

LIVING MARXISM LM100 | UK £2.50 MAY 1997 | US\$6 DM9 FF27 IR£2.50

**FREE SPEECH?
LM LAUNCHES THE
FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT
TO BE OFFENSIVE**

LM100

The mag ITN wants to gag

**FREE EXPRESSION?
CRASH PRODUCER HITS
BACK AT THE CENSORS**

**FREE SOCIETY?
WHY BLAIR'S BRITAIN
WILL BE AN OPEN
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Whatever
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LM 100

4	MICK HUME: Whatever happened to freedom?
6	LM-Mail
8	TABOOS: The addiction myth <i>Dolan Cummings</i>
11	OPINION: <i>Ann Bradley</i>
12	New revelations about the picture that fooled the world <i>Thomas Deichmann</i>
14	Libel laws: censorship for hire <i>Helen Searls and Daniel Lloyd</i>
17	NIGHTMARE ON DOWNING STREET
18	Hard Labour <i>Charlotte Reynolds</i>
18	Nanny Blunkett knows best <i>Claire Fox</i>
20	Is Blair Tina's heir? <i>Mike Fitzpatrick</i>
23	the next step conference
27	We told you so <i>Andrew Calcutt</i>
28	CLASS POLITICS CANNOT BE RESCUED TODAY <i>Frank Furedi</i>
32	Safe Spice <i>Jennie Bristow</i>
34	FUTURES: Time for science to get on its soapbox <i>John Gillott</i>
37	SECOND OPINION: <i>Dr Michael Fitzpatrick</i>
38	ALT.CULTURE.LM 'The copy-cat argument is just a joke'— <i>Crash</i> producer hits back
43	READING BETWEEN THE LINES: <i>What's behind the Hegel revival?</i>

Welcome

to the one hundredth issue of our bigmouthed, broadminded magazine, an occasion marked by *LM's* launch of the Fight for the Right to Be Offensive.

If you want to see issue 200 of *LM* (or maybe even issue 101), turn to the back page and back the Mag ITN Wants to Gag

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MICK HUME

Editor



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO FREEDOM?

THROUGH ALL THE COUNTLESS SPEECHES and statements and press conferences and television interviews of the general election campaign, one word has barely passed any leading politician's lips: freedom.

Freedom has been so devalued that those running for public office in a Western democracy like Britain no longer feel the need even to pay lip service to it. That is a remarkable turnaround. After all, the notion that we live in a free society at the heart of the free world used to be the proudest boast of British governments and opposition leaders alike. Now it seems that freedom has become a dirty word, something that can be casually associated with immorality, promiscuity or greed.

The major parties' 1997 election manifestos bear testimony to the degradation of freedom. The Tory Party has traditionally sought to associate itself closely with this cause. Its manifesto, 'Our Vision For Britain', still uses the word 'freedom' on 14 occasions. But exactly what are the freedoms that the Conservatives are concerned about today?

Six of those 14 mentions in the Tory manifesto refer to freedom for schools—freedom to opt-out of local education authority control, freedom to charge fees, freedom to hire and fire teachers—while another one upholds the freedom of fundholding doctors to manage their own budgets. Elsewhere the manifesto says that there should be less freedom for criminals, and that the courts should have the freedom to allow the names of convicted juveniles to be published. Three of the other mentions of freedom are rhetorical outbursts of Euro-scepticism (including a commitment to the freedom to plant trees after the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy). And the last two are a rhetorical outburst of Conservative support for the family as the basis of freedom, and a rhetorical outburst celebrating the end of socialism as a 'triumph for human freedom'.

The Labour Party manifesto 'new Labour: Because Britain Deserves Better' is even thinner in the freedom department. The programme on which New Labour is going to be governing the country from May mentions the word just five times. Three of those references are to freedom

of information, as part of New Labour's sanctimonious moral crusade to 'clean up politics'. The other two deal with Labour's commitment to the 'commercial freedom' of the Post Office, and its support for the freedom to explore the countryside—tempered, of course, by a warning that New Labour will not permit any 'abuse' of the right to ramble.

In these statements of principle from Britain's great parties of state, 'freedom' is at best trivialised and belittled, at worst twisted to mean its very opposite. There is no mention in either manifesto of the big democratic freedoms that have traditionally been seen as the defining values of British civilisation. The fact

THERE IS A RESOUNDING SILENCE ABOUT THE CONTINUING ASSAULTS ON

that New Labour, the natural party of government for our times, feels the least discomfort about devaluing freedom is a telling sign of which way the wind is blowing.

The resounding silence about basic freedoms is doubly remarkable, because so many of the political and personal freedoms which formally exist in our society are under assault today. There is a continuous process of encroachment upon our freedoms by official and quasi-official bodies. Yet it seems to mean nothing to those who are setting the current agenda for public debate.

SOME OF OUR FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL and public freedoms are now in the firing line. Freedom of speech is continuously being curtailed in the censorious climate of the nineties. The freedom to assemble and to protest have been severely undermined by the repressive public order and anti-trade union laws of the Tory years. Even the principle of a free vote has been rendered pretty meaningless in the latest electoral farce; after all, what does democracy mean when there are no competing political alternatives on offer, and the opposition parties are even prepared to vacate the field altogether in order to let a knight in a white suit stand on an explicitly non-political platform?

Many of our personal and private freedoms are being more explicitly trashed today. Homes are no longer castles at a time when an army of council inspectors, policemen and social workers can demand access to a family's most intimate affairs. You no longer have the freedom to argue with your partner, smack your own children or even let a child play outside without risking the wrath of the intrusive authorities. Nor do you have the freedom to smoke, drink, drive, watch a film, own a gun, adopt a child, enter a public building or walk down a street without negotiating an expanding minefield of regulations, restrictions and surveillance measures.

That important outposts of freedom are being lost is bad enough. That this is not even a controversial issue makes matters far worse.

FREEDOMS WHICH PEOPLE SPILT BLOOD, sweat and tears over are now being given up without so much as a sniffle. Indeed it is widely taken for granted today that too much freedom is a bad thing, and that the popular passions and ambitions need to be kept in check by more enlightened authorities. The right to self-determination, for example, a freedom which the proud peoples of the old colonial world fought for and won at great cost, has now been erased by a global consensus which agrees that Western charity officials and international financiers know what is best for the poor little Africans and Asians. It is a similar story elsewhere, as panicky responses to society's problems turn into demands for more controls on human behaviour, aka less freedom.

We are not only living in an unfree society, but one which often seems uncomfortable with what little freedom it has; an anxious society in which far too many people seem prepared to offer up their freedoms for sacrifice even before the authorities demand them, in return for the empty promise of a bit more order and security.

THE FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO BE OFFENSIVE

There is no time to lose if we are to make the case for freedom before things go too far. Freedom is not just a nice idea or an abstract principle that should be upheld for its own sake. An unchecked assault on society's freedoms will have profound implications for the kind of life we can lead, both as individuals and as a collective humanity.

Over the past 200 years or so, the expansion of freedom has created the space within which human beings could experiment and make progress without the old constraints. Freedom in the political and private spheres has allowed societies the chance to move forward. Individuals who have enjoyed the freedom to break

OUR BASIC FREEDOMS

through the barriers of convention and respectability, in fields of human activity ranging from science to social reform, have been instrumental in making the world the place it is.

Restricting freedom is a recipe for stagnation, for holding back the human potential to improve. And that is the last thing we can afford to do, surrounded as we are by the growing feeling that society has reached a dead-end.

There is a need now to take an uncompromising stand for freedom; for the freedom to speak as we find, to judge for ourselves, to live as autonomous adults. *LM* magazine is making a start by upholding free speech against all-comers, with the launch of the Fight for the Right to be Offensive.

This initiative reflects a concern that has grown within *LM* over our 100 issues, as we have mapped the creeping progress of censorship and self-censorship in society. That concern has been thrown into sharper relief by *LM*'s current battle against ITN's libel writs and gagging orders, where we have been shat upon from a great height for trying to exercise freedom of speech at the expense of conventional wisdom and powerful interests.

Apparently 'It's a free country, ain't it guv?' is no longer an acceptable line of defence.

We might still have the formal right to free speech. But that means nothing unless we can exercise the right to be offensive.

Today it seems as if anything that can be adjudged offensive, either to 'decent people' or to some delicate minority, can automatically be ruled out of order. Offensive opinions, language, gestures, films, books, art, TV shows, adverts and jokes have all been censored, cut, punished or withdrawn in order to protect public sensibilities.

Yet it is surely only the controversial and the offensive that we need worry about protecting. The mainstream and the conventional can look after itself.

Since Galileo was convicted of heresy for insisting that the Earth was not the centre of the Universe, the heralds of the new have always been branded offensive. Every social or scientific advance worth having, from contraception and the railways to votes for women and the abolition of slavery, began by outraging the conventions of its time.

Offending the set prejudices of public opinion has always been the first step towards popularising a more forward-looking outlook. If a few had not insisted upon their right to be offensive, humanity might have nice manners but it would still be somewhere in the caves.

In the stultifying atmosphere of today, there is an especially pressing

It is only the **CONTROVERSIAL** that we need worry about **PROTECTING.** The conventional can look after itself

need for a full discussion of possible alternatives for a society which seems to be at a dead-end. Yet at the very moment we require open minds, the insecure are seeking to close down debate, control what can be said and outlaw anything 'extreme' or 'offensive'.

In response to this dire state of affairs, it is time for those of us who are concerned about freedom and democratic debate to insist upon our right to tell it like it is, to bust every social taboo, to blaspheme in the face of all religiosity and outrage public opinion. In short, we should fight for the right to be offensive.

Free speech should not be constrained either by bans, libel laws or 'responsible' self-censorship. In a world of adults, we should expect to be able to speak for ourselves, to judge for ourselves and to stand up for ourselves. Anything less is an offence against freedom.

The picture that fooled the world

Andrew JM Hogg (letters, April) implies that taking a stand against the vilification of the Serbs makes *LM* card carrying ethnic cleansers. Perhaps he can answer these questions, then.

The ANC had several torture camps in Southern Angola. Would reporting this have made one a supporter of apartheid? In 1982, British soldiers were found to have shot prisoners and mutilated corpses in the Malvinas. Would reporting this make one a supporter of a right-wing dictatorship? In Italy in 1943, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders shot surrendering German soldiers. Does reporting this make one a Nazi?

FLOYD CODLIN *London*

Andrew Hogg (letters, April) says that 'it was not the barbed wire at Trnopolje that was so important'. It is amazing how the fact of the barbed wire fence suddenly becomes an irrelevance when difficult questions are raised about its existence. The reason why it 'looked perilously like' the Bosnian Serbs were embarked on a 'Nazi style policy of extermination' was precisely because of images such as that of the barbed wire fence that could only serve to conjure up memories of the Holocaust. When the media representation of any event is challenged by well-researched facts, it is the obligation of journalists to answer the questions asked of them, not to dismiss the truth as an irrelevance.

JAN MACVARISH *London*

I attended the Off The Fence meeting on 6 March with my wife and friends, and was extremely impressed with your organisation and style in exposing ITN's shenanigans. I attach a copy of the letter I sent to the *Guardian* in response to Luke Harding's article about the meeting ('A shot that's still ringing', 12 March). If the *Guardian* does not have the guts to use it or respond to me, then please let others see what a government employee thinks:

As a regular *Guardian* reader I have been impressed with the frankness and openness of the paper's editorial policy and its

responsibility towards truth—until now. The article presented by Mr Harding was nothing better than a cheap tabloid hatchet job. If that is the style of reporting we can expect, the *Guardian* will lose all credibility for championing and presenting the truth.

At the meeting I heard professional presentations, watched the film, and considered the evidence. This subject demands an investigation into the rights of a free press to carry out investigative journalism, and underlines the necessity of accurate and impartial reporting. Mr Harding's throwaway comments had no importance to the main issue, which his article appeared designed to deflect.

Mr Harding sounds an alarm in stating that 'revolutionaries' and 'chilling pan-Serbian enthusiasts' are attempting to re-write history. It would be a service to us all if he had written objectively and recognised that not everything that has been recorded in the past, whether distant or recent, reflects the truth. To the *Guardian* I present this challenge: be just that, guardian of the cause of a free press, accurate reporting and seeker of the truth. Maybe then you will regain my trust.

AJ FOX *Orpington*

The American press has not sniffed out one hint of this controversy. Of course, those so quick to judge would be utterly dumbfounded at the prospect of having to retract and re-think, but come on—at what point does one finally acknowledge that this one was not so cut and dried after all? On the other hand, we are dealing with a Western media apparatus who have never let a little thing like truth and evidence get in the way of hard reporting! Not yet, anyway.

J ROSEN *USA*

The fight for the truth goes on about what actually happened in Bosnia where ITN filmed. I support your efforts to inform the British people. Kick right-wing arse, Mick. Furthermore, as a publisher of a journal on politics and other matters, I invite your readers to visit my website.

ANDREW HOOD
<http://www.englishtimes.com>

Having followed the *LM* versus ITN case with interest I am worried that the trend towards subjectivity has reached the editorial offices of *LM*. How else are we to understand Mick Hume's comments in his letter to the *Guardian* that he 'wears good suits'?

