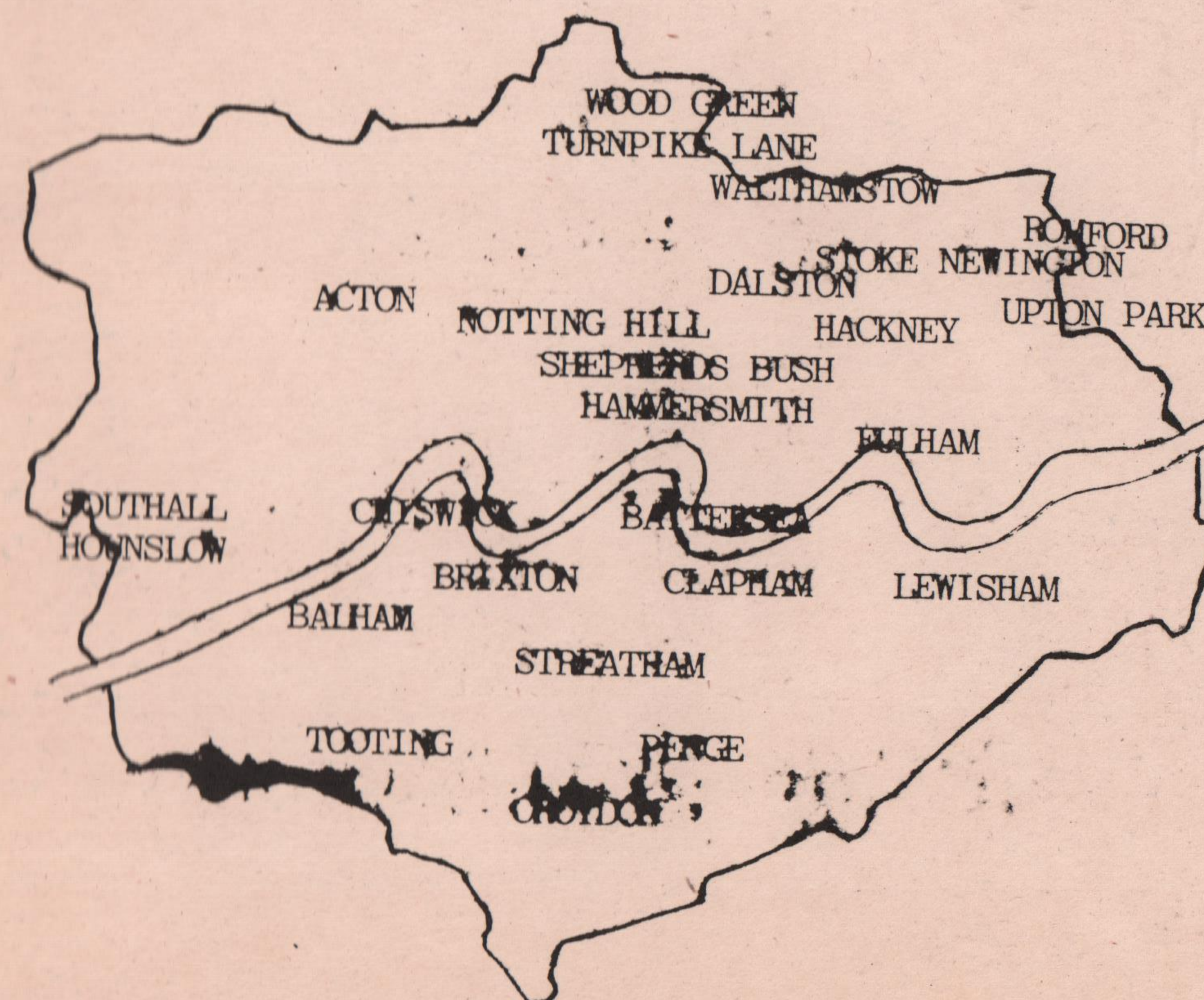
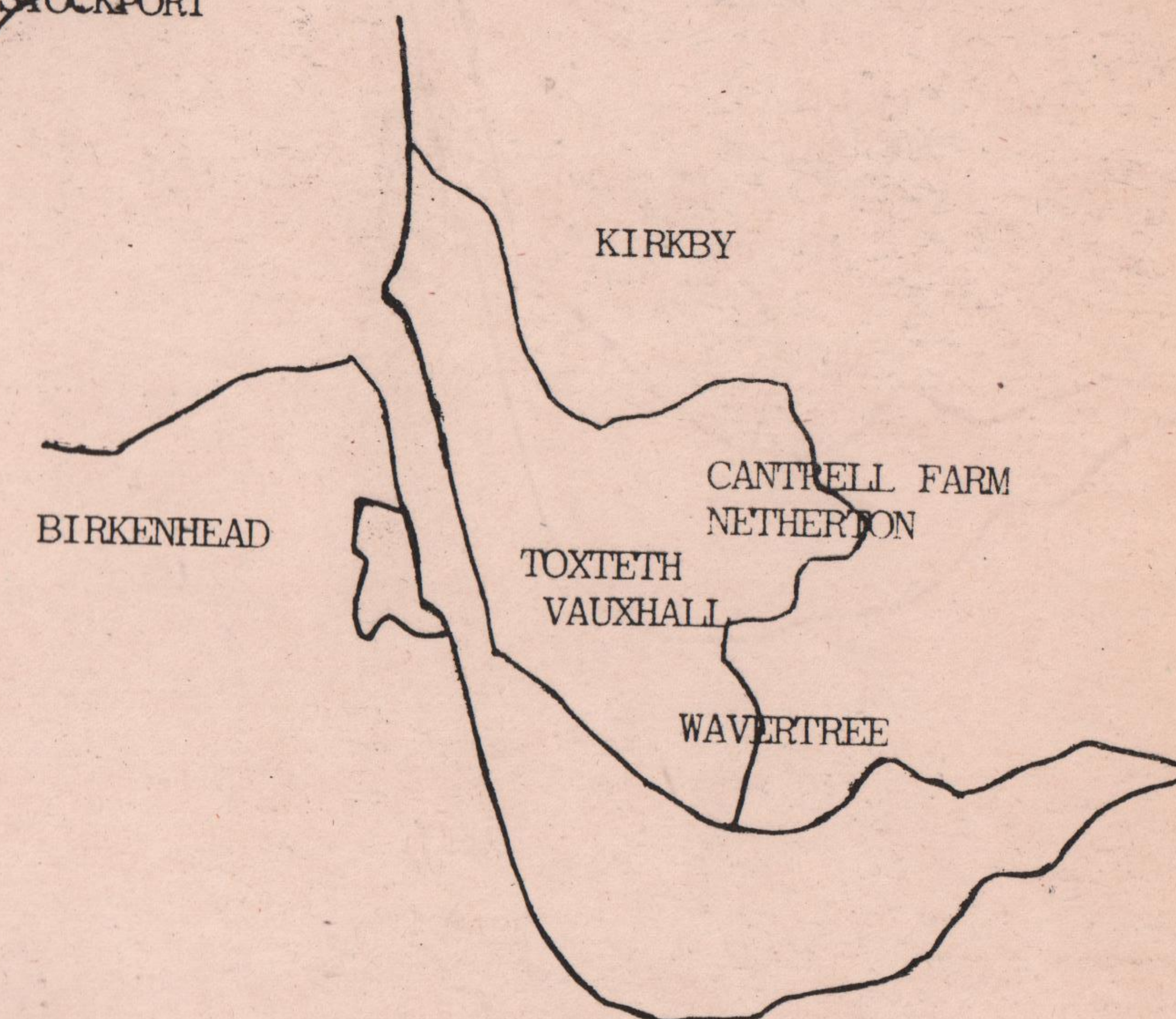
**KNARESBORO: ENGLANDS DREAMING.**  
*The picture postcard medieval market town of Knaresboro 'in its enchanting natural setting', 'clothed with deep woods' (Arthur Mee's 'Yorkshire W. Riding') was one the evening of July 11th '81, a picturesque scene of youthful parishioners running through the pear tree shaded wynds of Main Street trashing banks, jewellers, off licenses and shouting 'Brixton, Brixton'.*

# RIOT AREAS:



## MANCHESTER

## LIVERPOOL



## LONDON