Mick, no you don't. Hope you can handle the truth.

CARL BROGAN fashion designer
Manchester

*** Thanks for the many messages of support we have received**

Consumer power

For all your sarcasm about anti-consumerism and ethical consumerism ('Consuming passions', April), you cannot ignore one basic fact. The firms that everyone hates because they underpay their workers, ignore health and safety in the workplace and the market place, pollute etc, only stay in business because we buy their products. If we did not, they would go bankrupt (in the financial sense of the word, already being morally bankrupt).

Then again, why should *LM* point this out? You are always much nastier to the left than to the right. One day, you must run a piece on what separates *LM* from right-wing libertarians: there must be something.

KATHARINE A GILCHRIST *Canterbury*

Holy profanity

James Downey (letters, April) is in favour of the transubstantiation of Dunblane on the grounds that it takes something like a new religion to bring people together. So I presume he is equally in favour of the sanctimonious Blitz spirit which various commentators tried to engender after the IRA disrupted the Grand National.

Are you so desperate for a sense of belonging, James, that you are willing to belong to anything, no matter how morbid or absurd? The fixation on Dunblane is sick not sensitive, the Aintree headlines ('we'll fight them on the Bechers') were an unfunny self-parody, and you should realise that sharing in our own degradation is the kind of togetherness we can all do without.

DARREN THOMAS *Wolverhampton*

Style wars re-released

I was worried by the new look *LM*. Is this *Lesbians Monthly*, *Living Madly*, *Loud Men* or some other *LM*? *Living Marxism* has raised more questions in the staff room than *LM*. Where is the statement being made when colleagues glance at the front cover?

Although I am aware that you must try to appeal to a wider audience for financial survival, the new style layout with its annoying sideways look at arts and slick presentation seems to emphasise the lifestyles image.

JP DOBSON *Peterborough*

I think that *LM* would do well to put less emphasis on moral panics and include more articles on social issues. I am not suggesting that cheering on the unions would be a good idea, but issues such as Europe have received little coverage in *LM*, and yet are a major part of public debate. I also think that some more theoretical articles would be useful. Marxism aims to understand the world as a totality. It would be a shame if *LM* came to be seen as a liberal publication espousing dogmatic lines on a small number of issues.

MARTIN EARNSHAW

Goldsmiths College London SE14

More roads, please

Rob Ewing (letters, April) states that 'there is simply too little road space, and too many cars'. The first problem is simple—build more and better roads. As for there being 'too many cars', does he mean that I should leave mine at home and struggle to work by bus or tube?

No way. In rush hour traffic it probably takes me as long to travel by car as it would to do the same journey by public transport, but how much more civilised it is to sit and listen to the radio or contemplate the day ahead, rather than being stuck under someone's armpit on the tube or bracing myself for a fight to get on that already overcrowded bus.

As to car drivers being selfish, I suggest that Ewing spends a day behind the wheel in London and witnesses the cyclists' highway code: do not ever signal your

manoeuvres, mount the pavement when you are in a queue (disregard pedestrians), and *never* pay attention to the traffic lights because you are God's gift and they do not apply to you.

JUSTINE BRIAN, Nissan Micra
London.

Relativism sucks

Despite what John Waller says (letters, April), the achievements of the pharmaceutical industry are tremendous. Developments in medicine over the past few years have eased or eliminated the suffering of billions. Waller is concerned that scientists are not prejudice-free, as if there were some conspiracy of prejudice behind pharmaceuticals. Sorry, John, but that is not how it works: a company spends billions to try to get a product that works, so that we will buy it. Occasionally products have side-effects or do not work properly, in which case the company and a number of people lose out, but overall people get better.

Waller tries to substantiate his view by pointing out that 'left-wing sociologists are in the vanguard of scientific relativism'. But if knowledge is relative, how can anyone be sure where the vanguard is? Relativism is not a vanguard but a rearguard heading in the wrong direction. Einstein was better than Newton, modern medical technology is great, and leeches suck.

BARRY EAST *Chesterfield*

Paddywhackery

How pleasant it was to find a condensed version of Mark Ryan's article ('Why I am not proud to be Irish', March) in the *Daily Telegraph* on St Patrick's Day. I quite agree with his sentiments regarding 'fake' Irish pubs. Never in all my many visits to such establishments have I been confronted in the toilet by an incoherent tramp from County Mayo who has affectionately slapped me on the back with such vigour that I have almost been propelled into an overflowing urinal; nor have I ever met an emaciated 15-year-old brandishing tiny infant and rattling tin. I trust the brewery big shots will address these matters immediately.

MARTIN 'PADDY' CULLEN *Wakefield*

LM-MAIL

Over-rated Crash

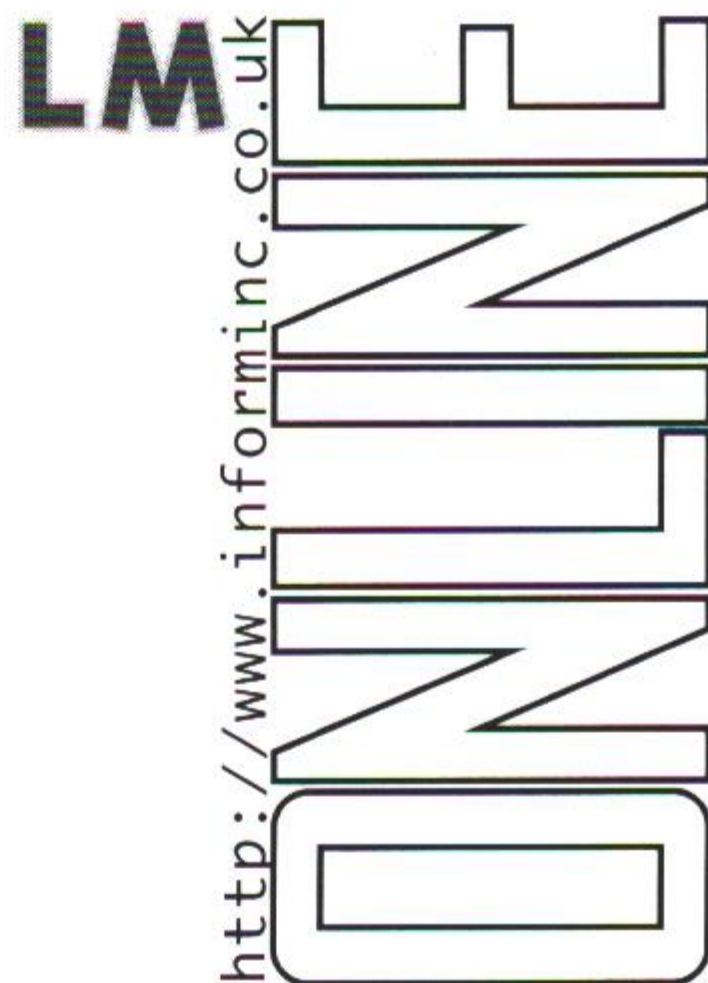
When I picked up the book *Crash*, I was rather turned off by the preface which author JG Ballard added to it in 1995. He basically backtracks on his critique of conventional morality, suggesting that there is an 'innate perversity' in us all; and he makes a statement against the car and car culture ('a pandemic cataclysm that kills hundreds of thousands of people each year and injures millions') that fits the current climate of restraint ('the ultimate role of *Crash* is cautionary').

The novel itself is merely a description, albeit a gory one, of the main characters' perversions. I did not feel any sympathy for the bad guy, in the way that Nabokov's *Lolita* compels you to do. Hitchcock said that his films were only as good as their bad guys, and in this department *Crash* the novel fails miserably.

I am not speaking as an enraged moralist in his pulpit, but as someone who loves reading about perversions, either in fiction or non-fiction, from Jacques Lacan's readings of famous psycho murders to the novels of Jim Thompson and Derek Raymond. Such books genuinely show that the repressed underbelly of society can be understood by 'normal' people. Unlike *Crash* which, contrary to expectations, is boring and dated.

ALESSIO QUARZO-CERINA

London E8



The what's NOT on guide

KILLED *Homicide*: The first two episodes from the new series of the cop show set in Baltimore have not been broadcast. Channel 4 announced that, because of alleged similarities between the bought-in episodes and the tragic events at Dunblane, it was thought inappropriate to show them 'at the present time'. Since the murders committed by the deranged Thomas Hamilton occurred in March 1996, perhaps Channel 4 should explain how long 'the present time' can be expected to last.

BURIED *Dawn of the Dead*: Billed as the first complete screening on British television, George A Romero's film *Dawn of the Dead* was actually shown on BBC 2 minus one scene, which was cut for Dunblane-related reasons. No doubt those who had already sat through the rest of Romero's gory fantasy would have been traumatised by seeing zombie children machine-gunned.



Offensive to zombies?

GAGGED Investigative journalism: The new Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) has issued a draft code of practice which would outlaw deception and secret filming by journalists unless they were acting in the 'overwhelming public interest'. The draft code also states that interviewees should have the right to withdraw their interviews or change their statements if the story under investigation has moved on since the interview took place. Programmes like *Brass Eye*, which came late to our screens after complaints from interviewees, would be in clear breach of the draft code. Presumably there is no chance of the code being applied to the endless stream of TV programmes culled from secretly filmed police video footage.

HIDDEN The true story of Waco? On *Rant in E Minor* (Rykodisc), a posthumously released CD from the late Bill Hicks, the caustic comedian recalls seeing public access TV footage of the FBI siege of a cult HQ in Waco, which did not appear in mainstream news coverage of the event. The FBI insists that the fire which killed 86 people was started by cult members, but Hicks says 'I've seen it, with my own eyes, footage of a Bradley tank shooting fire into the compound'. He ruminates as to why no major news source picked it up. Surely it was newsworthy, he says, because 'that basically means that the government...including Bill Clinton are...liars and murderers'.

JELLIED *Eels*: The song 'Novocaine for my Soul' includes the line 'fucking with my head'. At least, it does on the album version. On the single which was a hit in March, frontman E sings 'F-F-F-F with my head' instead. Likewise on the recent hit single by The Beautiful South, the line 'don't marry her, have me' replaces the original lyric: 'don't marry her, fuck me'. Just two examples of the growing trend for bands to censor themselves in order to make the radio playlist. Don't they know that the shortest route to rock 'n' roll stardom is to have your record banned?

PULLED *Esquire* (US edition) literary editor Will Blythe resigned in protest after editor Edward Kosner pulled *The Term Paper Artist*, a steamy short story by gay novelist David Levitt due for publication in the April issue. Perhaps *Esquire* feels uncomfortable about men squiring each other—surely a backward step for the magazine which dared to send Jean Genet and William Burroughs to 'cover' the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

WE WELCOME READERS' VIEWS AND CRITICISMS

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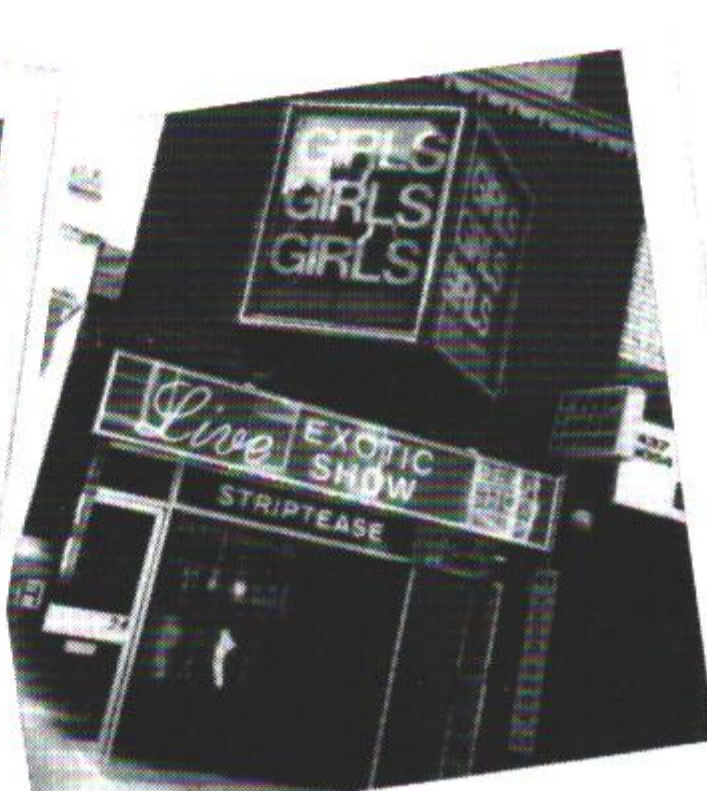
Letters may be edited for clarity and length

TABOOS

Is addiction a growing social disease, or just the ultimate excuse for screwing up?

Dolan Cummings investigates

THE ADDICTION MYTH



The American cigarette manufacturer Liggett made world news in March, by becoming the first tobacco corporation to admit that 'smoking is addictive'. This concession follows a campaign, led by the non-inhaling President Clinton, to have tobacco reclassified as a 'drug of addiction' and to clamp down on advertising (see M Fitzpatrick, 'Warning: Anti-smoking crusades can damage your life', *LM*, October 1996).

On the same day that Liggett relented, a report published by Alcohol Concern warned that one in 20 people in the UK are addicted to alcohol, and called on the government to develop a national alcohol strategy to crack the problem. Alcohol Concern director Eric Appleby insisted that the current 'light-hearted approach' to alcohol abuse would have to change.

Almost every day, it seems, we are confronted with further evidence suggesting that addiction of various sorts is a major and growing problem. But what exactly is addiction?

Everybody knows that heroin is an addictive drug, and that drug addiction

is a terrible thing. But is heroin addiction the same thing as cigarette addiction? Is it a physical disease? What about gambling addiction? A psychological disorder? Is there such a thing as an addictive personality? Can anybody become addicted to anything?

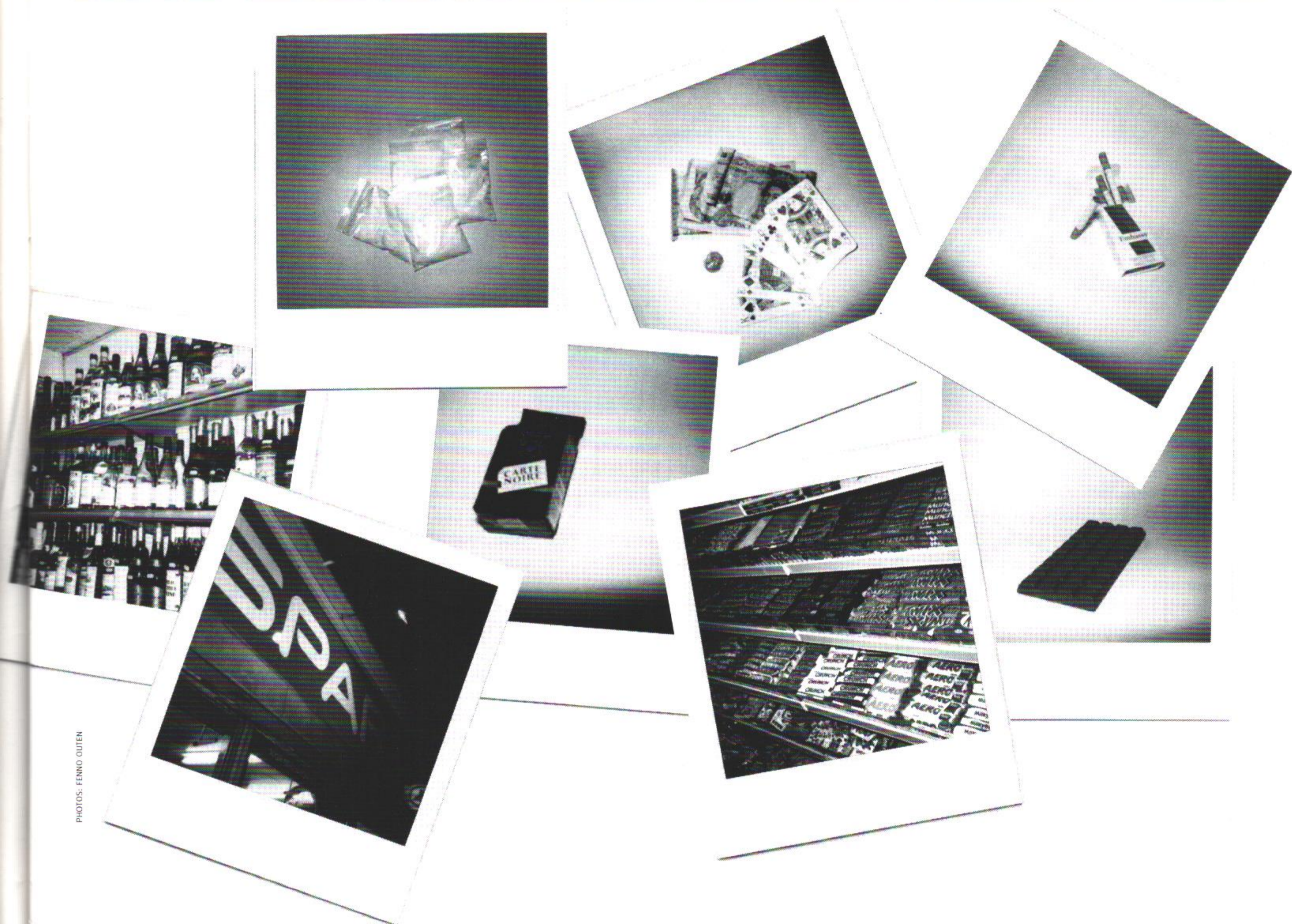
Just look at the proliferation of addictions. Is shopping addiction a joke or a disease? What about chocolate addiction? Sex addiction?! A bit of thought reveals that it is all less simple than it first appears. There does seem to be one common factor though: whenever something is labelled addictive, there follow calls for tighter controls on what people can do, see or buy. If tobacco and alcohol are addictive then there must be stricter regulation of cigarette sales, drinks licensing and the advertising of both. The assumption is that addicts cannot control their own behaviour, so controls must be enforced by the authorities for their own good.

Looked at in this light, the increasing propensity to describe problems in terms of addiction indicates a diminished view of individual responsibility.

Rather than simply condemning drunks and junkies for their behaviour, there is a tendency to blame the drugs themselves. In this spirit, Marks and Spencer recently offered free treatment to addicts who shoplift to feed their habits. Paul Burns of the Scottish Law Society has called for addicts to be formally relieved of legal responsibility and treated as children until they are weaned off the drugs (*Scotland on Sunday*, 13 October 1996). More recently, Sheriff Richard Davidson from Dundee suggested to a social work conference that the children of addicts should be put up for adoption, as they could not be expected to be responsible parents. The idea that drugs in themselves can in some way 'take people over', however, is not without problems.

You have to want to

For a start, why is it that so many people are able to take 'addictive' drugs without becoming dependent? And it is not only alcohol: a recent report published by the Scottish Office suggested that there are a significant number of casual heroin users. It could be argued that, rather



PHOTOS: FENNO OUTEN

than addiction being a medical problem that takes over people's lives like a disease, people actually only become addicted to something if their lives are already out of control for some other reason. Even those who develop a physical dependence on drugs like heroin are often able to shake off the withdrawal symptoms with relative ease. Significantly, those who work with 'addicts' realise that recovery from addiction has very little to do with medicine and a lot to do with attitude.

David Bryce is the founder of Calton Athletic, the Glasgow-based drug recovery group that assisted in the making of *Trainspotting*. He is clear about the nature of the problem: 'It's very simple. An addict either wants to give up, or he wants to go on using. And you have got to recognise that if he doesn't want to give up, you're very limited in what you can do. If an addict does want to give up, it can be done. But nothing can be done without the individual's co-operation. I believe that in my heart and soul.'

Nonetheless, the view that addiction is a medical problem requiring an externally imposed clinical solution

is increasingly widespread. An article published in the *Lancet* last year called for drug addiction to be recognised as a chronic relapsing disorder, in the same league as diabetes or asthma. There is even a growing tendency to explain addiction to particular substances, or even addiction in general, in terms of genetic predispositions. Last year the Medical Research Council granted over £1m to a team at Cambridge University that is researching this area.

Genetic excuse

The genetic explanation has found an audience among those who wish to explain non-biological supposed 'addictions' which it is hard to explain away as straightforward medical problems. The traditional emphasis on pharmacological dependence could not account for non-chemical addictions such as compulsive gambling. A gene controlling behaviour would explain everything.

If there was a genetic explanation for addiction, it would also help to explain away the pattern of recovery and relapse followed by so many addicts, which

makes a mockery of the idea of simple physical dependence. Kicking the habit is relatively easy; everybody in the field knows that it is staying off drugs that addicts find difficult. A gene, or other biological predilection to addictive behaviour, would also explain this problem. But just how convincing is the biological case?

Researchers at Cambridge have identified a part of the brain that they think might control habitual behaviour. It is possible that addicts have peculiarities in this area. Dr Richard Hammersley of Glasgow University's Behavioural Science Group says that the studies are fine as far as they go, but that they can be misinterpreted. He insists that it is 'semantic nonsense' to say that addiction is biological, because addiction is not one simple problem that can be looked at in its own terms. 'I'm quite happy with the idea that anything I think or do is caused in the brain', he says, 'but there's a risk of drawing simplistic conclusions'.

A phenomenon like addiction is far too multi-faceted to be explained in straightforward neurological terms. ♦

We are assumed to be the impotent prisoners of our genes or our animal urges



◆ Most importantly, addiction is not a problem that can be isolated in the biology or brain of any individual. It is always part of a socially recognisable lifestyle.

Of course if addiction is about lifestyle, that raises the question of how somebody gets into that lifestyle. We are all familiar with the suggestion that people progress from soft drugs like cannabis to heroin addiction. The latest version of this relates to the club scene. A BBC television programme shown earlier this year warned that regular ecstasy users suffer from increasingly unpleasant come downs, and are soon tempted to take downers to ease the process. After a few months the hapless raver is a helpless addict (*Frontline Scotland*, 14 January). This disturbing if dubious account is supported by Calton Athletic, who insist that all long term ecstasy users develop problems with other drugs. Of course, recovery groups do not hear from many healthy drug users.

In reality the idea of recreational drug use leading to addiction seems to come from reading history backwards. You take a group of heroin addicts, find that they have all smoked dope in the past, and announce 'conclusively' that there is a direct line leading from one to the other—conveniently ignoring the countless thousands who have used recreational drugs without ever thinking about touching the 'hard stuff'. Nobody becomes an addict overnight, and all addicts have their own stories about how they reached their 'personal hell', usually taking a lot of drugs on the way.

I talked to John-Paul, a recovering addict who is sceptical about the

slippery slope argument. 'Myself, I used to smoke a lot of hash, and yeah, I felt like I wanted to try something stronger, to get a better buzz. But not everyone does that. There comes a time when you realise that drugs have taken over your life, and it does kind of sneak up on you, but I suppose that's because the people that become addicts are out of control anyway. You just don't get heavily into drugs unless you've got some other problem.'

The point is that addiction is a logical progression only if drugs become the most important thing in somebody's life. Most people are able to take a step back and decide that it would be better to keep their drug use within limits. If we look at addicts as human beings with the same potential capacities as the rest of us, we have to recognise that they are making a choice of sorts.

Original sin

Opium fiend and existentialist Jean Cocteau described addiction as 'something that is neither life nor death'. Addiction is a decision to live life in abeyance, to postpone the present. The addict voluntarily suspends his or her will, and surrenders to a simple rhythm of need and gratification. This decision can be more or less deliberate, resulting from a conscious desire to drop out of life, or simply reflecting a perceived lack of alternatives (hardly an alien concept in the 1990s). Either way, rather than doing or thinking anything right now, the addict cooks up another shot. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?

Addiction, or what most people understand by the term, is a reflection of desperation. It is not something that

can be attributed to any drug, and it is not a 'risk' run by everybody who uses drugs. Of course anybody who uses heroin can develop what is called a physical dependence, but this only constitutes an addiction if the user is unable to deal with it. Alcoholism, on the other hand, is an addiction that often occurs without any chemical dependence.

In the past, behaviour has only ever been seriously designated as addictive if it is seen as problematic. That is why the term has traditionally been reserved for the self-destructive behaviour of desperate individuals. The idea of addiction to something worthwhile like sex, or to something as trivial as chocolate, exemplifies a bizarre new situation in which we are not expected to take responsibility for any aspect of our lives. The loss of faith in humanity appears to have reached the point where we are often assumed to be impotent prisoners of our genes or our animal urges. Addiction has become the ultimate excuse, the explanation for every failure and every loss of self-control. And that notion has destructive consequences all of its own for all concerned.

Somebody who binges on Easter eggs simply because they are a glutton can be told to exercise restraint and reasonably be expected to stop acting like a pig. The insecure moron who tries to get off with get every woman he sees can be told to stop behaving like a 16-year old and face up to a mature relationship. But what advice can you possibly give a 'chocolate addict' or a 'sex addict' that could enable them to kick their terrible, all-powerful habits?

The label 'addiction' is used in all sorts of situations today, but it is always associated with a lack of self-control. And this is what accounts for the current popularity of the term. Self discipline is now widely seen as too much to ask of any individual. The idea of addiction then becomes a bit like a modern version of original sin: addicts supposedly cannot escape their terrible desires, and therefore have to be saved from themselves.

Choose life, not drugs, goes the old slogan. Actually some might say the two need not be mutually exclusive, but at least that slogan credits us with the ability to make a decision for ourselves. Nowadays it seems to be automatically assumed that we are at the mercy of our most immediate impulses, and must not be exposed to anything too pleasurable in case we get hooked. Such a cautious world-view, if allowed to go unchallenged, may well drive us all to the horrors of Ovaltine addiction. ●

ANN BRADLEY

Sad sex



A friend in Washington has sent me an article from the *Washington Post*, in which feminist writer Katie Roiphe describes the success of Aids advertising in discouraging promiscuity on the liberal dinner party circuit. Americans, she suggests, have gone all coy and conservative about sex. Young people (well, some of them) are celebrating virginity and older people are keener to minimise their experience than maximise it. Sex is, once again, a big deal. It implies commitment and responsibility.

The new sexual conservatism that Roiphe describes in the USA seems to be girding the loins of the Brits too. The latest *General Household Survey* found that rather than revelling in a commitment-free life, four out of 10 single women were not having a sexual relationship with anybody.

saying—"do I know this person well enough to want to take this further".'

Roiphe concludes that the dampening of carnal desires is due to worries about Aids and a yearning for purity in corrupt times. Fears about Aids may well play some part in it. Aids awareness has restored penetrative sex to its pre-1960s status as something very different from other things people do with each other. It has also allowed moral puritanism to assume a language of 'health awareness'—one that dinner party liberals will swallow much more readily. Nobody needs to pass judgement on whether 'sleeping around' is right or wrong, cool or uncool, moral or immoral, because there is a consensus that it's hazardous.

But Roiphe is also right, I think, to suggest that there is something more to all this. You have to question why people

stems more broadly from people's lack of confidence in themselves and the world around them today.

So many people now seem to have such low expectations about what the future holds: fears of commitment, fears of being let down, lack of confidence about themselves and what they can achieve etc. People talk endlessly about being 'used' and 'abused', the need to 'distrust' others (and even yourself), of being 'at risk' from relationships in general and especially from sex.

In this atmosphere it seems understandable that more people should shy away from intimacy. If you come to see your work colleagues as potential sexual harassers, the guy you go out with as a potential (date) rapist, your neighbour as a possible stalker or child abuser, it is hardly surprising you might look back at your more liberated sexual past and think—"how could I have been so naive and how did I survive it?". Against a background where many feel insecure about everything, it seems safer to keep yourself to yourself and do nothing that exposes your vulnerability—which (let's face it) sex and relationships do. As 'Jo' interviewed in the *Guardian* put it, 'Life is complicated enough. The last thing you want these days is trouble'. She says she would rather just go home and read a book.

There was some amazing article in a woman's magazine recently that advocated masturbation (the kind you do on your own) as the best sex a woman can ever have. You cannot get pregnant, you cannot catch anything and—best of all—you know your body well enough to give yourself an orgasm (or several) every time. Well, perhaps. But it rather misses the point that sex with yourself is like talking to yourself. You might refine your own private view of the world, but you won't benefit from anybody else's experience.

Celibate sex might be safe sex—but it is also sad sex. Taking a chance with somebody might feel scary, but sometimes the chance pays off and if you never take it, you will never know how good it might have been.

Most of us do not know somebody who is HIV positive, so why are we so scared?

The statistics are supported by anecdotal evidence from family planning organisations, who claim that an increasing number of callers to their helplines are people who are not 'sexually active'. It is hard to imagine what the content of these calls might be: 'Do I need to use a condom on my vibrator? How long do I have to take the pill before it is safe not to have sex?' But the Family Planning Association seriously insist that they are hearing from more women who are keen not to have sex. Press officer Michelle Misgalla was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* as saying: 'We are now often asked on our counselling line what to do if their boyfriend wants to make the relationship sexual. I think it's the case that women are becoming much more thoughtful about a sexual relationship....Women are

have become so hung up about Aids. Yes, it is deadly, but it is also extremely rare. The large-scale heterosexual epidemic has not happened. Contrary to the predictions made in the 1980s, most of us do not know somebody who is HIV positive. Outside of those who engage in the much discussed high risk activities, worries about HIV infection are completely disproportionate to the real risks. And we have to ask, why? In my wilder student days everybody fretted about herpes—but they still fucked. Granted, herpes does not kill, but it is a lot more common than HIV and a condom does not protect against it, either.

Aids awareness may be one of the main means by which a new puritanism has permeated public opinion. But the new celibacy—in so far as it exists—

Thomas Deichmann's revelations about ITN's award-winning reports from Trnopolje camp in Bosnia have already sparked off a storm of controversy and a major libel case against LM (see 'The Picture That Fooled the World', LM February). Now the German journalist has discovered another twist in the tale

'EXACTLY AS IT HAPPENED'?

The British reporters who entered the Bosnian Serb run Trnopolje camp on 5 August 1992—Penny Marshall (ITN for *News at Ten*) Ian Williams (ITN for *Channel 4 News*) and Ed Vulliamy (*Guardian* newspaper) have always insisted that they gave a straight eye-witness account of all that they saw there. The famous sequence of pictures, first broadcast by ITN on 6 August 1992, shows Penny Marshall, filmed by her cameraman Jeremy Irvin, walking up to a barbed wire fence where, it appears, the first person she meets is the emaciated Fikret Alic, who subsequently became the global symbol of the Bosnian camps.

The images of Marshall shaking hands with Alic through the barbed wire were seen around the world as proof that the British news team had stumbled across Nazi-style concentration camps, run by the Bosnian Serbs. 'We were not prepared for what we saw and heard there', explained Marshall in her ITN report. In an interview conducted for a Channel 4 documentary in 1993, she said explicitly that her cameraman Irvin had 'filmed it exactly as it happened'.

Maybe he did film it 'exactly as it happened'; but that was not the way in which it was broadcast. There is clear and mounting evidence that the ITN reports from Trnopolje were edited and presented in a highly selective fashion. Tapes from a local TV crew, which accompanied and filmed the ITN journalists during their visit to Trnopolje, present a quite different account of what went on there.

The world-shaking ITN pictures of Penny Marshall approaching the barbed wire fence, behind which Fikret Alic and other Bosnian Muslims were apparently caged, were broadcast as three shots, edited together in such a way as to suggest an unbroken sequence. My previous report, published in the February issue of *LM*, has already revealed in detail that these pictures

were not all that they seemed. The image of Alic imprisoned behind barbed wire was misleading, for the simple reason that it was not the Bosnian Muslims who were encircled by barbed wire, but the British journalists themselves. Marshall's team took those pictures from inside a small agricultural compound which was ringed by a barbed wire fence, erected long before the war. There was no barbed wire fence around Trnopolje camp. But by filming Alic and the others through the barbed wire of the compound fence, the British news team came away with pictures that the world wrongly interpreted as evidence of concentration camps in Bosnia.

The film taken by the local TV crew confirms my evidence about the way in which the pictures that fooled the world were taken. But it also raises new questions about the way in which ITN presented their version of events. What really happened when Marshall approached the barbed wire fence? Why was Fikret Alic smiling? How could it be that the first thing Marshall said was 'How long has he been here?'.

Curious crowd

The Bosnian Serb TV crew's film of Marshall's trip shows that she did not just walk up to the barbed wire and encounter the emaciated Fikret Alic. She had spoken to several other Muslims through the fence before he appeared. A curious crowd of men standing inside the camp, but outside the area encircled by barbed wire, had gathered at the fence as the news team approached, eager to discover what was going on. Marshall spoke to one young man in a black t-shirt. Then, most notably, she and Ed Vulliamy of the *Guardian* talked for several minutes to a Bosnian Muslim named Mehmet, who appeared to be ushered forward because he spoke some English. Mehmet, dressed in blue dungarees with no shirt underneath, can be seen standing next

to Fikret Alic in the famous ITN shot that went around the world.

The local TV crew's film shows Mehmet, in slightly awkward English, telling Penny Marshall that conditions in Trnopolje were 'very fine, nothing wrong, but it's very hot'. Marshall asked if they had to sleep outside. 'No, no, inside' he replied, pointing to the former community centre in the background; in his eye-witness report, broadcast on *Channel 4 News* the next day, Ian Williams stated that 'hundreds of men were forced to eat and sleep outside in a field behind barbed wire'.

Marshall asked Mehmet if the people at Trnopolje camp had treated him badly. No, he said, 'very kind'. He further explained that he had been brought to Trnopolje from his home 'with the bus', and that he was not a fighter. Marshall asked him if he felt safe there. 'I think it's very safe', replied Mehmet, 'but very hot'. Apparently dissatisfied with his answers, Marshall then indicated the young man in a black t-shirt standing next to Mehmet, pointing out that 'This man is very thin'. Mehmet replied: 'Yes, he is very thin but I think that all the people is not the same.' Mehmet, like many others in Trnopolje, did not look anything like the exceptionally emaciated Fikret Alic.

One of the British reporters then asked Mehmet whether Trnopolje camp was a prison. 'No, I think it is a refugee camp, not a prison', Mehmet replied. Next Ed Vulliamy asked the rather absurd question, given that they were in the middle of a war zone: 'If you wanted to get on a bus to Banja Luka could you do that this afternoon?' Mehmet responded that he believed it would depend on the 'civil government' and that he could not leave 'now'. Vulliamy pressed him again: 'You say you were taken from your home and brought here on the bus and you can't leave but you don't think it's a prison?' Mehmet

The world saw Fikret Alic greet ITN's Penny Marshall, but in fact she had already talked at length to Mehmet, far right



**'It is not a prison,
IT'S A
REFUGEE
CAMP'
Mehmet told ITN but
they edited him out**

shrugged: 'I think it is not a prison, it's a refugee camp.'

It was around this time that Fikret Alic first appeared in the background of the shot. He inched through the crowd towards the fence, curious like the others as to what was going on there, holding his t-shirt in his right hand. Another Bosnian Muslim pointed to Alic, who stood out because of his protruding ribs. Somebody in the British news team can be heard on the film pointing out 'the two very thin ones to the right'. Penny Marshall made eye-contact with Alic. From there on, the local TV crew's film shows what was broadcast by ITN: Fikret Alic smiled at Penny Marshall and came up to the fence, standing next to Mehmet, in whom the journalists were no longer interested. Marshall shook hands with Alic and asked her translator 'How long has he been here?'

'Tell us the truth'

The sequence filmed by the local TV team raises further questions about what the ITN team really found at Trnopolje camp, and the editing that went on after the camp visit. Nothing of Penny Marshall's exchange with the English-speaking Mehmet which is outlined here was included in the ITN broadcast. Instead attention focused on the dramatically emaciated Fikret Alic. The very short bit of Marshall's interview with Mehmet which was broadcast gave a rather different impression of his whole statement: 'Tell us the truth' Marshall asked and Mehmet replied 'I am afraid'. That is all that was presented of Marshall's conversation with Mehmet in the ITN reports.

In 1993, Penny Marshall was interviewed for a Channel 4 documentary on the media and Bosnia, entitled 'Journalists at war'. In this unbroadcast exchange, Marshall was asked if she had filmed the Trnopolje report 'exactly as you found it? For

example the barbed wire was quite prominent in the report. Was there barbed wire all around this camp or did you choose...?'. Marshall replied while watching the famous film on screen:

'We filmed it exactly as it happened. And this is extraordinary for me because I've worked with lots of different camera persons and this cameraman Jeremy Irvin was super in that he really did unfold. There was... a shot of me walking to the barbed wire... It just happened... It happened as it unfolded. That's where I walked up. I mean it's a huge area. I cannot tell you. That's where I walked up and there was barbed wire. I don't know what's behind the fence behind that house, because they wouldn't let us see it. But it's exactly as it happened. Exactly as it happened and chronologically and we didn't have time or anything to think about style...'

Marshall not only forgot to answer the question as to whether there was barbed wire all around the camp, she also seemed to have forgotten the actual sequence of events that occurred during her famous report from Trnopolje.

Penny Marshall was then asked if Fikret Alic was at the barbed wire when she got there, or whether he had been brought forward by the others. Marshall said: 'I can't honestly remember. But if you look at the shot you'll see. Yes he was at the wire. Yes I think, you'd have to look at the shot. They might have pushed him forward. I can't honestly remember...'. Somehow Marshall had already forgotten the circumstances of her meeting with Fikret Alic just a few months before—the most important event of her career. All she could say was 'look at the shot'. But did she mean the shot that was actually taken at Trnopolje camp on 5 August 1992, or the selectively edited one that was broadcast by ITN in her report the following day?



CENSORSHIP FOR HIRE

ITN's use of libel writs against LM magazine, over our revelations about their award-winning pictures of a Bosnian camp, demonstrates how those with the money can use the law of defamation in a bid to buy immunity from criticism through the courts.

Helen Searls and Daniel Lloyd spoke to Dan Mills of the McLibel support campaign, and discovered why Britain's libel laws are the envy of the rich and powerful around the world

Towards the end of May, Mr Justice Bell is expected to deliver his final verdict on the longest trial in English legal history. After 25 months of testimony and eight weeks of closing speeches, he has to decide whether Helen Steel and Dave Morris libelled the McDonald's corporation in a six-page factsheet, produced by London Greenpeace, entitled 'What's wrong with McDonald's? Everything they don't want you to know'.

Dan Mills left his job as a solicitor to work full-time for the McLibel support campaign just as the trial was starting. He had no idea what he was letting himself in for. 'We needed someone to co-ordinate the office. I was working in a corporate law firm at the time and I wasn't particularly happy. When my contract came to an end

I agreed to work full time for the campaign. It quickly took over my life! The trial was only scheduled to last about three months. No one had any inkling that it would last this long.'

Dan Mills thinks that the courts and McDonald's thought that the case would go the same way as other libel actions, and the plaintiffs would have an easy ride. 'McDonald's had a very arrogant attitude to the proceedings. Even quite a long time after the trial began they thought it was going to be a walk-over.' The defendants had to conduct their own defence since neither had any money and there is no legal aid in libel cases. 'McDonald's just assumed that they could wear them out.'

The McLibel trial is noteworthy not only for its length. Whatever you think of the original factsheet, the case serves as a perfect illustration of how British libel law is used by the



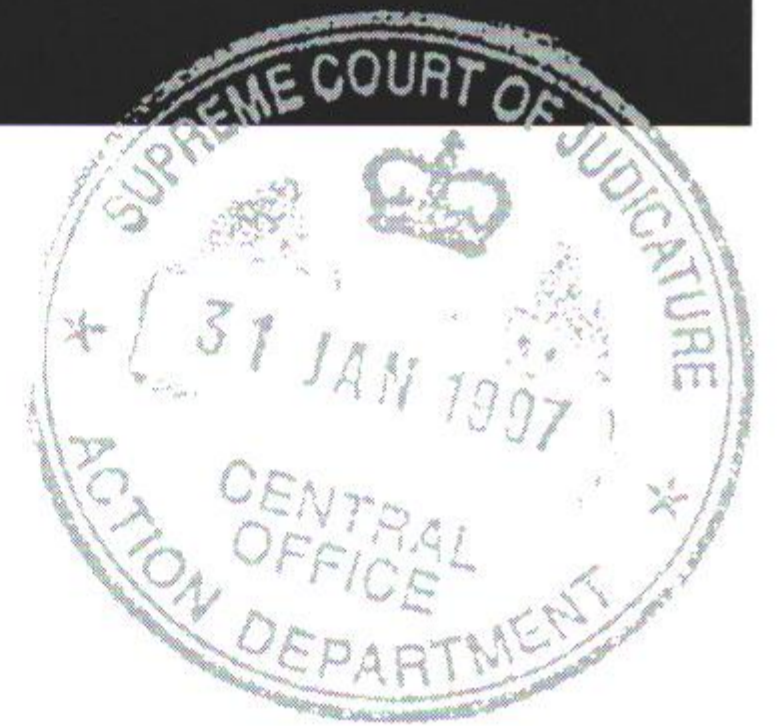
Dan Mills McLibel support campaign

rich and powerful to stifle criticism. Rather than answering the criticisms levelled at them in the factsheet, McDonald's used the courts and the judiciary to intimidate their critics—and not for the first time. Before anybody coined the word McLibel, McDonald's had acquired a formidable reputation for suing anybody who crossed the corporation.

'McDonalds had been very successfully using the libel laws to silence their critics over a long period of time', says Dan Mills. 'Anyone who dared to criticise the company in the 1980s was either threatened with a libel writ or actually received one. It had proved very effective at shutting people up. Everyone apologised, backed down or went bust trying to fight the case because the law is very much in favour of people suing.

'It is a real gamble if you are going to defend a case. Organisations like the BBC or the *Guardian* had to consider the damages that could be incurred. Most papers like the *Guardian* can only take on two or three libel cases a year, and they have to pick and choose which ones to contest. They decided to back down. McDonald's created a climate of intimidation and fear so that people did not dare to put pen to paper in the first place. Everyone knew how litigious they were—rather like Robert Maxwell. So until now using the libel laws has been a very successful tactic for them.'

As a lawyer, Dan Mills has no doubts about the injustice of the libel laws. 'I think you would find that most lawyers would agree that they are very harsh and repressive. All the burden of proof falls on the defendant. There is no legal aid to defend libel. This makes it the preserve of the rich and powerful.' He notes that British libel laws are widely regarded as the most repressive in the West. 'You just have to look at some cases, where an alleged libel takes place predominately abroad, but because a few copies of the magazine or paper are sold here that entitles people to sue in the British courts.



A lot of libel litigation actually comes to Britain because the plaintiffs know they have a much better chance of winning here than in other countries.'

Libel is the written form of defamation (slander is the spoken form) and as such falls under the law of defamation. On paper the defamation acts look fair enough. The law can be used by anybody who feels that their reputation has been damaged by statements made by others; it was reputedly introduced as a more civilised alternative to the ancient art of duelling. Those bringing an action under the defamation acts—the plaintiffs—have to prove that the words complained of are capable of lowering their reputation in the eyes of right-thinking members of the public. Publishers, broadcasters and writers can defend their use of such statements by proving that they are 'justified' because they are true or that they are 'fair comment', given that the facts behind the statements are true.

A closer examination, however, reveals that the laws that frame libel actions are profoundly undemocratic. Just as duelling was the preserve of the old aristocrats, so libel law serves the interests of the elites in modern society. All may have the same rights on paper, but in practice most of us never get a look in.

For a start the costs involved in libel actions are prohibitive and there is no legal aid. Libel actions can be notoriously complex. Even before cases come to court there can be numerous pre-trial hearings to resolve finer points of law; there were 28 of them before the McLibel trial finally began. With every stage involving expensive barristers, very few people can afford to even get a case into court. If you do get that far, libel proceedings can only be heard in the High Court. This adds to the expense of cases, and ensures that libel law remains the specialism of a handful of London-based barristers who can command top fees. ♦

The law of defamation is an ATTACK UPON THE RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH and the principle of open democratic debate

◆ McDonald's, for example, were reportedly paying their legal team £6500 for every day they appeared in court. If such claims were true the trial alone will have cost McDonald's well over £2m. The defendants on the other hand, a bar worker and a gardener, were forced to conduct their own defence since they had no money to pay for expert help. The McLibel case is not typical, but one barrister recently estimated that few libel cases could be heard for less than £200 000 worth of costs on either side.

The threat of huge costs hanging over the defendant means that few libel cases get to trial. In most instances the complainant issues a writ or even a threatening letter, and the matter will be settled out of court within weeks. For those who can put the money up front this is a game that plaintiffs rarely lose. Most defendants back down at the first sign of a writ; they have to apologise, pay costs and damages and promise never to repeat the allegation.

But it is not just the costs that make libel law unjust. Unlike in criminal cases, in a libel trial the burden of proof falls largely on the defendant. The plaintiff only has to demonstrate to the court that the words are capable of lowering their reputation. They do not even have to prove that actual damage has been suffered. The defendant on the other hand has to prove that all the statements made are true in substance and in fact. Much of the evidence needed to prove these facts is often in the hands of the plaintiffs, and it is up to them whether they release this information or not. If the defendants fail to prove the truth of their statements to the court's satisfaction, they lose—even if every word they said was true. Little wonder then that the plaintiff wins the overwhelming majority of cases which come to court.

Britain's libel laws play an insidious role in stifling public debate and criticism. Most libel cases that hit the headlines seem to be about the alleged sexual misconduct of celebrities. If this was all that was involved it would be hard to get excited about libel law. As a frivolous pastime for the super-rich it might be unfair, but of little importance. The law of defamation, however, is not merely about protecting people's personal reputations. It can also be used by public figures and most public bodies to suppress and punish public criticisms. This is a peculiar attribute of British libel laws—one which makes them the envy of the powerful across the globe.

McDonald's—and now ITN—stand in an unsavoury tradition of sensitive public figures and corporations who have hidden their dirty linen behind the libel laws. A good example is COPEX, the company that organises the Covert Operations Procurement Exhibition, where the world's police chiefs and spy-masters come to buy the latest in hi-tech repression and surveillance. COPEX has sued (among others) a pensioner and a schoolgirl who wrote to the manager of the exhibition's venue, questioning what they believed was the sale of dangerous goods to despotic governments.

In the USA, there is such a thing as a public figure defence. If a public figure like a politician is criticised in their public

capacity, they have no automatic redress to the courts unless they can prove that the information was maliciously fabricated. In Britain, by contrast, it is only state funded public authorities that are prevented from suing for libel. Every other individual or institution can use the law to immunise themselves. Even policemen can use the libel laws to prevent public discussion of their actions. The Police Federation reputedly has a seven figure budget for libel action on its members' behalf, and has brought 95 actions for defamation in less than three years. As one critic of the libel laws notes, 'This explains why the public is rarely informed which police station an errant policeman belongs to: the newspaper risks a collective writ from his blameless colleagues.' (George Monboit, *Guardian*, 29 April 1996)

The recent Defamation Act of 1996 has made this aspect of the law even more undemocratic. Before this amendment to the law was passed MPs at least were slightly restrained from suing for libel, as their parliamentary privilege prevented the courts from investigating what MPs did in parliament. This privilege makes it possible for MPs to speak their minds without fear of prosecution. But equally, it meant that when MPs were criticised for their activities as parliamentarians, it was difficult for them to sue. The 1996 changes to the law mean that MPs can now waive parliamentary privilege in order to pursue libel actions. This allowed Tory MP Neil Hamilton to sue the *Guardian* over cash-for-questions allegations. In the end Hamilton's case collapsed. But this is really nothing to gloat about. The amendment to the law still stands, making it easier for the media to be sued over criticisms of politicians.

The law of defamation is an attack upon the right to free speech and the principle of open democratic debate. And in the litigious climate of modern times, it is being used more and more to gag those who dare to criticise. Since 1992 there has been a 66 per cent increase in the number of writs issued for libel. Moreover, libel law attacks the right to free speech where it really counts, since it can be deployed to curtail real debate on matters of public concern within a democracy. ITN's decision to issue writs against *LM* magazine shows another worrying development; libel law is now being used as a gagging order to attack press freedom not just by a McDonalds or a COPEX, but by a major news organisation that prides itself on its reputation for reporting the truth.

A court case may look like an improvement on duelling, but in a modern democracy matters of honour and reputation ought to be settled in a far more straightforward way through full and frank public argument. Let both sides of the dispute slug it out in the court of public opinion, and may the best party—the one with the most convincing arguments rather than the most expensive barristers—win.

For more information about the McLibel case see <http://www.mcspotlight.org>
Helen Searls is the legal co-ordinator LM magazine.
Daniel Lloyd is a barrister

The Tories have been bad enough, but you ain't seen nothing yet. Blair's Britain will be like an open prison, run by a government whose instinct is to regiment life, regulate behaviour, restrict freedoms and curb passions at every opportunity.

Those set to become leading Labour ministers are mostly self-righteous, illiberal killjoys. But there are bigger reasons than this for expecting their regime to be even more unpleasant than the old gang. New Labour is a product of its times, and the 1990s are the age of the New Authoritarianism.

An old party like the wrinkled Tories is still partly shaped by the traditions and constituencies of yesterday. By contrast, New Labour is a rootless *arriviste* without a past to guide it. Its policies and personalities merely reflect the mood of the present: an uncertain, panicky and confused time when the spontaneous inclination is always to clamp down, for fear that something might get out of control.

With the old institutions of government and society in disarray, it is clear that something new is needed. Yet with Tony Blair having officially acknowledged that there is no alternative to the market system, major social changes are out of the question. For a New Labour government that wants to alter things, all that remains is to try to change how people behave, to re-educate and if necessary repress them, in line with Blair's blueprint for a purified nation. Which is why every Labour policy, whether it is supposed to deal with the economy or education, will effectively be a law and order policy.

Get set for a government that will endlessly moralise about how we ought to live. But New Labour is no harmless vicar. Blair's team are not only sanctimonious, their sanctimony always has a hard edge, with the inference of a threat towards those who fail to put the sermon into practice.

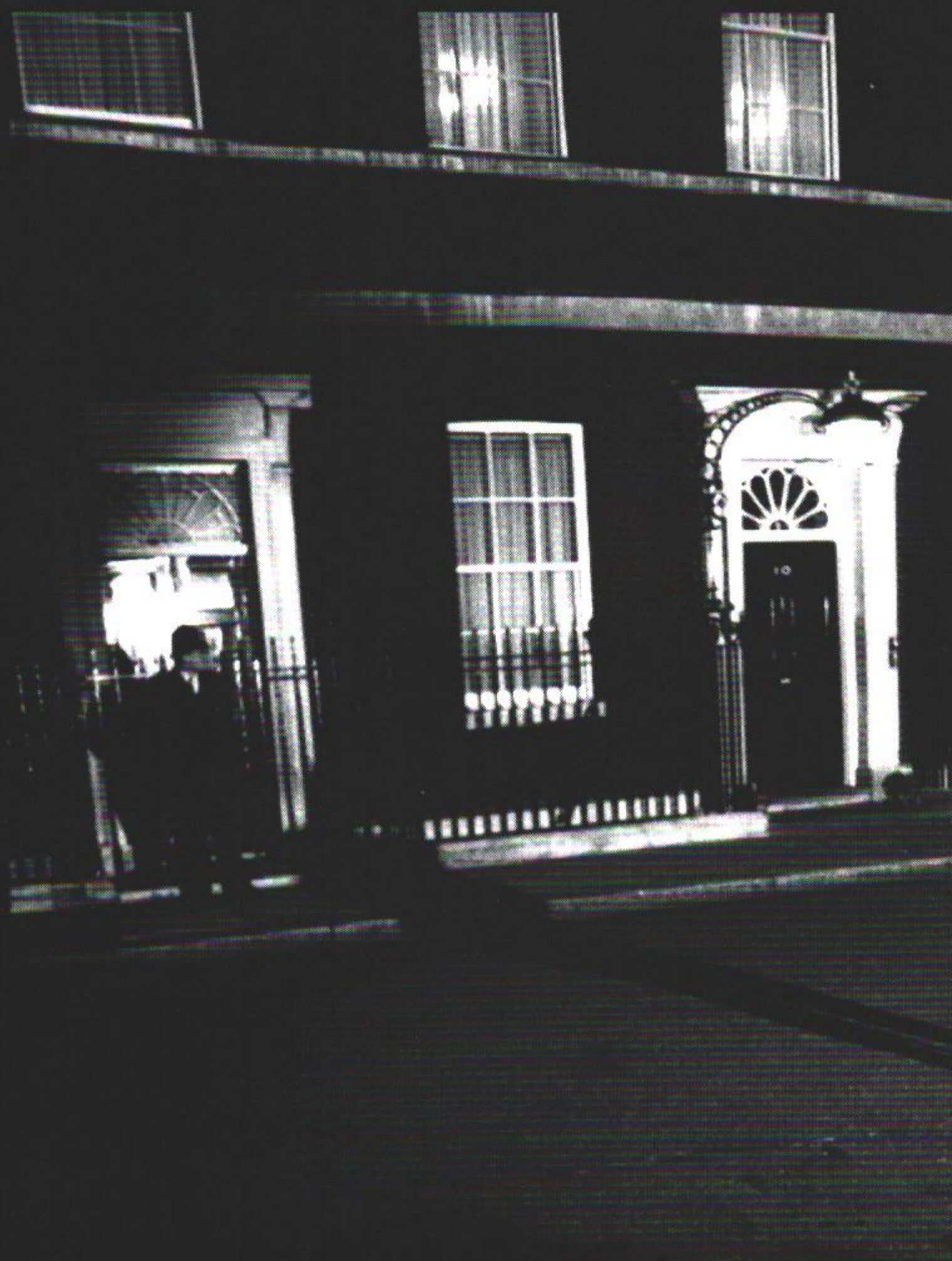
LM magazine confidently predicts that, under New Labour, our public and private lives are going to be hedged in by more restrictions, regulations, bans, police powers, guidelines, codes of conduct, ethics committees, quangos, official inquiries, judicial reviews, education programmes, watch schemes, counsellors, caring professionals and surveillance cameras than ever before. As a result, in many respects we are going to have less freedom than at any time in the modern age.

Damon Albarn of Blur has insightfully noted that there are probably more libertarians in the Tory Party than in New Labour. Yet he is still going to vote for Blair. That is a common stance among those who are desperate for a change at any price. But it makes no sense. Why would anybody who loves freedom vote for New Labour? And given the 'alternatives', why vote at all in 1997?

LM has never been a magazine to indulge passivity or cynicism, we think that people should stand up and get stuck in. But taking part in this particular electoral charade can only lend legitimacy to what in reality is a contest to see who is the most law-and-order obsessed agent of social control. Democracy is supposed to be about choosing between competing political visions, not selecting the most appropriate instrument for our own punishment.

NIGHTMARE ON DOWNING STREET

Over the page, *LM* writers outline some of what is in store for us under New Labour. There will be more of such horror stories in the months ahead. ▶



HARD LABOUR

Unlike the Conservatives, Labour will not fail the country on crime. We are now the party of law and order.... It is only the Labour Party which is tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.' (*Safer communities, safer Britain*, 1995)

But what exactly do New Labour identify as the cause of crime? Or, more precisely, who?

The Labour Party helpfully informs us that 'the Tories have consistently downplayed the importance of dealing with the causes of crime, and failed to accept responsibility for what is happening in society' (in 1993-94 only 2.5 per cent of the Criminal Justice budget was spent on crime prevention). By contrast New Labour aims to set that straight by developing a comprehensive programme for proactive crime prevention, which can identify both the groups of people who are most likely to cause trouble, and the kind of measures that might stop them doing so again.

Far from taking 'responsibility for what is happening in society', Labour seeks to spread the blame around. The guilty groups which their policy documents identify include:

PARENTS—guilty of 'poor parental supervision; harsh, neglectful or erratic discipline; parental discord'—all factors which lead to later offending.

YOUNG PEOPLE—'far more likely to be involved in crime than any other age group'.

SCHOOL STUDENTS—those who are 'difficult at school or are truanting are often most likely to offend'.

UNEMPLOYED—'most likely to offend, and to become persistent juvenile and then adult offenders'.

DRUG ABUSERS AND DRINKERS—'a substantial proportion of property crime is drug related' and 'alcohol also has a hugely damaging effect on individuals and society'.

HOMELESS—'their aggressive begging affronts and sometimes threatens decent, compassionate citizens'.

MENTALLY ILL—lack of proper planning and support means that they are 'at risk to themselves or others'.

VICTIMS—'people who are victims once are likely to be victims again'.

If these millions of people are the potential cause of crime, what exactly do Tony Blair and his home secretary Jack Straw intend to do with them all? New Labour has developed a full range of proposals to police all kinds of people—and a new vocabulary with which to sell their authoritarian package:

COMMUNITY SAFETY ORDER—a court injunction allowing courts to deal with 'nuisance neighbours' by imposing curfews and exclusions from designated areas, on the word of anonymous informants.

NANNY BLUNKETT KNOWS BEST

Claire Fox on Labour's plans for re-educating the nation

When New Labour leaders state that their top priorities are education, education and education they really mean it. Imagine a world where there is nothing else but education—a world of lifelong learning in which we could all be permanently consigned to the status of schoolchildren and where, if we break the behaviour codes, Labour education chief David Blunkett and his hit squads will dish out the punishment. Imagine a world full of self-righteous Blunketts and worthy educational advisors, all telling us they know what is in our best interest, how best to rear our children, telling us how to dot our i's, cross our t's and say our prayers.

Tony Blair states that, 'The education and skills deficit is the ultimate example of what happens when individuals are left to fend for themselves'. No fear of fending for ourselves when Mr Blair becomes Britain's new Headmaster. Education seems to be the password for a New Labour government to gain ever more intimate access to our affairs. This intrusiveness will neither stop at the school gates, nor end at school

leaving age. If Blair and Blunkett get their way, we will have some appointed educational guardian watching over us at every stage of our lives.

From birth to old age, New Labour's educationalists will be on hand to 'advise' (interfere). They intend to start young. When Labour launched its early years and family policy last year, it promised that health visitors would support the early educational development of children 'from day one'; in case mums and dads feel left out, they will be taught a lesson too. Labour's 'New Early Excellence Centres will combine nursery education and childcare with adult education, family support and parenting skills' classes, to teach us how to bring up our children.

And you are never too old—either to be roped in as an educator or to be taught a thing or two. Retired 'third age' members of the community are to be enlisted to link up with families to provide practical advice and support. Meanwhile the concept of lifelong learning ensures that we will all be issued with a new Learn As You Earn smartcard 'enabling every employee

to open their own individual learning account to save for training and learning'.

If you are worried that as an adult you may not have time for all this learning—after all many of us have families and our concern is with our children—never fear, Nanny Blunkett is here. New Labour seem keen to take child-rearing out of our hands—after all, they know best. Teaching children how to live and behave, long the preserve of parents and common sense, is now to be directed and monitored by the Labour government, which has assumed for itself the role of *in loco parentis*.

On school premises, during class time, children are rightly subject to constant monitoring. But even the traditional moments of freedom are circumscribed in Blunkett's plan. One of the most perverse examples of petty interference must be New Labour's campaign to improve national nutritional standards. Even the joys of school dinners will be scrutinised by the New Educators; goodbye Mr Chips, bring on the brown rice. For Blunkett, school dinners are not only about

PARENTAL TRAINING ORDER (aka Parental Responsibility Order)

gives courts the power to make parents attend counselling sessions on how to bring up their children. Although similar classes exist already, the problem Labour notes is that 'the majority of participants are white, middle class mothers'—obviously not who they are aimed at then!

CHILD PROTECTION ORDER—local authority power to impose curfews on

children aged 10 and under.

TESTING AND TREATMENT ORDER—power conferred upon courts to force criminals suspected of drug misuse to take a blood test and enter treatment.

ELECTRONIC-TAGGING—parting gift to all sex-offenders released from prison. Usually found alongside powers of house arrest and free 5-year membership of the Sex Offenders Register, extendable to life without consultation.

NEIGHBOURHOOD NUISANCE SQUADS—collection of environmental, housing and social services officials who will share information relating to 'problem families'. At worst, these busybodies will be used as a...

PROFESSIONAL WITNESS—somebody who might 'move into a flat or house on a temporary basis to log round-the-clock evidence' of what goes on in the neighbourhood. This evidence could be used, uncorroborated, in court to secure a prosecution for 'cumulative anti-social behaviour'; watch out for the new neighbours with secret video cameras concealed about their person.

NATIONAL BEDTIME—something parents should agree on nationally, with advice from New Labour, in order to give them more authority to deal with 'manipulative children'. Tory Home Secretary Michael Howard says people cannot commit further crimes if they are locked up in jail. Jack Straw has trumped him again, implying that nobody can commit a crime in the first place if they are all tucked up in bed at the same time.

Charlotte Reynolds

PHOTO: DAVE CHAPMAN



feeding hungry children; like everything else under New Labour, they are also about teaching people how to behave. As Blunkett told last year's Unison conference, school dinners 'encourage children to learn good manners and eating habits and help avoid truancy'.

The school bell will no longer signal freedom at the end of the school day, but the start of another round of monitoring. New Labour's guidelines detail how much homework should be done at different ages. This National Minimum Homework Requirement demands that parents ensure that seven year olds and upwards do 30 minutes a night, increasing to 90 minutes from age 11—presumably to be done after Jack Straw's curfew vigilantes have got the kids off the streets. The latest bizarre twist in this policy is to encourage children to do their homework at supervised sessions in empty football grounds. See, life can be fun under New Labour, too.

Meanwhile, in February, Labour announced that once in power they will launch a national crusade to improve literacy in which parents will be given training on how to help their children to read. Forget fairy stories and comics; Labour's lessons will even include recommended bedtime story books. If parents fail to comply, the Labour designed home-school contracts will act as a big stick and educational welfare officers will be forced to call at your home to investigate such obvious dereliction of duty.

And do not imagine that education, education, education takes a break for school holidays. Summer holidays belong to some halcyon past. Labour's new literacy task force, chaired by Professor Michael Barber of the Institute of Education, plans to run summer schools and 'reading holiday camps' to 'help youngsters falling behind'.

David Blunkett has even devised a way of interfering in who children model themselves on. Forget wanting to be another Ryan Giggs, or even wanting to be like your Dad. Worried about a shortage of positive male role models. Blunkett has substituted educational mentors from among the great and good to go forth into schools and inspire. Concerned to give boys greater self-esteem and a stake in the community, Labour launched 'Boys will be Boys' in November 1996 to tackle the increasing gap between boys' and girls' exam results. The 10-point action plan—which includes plans for out of school clubs and homework centres—also suggests mentoring schemes such as those in Deptford High School in Lewisham, where pupils are linked with mentors from the business world. Can you imagine your child hero-worshipping the local bank manager? In David Blunkett's dreams.

● Those interested in a critical approach to educational matters can contact Louise Fahey, national convenor of **re:education 2000** c/o *LM* magazine.

New Labour will win the election. But will it succeed in its wider project of constructing a new system for controlling British society? If it does, says Mike Fitzpatrick, it will be at the expense of democracy

IS BLAIR TINA'S HEIR?

If you read the election manifestos and listen to the politicians' speeches, it would be easy to draw the conclusion that the major parties are all much the same. Easy, but wrong. It is true that at the level of policy there has been a remarkable convergence, particularly between the Conservatives and Labour, and that the range of differences is small. Indeed the absence of major issues of conflict between the big parties has been a key factor in encouraging the preoccupation with scandals, 'personalities', chickens and other trivia that characterised the campaign from the start.

Yet the notion that Labour and the Tories are the same obscures crucial differences in the roles played by the two main parties in British society today. Under John Major, the Tories are a party in chronic decline and disarray, their demise reflecting the exhaustion of the strategy of reviving British capitalism through unleashing market forces that had appeared so successful under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. By contrast, Tony Blair's New Labour is a party in the ascendant, a party utterly transformed and reorganised around the project of reconnecting the frayed links between capitalist enterprise and the communities and individuals

which make up British society.

The opening days of the election campaign confirmed the decay of Conservative Party cohesion and morale. Confronted with allegations of sleaze and scandals, party leaders could neither agree on a firm line nor impose it on local organisations. The result was that while one MP, Tim Smith, stood down in the face of the 'cash for questions' revelations, another, Neil Hamilton, defied party managers and the Tory press, to tough it out.

In a parallel set of embarrassments, Glasgow MP Allan Stewart resigned over an extra-marital affair, while Beckenham MP Piers Merchant staggered on, despite lurid tabloid headlines (and photos) of his affair with a '17-year-old nightclub hostess'. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of these events was the inability of the Tory fixers and their friends in the media to mount any counter-offensive against the Labour Party.

The resignation of Sir Michael Hurst, chairman of the Scottish Conservatives, over allegations of a homosexual affair, plunged the leadership north of the border into overt civil war as they awaited electoral wipeout. Things were little better in London, where the election after the election (for the party leadership)

seemed to be a greater preoccupation for many Conservatives than the contest with the Labour Party.

In fact, the demise of the Conservative Party was not the result of corruption or debauchery. It was the price to be paid for the impact of one of Margaret Thatcher's most famous slogans—'There Is No Alternative'. Proclaimed in the moment of Western triumphalism over the collapse of Soviet communism in the East and socialism everywhere, this slogan expressed the prevailing conviction of the capitalist elite that the supremacy of the market system was now unchallenged. But in the 1990s it has become increasingly clear that, if there is no alternative policy to that dictated by the market, then in the end there is no space for political life.

The demoralising consequences of 'Tina' were pointed out in the *LM* manifesto, *The Point is to Change It*, published last year: 'The philosophy of Tina has fostered a psychology of low expectations which has pervaded society. In a period when it suffers a chronic lack of dynamism in both the economy and the realm of ideas, Western capitalism cannot generate popular enthusiasm or even unambiguous approval for its continued existence. The system



ILLUSTRATION: DASTCO

and those who run it get by, not by promoting any positive vision, but by suggesting that the negative features of capitalist society are in fact attributes of human nature. The limits which the system imposes in every field of human activity are then depicted as confirmation of human limitations in general. As a result, a profound sense of the limited scope of human endeavour prevails at all levels of modern society.' (For a fuller examination of these trends see p28.)

In the name of Tina, Mrs Thatcher's beloved free market ravaged traditional industries and communities, and also undermined established institutions and allegiances, from trade unions and

political parties to churches and the family. The result of these destabilising changes has been that, even when Thatcher's successors pointed to some material improvements over 18 years of Tory rule, the 'feelgood factor' proved elusive among the many voters who had experienced an increasing sense of insecurity under the Conservative government.

Into the void created by Tina has stepped Tony Blair. The key role of New Labour is to rebuild new institutions to replace those destroyed in the Thatcher years and so to restore the weakened bonds between the individual and the capitalist system. To some extent this is a conscious process, to some extent the new arrangements emerge in an ad hoc and haphazard way. New Labour's adoption of the concept of 'stakeholder capitalism' expresses a conviction that it is necessary to recreate, albeit in a new form, the sense of having a stake in the system that has been eroded over the past 20 years. Whatever the form, the central dynamic is the drive to restore

some of the lost legitimacy of British capitalism in the hearts and minds of the people.

Blair's decisive first step in this process—a step central to his current appeal to the electorate—was his success in transforming the Labour Party into New Labour. The contrast between New Labour and the Tories in the opening week of the campaign was revealing. Local Conservative associations openly defied the leadership and insisted on keeping Hamilton and Merchant as their candidates. Meanwhile New Labour constituencies behave with a spirit of obedience more characteristic of a monastic cult than the militant outlook of the local parties only a decade ago. Not only has the leadership intervened to ensure the selection of candidates congenial to the New Labour ethos, it has given them detailed instructions about what to wear.

Blair's achievement since he became party leader only three years ago, in ditching Labour's historic Clause Four commitment to nationalisation, not to mention all its radical policies and any radical candidates who might have squeezed through the selection processes, reveals what an empty shell Old Labour had become. The capitulation of the old left to the new style of party management personified by media fixers like Peter Mandelson confirmed the disengagement of the Labour Party from its historic roots in the labour movement. In a short time, Labour has been completely transformed into the political instrument of a section of the elite, supported by a layer of new recruits drawn largely from the professional middle classes.

Blair now offers New Labour's skills in institutional reform to tackle the wider problems of the British establishment. This project involves shifting power away from discredited

Two judges,
a civil servant and the editor of
the *Guardian*—
NONE OF WHOM IS ELECTED
—now enjoy more power
than government ministers



◆ old institutions, particularly parliament, in favour of even less democratic bodies and less accountable officials. The campaign against sleaze provides a good example of this process at work, based on a model provided by recent trends in Italy.

The Italianisation of British politics means using allegations of corruption against politicians to intensify public cynicism about elected representatives, and so to encourage a shift of power away from parliament towards the judiciary, senior civil servants and even sections of the media. In fact the backhanders paid by Harrods proprietor Mohamed Al Fayed in return for favours from a number of Tory MPs, that are the basis of the sleaze campaign run by the *Guardian* newspaper, were of a modest scale that would attract little interest in Italy, or indeed in most other countries. The consequence of this campaign, however, is not merely to discredit a handful of Tory backbenchers, but to weaken the authority of parliament.

The cumulative effect of the 'arms to Iraq' scandal (investigated by Lord Justice Scott), the issue of MPs' 'outside interests' (investigated by Lord Justice Nolan) and the 'cash for questions' scandal (investigated by Sir Gordon Downey) is that two judges, a civil servant and the editor of the *Guardian*—none of whom is elected—now enjoy more power than government ministers. Characteristically in full sympathy with this trend, Blair has suggested that a New Labour government would make the Nolan Committee into a permanent constitutional commission.

The anti-democratic dynamic inherent in the process of Italianisation was well illustrated by the agreement of both New Labour and the Liberal Democrats to withdraw their candidates

in Tatton, so that an 'anti-sleaze' candidate could challenge Neil Hamilton. While the opposition parties played a game of holier-than-thou, it was left to the local parish priest to protest at the contemptuous attitude to the electorate revealed by this ploy: 'The election ought to be about more things than sleaze and there should be a range of candidates who can be sounded out on all relevant current issues that make up the political mix.' (*Guardian*, 29 March) Sleaze may not be of much interest to Father Kevin Moorhouse or the other electors of Tatton, but it is the cutting edge of the New Labour campaign to enhance the status of the new institutions that run British society.

In his election special *Why Vote Labour?*, the New Labour MP Tony Wright includes a chapter on what he terms 'the new democracy'. He consistently disparages existing parliamentary institutions—'yah-booism', 'arid adversarialism', 'stultifying and suffocating' party politics—and proposes more collaboration among the parties, tighter regulation of MPs, greater authority for European institutions and regional assemblies. All of these measures have one thing in common. They mean moving power away from elected representatives into the hands of party officials, state bureaucrats and judges. Wright is critical of the 'quango state', but proposes further quangos in food safety, environmental protection and other areas. All these measures inevitably mean more power to the state and less to the people and their elected representatives. New Labour's plans for constitutional reform point to a less and less accountable system of government.

New Labour's approval for the campaign by the Dunblane parents for stricter gun control, for Frances Lawrence's crusade for family values

and Blair's proposal for a US-style 'drugs tsar' to oversee the war against drugs—all these are initiatives that aim to recreate an institutional framework to regulate behaviour in society. They begin from a familiar focus of public anxiety, but move outside the established structures of politics and society. They elevate self-consciously 'non-political' individuals in the hope that these will carry more moral authority than political leaders. They appeal to popular sentiment, but all ultimately require the sanction of the state to enforce an essentially authoritarian agenda. For 'non-political', read unelected and non-accountable.

While New Labour looks beyond the election to the task of remoulding the institutions of British capitalism, Old Labour is looking forward to refighting the battles of the past. According to Ken Livingstone, in a pre-election interview, 'the six months from the moment the polls close to the Labour conference in October is going to be the most electric and decisive six months in British politics for a generation' (*Red Pepper*, March). Why? Mainly, because of 'the struggle to save the Labour Party' from the further depredations of Mandelson and his 'Millbank Tendency'.

In fact, of course, Livingstone and his colleagues lost this battle years ago and the only sparks flying after the election are likely to be around his own head. In the meantime, however, the old left—inside and outside the Labour Party—continues to provide a useful service to the leadership. While Blair and Mandelson forge ahead with the New Labour project, the old left secures the rear by keeping up the pretence that Old Labour lives on and is only waiting for its moment post-election. Don't hold your breath. ●

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One of the central features of the prevailing 'culture of limits' is the diminished role accorded to individual initiative today. Far from setting people free, the demise of old collective organisations, such as trade unions and political parties, has had a paralysing effect on individuals. The result is a society in which the victim enjoys the highest prestige and self-pity is a predominant sentiment. In the course of the next step conference, we aim to examine and challenge different aspects of the degradation of subjectivity and to promote the active agency of human intervention.

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Idealism, materialism

Belief and modernity: the sense of mission in an anxious

Decadent capitalism and

The health de

TUESDAY

- Theory in an age of uncertainty ● Ireland and the Irish ● The
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July

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ETY AND THE COMMUNITY ● DEFENDING 'MASCULINE' VALUES ● MEDIATING REALITY

nding 'masculine' values ● MEDIATING reality

MONDAY

aterialism and Darwinism ● The economy after economics ●

ONY AFTER ECONOMICS BELIEF AND MODERNITY ● THE SENSE OF MISSION IN AN ANXIOUS AGE

is age ● Children and the politics of international relations ●

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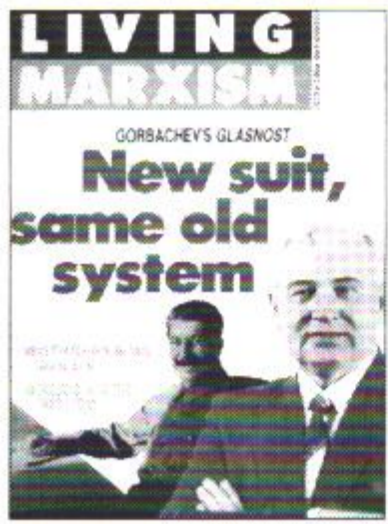
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Sunday course:

Monday course:

Tuesday course:



Andrew Calcutt flicks through the past 99 issues and selects a few of the many times that Living Marxism got it right

WE TOLD YOU SO (AND WE DON'T MIND TELLING YOU AGAIN)

1988

From Thatcher to the left, the whole world was mad for Mikhail Gorbachev. But the first issue of *Living Marxism* (front cover: 'New suit, same old system') saw through 'Gorbymania': 'We were right in the thirties when the European left was convinced that Stalin had

all the answers. We were right in the sixties when Mao was the left's man of the moment. We are right in the eighties when Gorbachev is installed as the left's new icon.' (November)

1989

While the West celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, *Living Marxism* exposed the nervousness beneath the triumphalism: 'the British authorities feel so insecure about what is

to come and so desperate to preserve what they can of the past that even the decline of their old enemies in Eastern Europe scares them.' (December)

1990

Living Marxism began the 'nervous nineties' with 'A reply to the scaremongers' (January). Dr Michael Fitzpatrick updated the insights in his 1987 pamphlet *The Truth about the Aids Panic*, and concluded that 'the charge of irresponsibility about Aids can be legitimately levelled against all those who have twisted and distorted the epidemiological evidence to justify their attempt to terrify Britain's heterosexual population into major changes in sexual behaviour'. The 'safe sex' doctrine prefigured the repressive climate of the nineties. Fitzpatrick noted that 'the Aids panic has created a consensus that excludes all questioning and tries to curtail any rational debate'.

The left continued to view the post-Cold War world through the prism of yesterday and waited for a seventies-style class struggle to return; in a path-breaking *Living Marxism* feature, 'Midnight in the Century', Frank Richards recognised that 'there are no historical precedents for the situation facing Marxists in the 1990s', and noted that 'the left, as a force that represents something in society, no longer exists'. (December)

1991

Was the Gulf War fought for oil, or the liberation of Kuwait? *Living Marxism* saw that both explanations were spurious: 'The Iraqi presence in Kuwait became the pretext for the USA to launch an international crusade, designed to reassert America's leadership of the

world. Washington's primary motive in turning the Gulf crisis into the hottest issue on Earth has been to hold its Western alliance together, at a time when the start of an economic recession and the end of the Cold War have threatened to pull it apart.' (February)

1991-2

Days before the general election, the political editor of the *Guardian* proclaimed that 'John Major last night caught the unmistakable whiff of election defeat and the looming prospect of a Kinnock government'. Five months earlier, the editor of *Living Marxism* already

knew that 'Labour cannot win outright', while this reporter noted that, among key working class voters in the South East, 'many still see the Conservatives as a safer bet on the economy than the lightweight Labour Party'. (November 1991)

1992

In May, when most commentators thought that the re-elected Tories were invincible, The *Sunday Times* mocked *Living Marxism* journalists for suggesting that John Major's government was facing 'a major crisis of confidence', and would soon be hit by 'fragmentation' as recession turned to slump. But by October, The *Sunday Times* was

following *Living Marxism's* lead: 'Oh, what a shambles!...[The government's] authority was shaken and its lack of political astuteness laid bare....Not a single minister challenged the *Sunday Times* survey that said recession was turning into depression.' Err, right.

1993

While others called for more laws and controls to protect our rights, *Living Marxism* warned of a 'new authoritarianism' which used the cover of paper rights to curtail real freedoms. James Heartfield

noted how 'the rights of the child are a convenient fiction for the authorities....The rights of the child are the rights of the state, as the presumed custodian of a child's interests, over all of us.' (October)

1994

The happy news headlines claimed that peace was breaking out in South Africa, Palestine, and Ireland. Looking behind the handshakes *Living Marxism* advised 'processed peace—don't buy, and observed that 'the apparent advance of peace talks is really a new method of regulating the third world and the East. No such process can bring a just and lasting peace, since it does not address the problems of Western domination which gave rise to wars and militarism in the first place'. (February)

In the first article in *Living Marxism's* monthly science slot, John Gillott took issue with the resurgent sociobiological view of man's proximity to the apes: 'it denigrates uniquely human abilities. It denies our capacity to change the world and ourselves through human activity. It emphasises the burden that our biological make-up places upon us. All of this makes it a conservative ideology for our time....Enough of this monkey business.' (February)

1995

When everybody else was talking about 'Bambi' Blair, *Living Marxism* explained 'why Labour would be even worse than the

Tories': 'Tony Blair's team are the people who will dismantle the welfare state and empower the custodial state.' (February)

1996

Living Marxism observed that the BSE panic was a historic achievement: 'a health scare, not about a disease, but about the possibility of a disease'; although scares about beefburgers, knives and scratchcards are trivial in themselves, 'overall the plague of panics acts and interacts to reinforce a general sense on insecurity in society...countering the paralysing impact of these "non-political" scares and panics is a priority'. (February)

Frank Furedi, who had noted two years earlier that 'society is suffering from mourning sickness' (July 1994), saw these morbid tendencies come to ghastly fruition in the aftermath of Dunblane: 'The tragedy that affects us all, not just today but for some time to come, is that British society has an insatiable appetite for victims and horrific crimes. It is only in response to such events that it can feel, at least momentarily, moral and virtuous. Bring on the next moral spectacle.' (May)

1997

Re-designed *LM* challenges the media mindset which ignores the facts in favour of 'the Greater Truth'. Watch this space...

CLASS POLITICS CANNOT BE REBUILT, REGENERATED OR RESCUED TODAY

...so how can we set about changing society? Frank Furedi raises some new questions for our changed times

Politics today has little in common with the passions and conflicts that have shaped people's commitments and hatreds over the past century. There is no longer room for either the ardent defender of the free market faith, or the robust advocate of revolutionary transformation.

The big issues of the past—the ownership and control of society's wealth, the production and allocation of resources—have been narrowed down to an occasional pleading for the homeless or the extremely frail pensioner. There is still concern about things like unemployment and poverty—but they are increasingly seen as painful facts of life, rather than social and economic problems susceptible to political solutions.

Surveys confirm that the problems which most concern people these days are usually to do with personal behaviour and threats to the individual, rather than broader questions of how society is organised and run. Crime, health and countless forms of abuse seem to exercise the contemporary imagination.

As a result, a mood of weariness informs political debate. Politicians are no longer interested in big ideas about society or socialism v capitalism, which risk causing controversy and division. Instead they tend to stick to the safe moralisms and banalities of the centre ground. Tony Blair articulated this trend during the general election campaign, when he argued that drug abuse was now as important a problem in Britain as poverty had been in the past.

Most attempts to make sense of the profound shifts in political life have proved hopelessly superficial. Instead of rigorous analysis of the underlying trends, too many commentators have chosen to react either by declaring that everything has changed, or by insisting that everything is as it was in the past.

Those who insist that everything has changed like to use terms like the 'End of History', 'post-capitalism',



THE STAIRCASE (2ND STATE), FERNAND LÉGER, 1914

'information society', to indicate that we live in a world that is fundamentally different to old-fashioned capitalism: These claims are usually backed up with statistical evidence of change. The spread of computers, the rise of the Internet, the increase in service employment, the decline of traditional manufacturing industries, the emergence of new patterns of consumption, have all been offered as proof that we live in a different world. This analytical approach is characterised by the tendency to exaggerate the importance of many new developments, by treating quantitative changes in technical matters as if they indicated a qualitative transformation of society.

The corollary of the tendency to exaggerate the changes taking place is to inflate the problems facing society. We live in an era of permanent panics. Commentators appear to revel in warning their readers about the numerous perils that threaten civilisation. From the water we drink to the most ordinary sexual encounter, it appears that hidden and invisible risks threaten human beings on all sides. This obsession with problems—nothing ever seems to go right—reveals the real meaning of the present day usage of the concept 'change'.

The changes that commentators highlight today are seen as the products of globalised forces beyond human



intervention. In this context the inflation of change, and of the dangers involved, is actually a confession that society that has lost control over its direction. According to this model, the world is out of control and there is little that human beings can do to master these developments or influence their destiny. Instead we are surrounded by change in the way that one might be caught in the middle of a tornado. Deprived of choice and options, humanity is forced into a world-view which Margaret Thatcher aptly described as Tina—There Is No Alternative.

Unfortunately the intellectual riposte to Tina is extremely weak. Most of the old radical critics of the system have fallen

into the trap of closing their eyes to the real world. As a result, left-wing commentators tend to do little more than repeat the refrain that nothing important has changed. They see the new mood as a temporary aberration that will soon revert to the patterns of the past. They almost seem to take a perverse pleasure in pointing out that there are still people who are poor, and that the capitalist system is still exploitative. Every time a group of workers takes industrial action, the rump of the old left perks up in the expectation that this anticipates the revival of the working class.

The arguments of the nothing-has-changed brigade boil down to the old adage that 'the poor are always with us', or at worst a repetition of the rhetorical question, 'what about the workers?'. This is an approach which implicitly seeks to reassure us that we still live in an unfair world. But its claims to be a radical criticism of the status quo actually obscure a profoundly conservative instinct. Like their more mainstream counterparts, radical thinkers now continually point to the mounting dangers facing human existence. Indeed they are often even more promiscuous in their doom-mongering than are conservative commentators. They revel in stories about *X-files* style cover-ups over poisoned food, lethal pollutants, new diseases and other threats to human health. The problem is, however, that when everything is treated as a cover-up brought about by secret conspirators, then nothing and nobody gets properly criticised.

It seems that, regardless of their point of departure, commentators of different shades of opinion are now likely to arrive at a strikingly similar conclusion: that the world is an increasingly dangerous, out-of-control place. The target of their concern may differ—some are more anxious about the rise of street crime, while others are obsessed by the variety of abuses that children face. However, such differences in emphasis are resolved through a common belief in the need to extend authoritarian controls. Conflicts of interpretation and ideological commitments do not stand in the way of a consensus that inflates the crisis of society. As a result, the entire spectrum of mainstream politics is devoted to extending the policing of everyday life. All sides share the view that human passions need to be controlled rather than encouraged.

Against this background, the conclusion of almost every discussion is that people are not trustworthy and cannot be expected to live their lives responsibly. The tendency to treat adults as children informs the action of the entire political class. Many of today's major political 'debates' are really an exchange of different proposals about the most effective way to limit human aspirations. Individuals are no longer presented as the 'political man' and still less as members of the 'revolutionary class' of former days. Instead, according to today's political vocabulary, we have the victim, the bullied, the client, the end user, the consumer or the stakeholder. The more passive and restricted role assigned to the client shows how far we have come from the days when the individual was at least rhetorically considered to be a 'political man'.

But what about class?

Class conflict has played a crucial role in the evolution of world politics. Most distinctively modern ideologies have had a strong foundation in the experience and aspirations of a particular class. So it is not surprising that those who remain committed to some form of fundamental social transformation are concerned about the decline of class politics.

Those who are waiting and hoping for a revival of class politics or class solidarity have missed the fundamental changes at work. The past two decades have been marked by the decomposition of class institutions.

Working class institutions like the trade unions have been exposed as empty shells, while important political institutions of the ruling classes, from the monarchy to parliament, have been similarly discredited. The full explanation for this development lies outside the scope of this essay, ♦

Instead of
STRIVING
TO ACHIEVE
 new goals, society now
 encourages the politics of
 self limitation

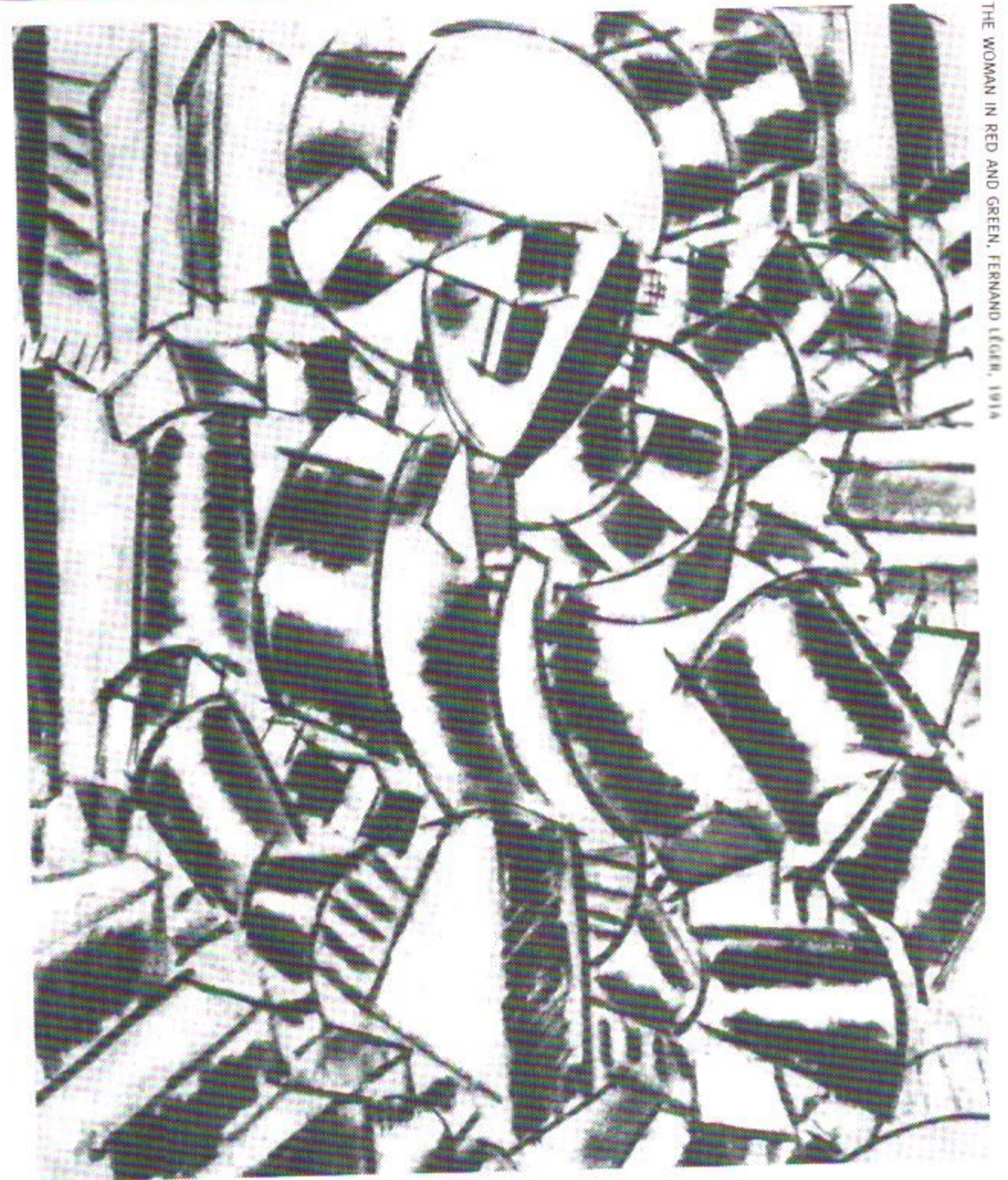
◆ but the defeat of former political experiments, the exhaustion of political traditions and the erosion of old solidarities have all taken their toll. As a result, individual experiences are now rarely mediated through wider institutions of solidarity. People still live and work near each other, and obviously

empathise with one another, but they lack the institutional means to give any meaning to that which binds them together.

The insignificance that people attach to class in a political sense is not the consequence of media manipulation in the way that some on the old left claim. For example, the long-running Liverpool dockers' strike has received little attention from the British media. No doubt national newspaper editors and television producers are not particularly sympathetic to the fate of striking workers. But then, nobody else cares much about them either. The reason why this industrial action is not news is partly because a lot of working people cannot, at this point in time, relate to this experience.

Inevitably, classes still exist in a divided society. But the institutions of solidarity which could give those classes a clear identity and meaning are weak if not non-existent. There are still a few strikes and people do take action in pursuit of their interests. But in the absence of clearly defined arrangements of solidarity, such actions acquire a meaning that falls outside the traditional vocabulary of class. Take the recent example of industrial action by auto workers in Europe. Here were workers of different nationalities, marching alongside each other in Brussels in a display of solidarity. However, their aim was to get support from the EU bureaucracy as much as each other; the coherence of the Brussels business machine probably appeared more useful and relevant to them than their own outmoded organisations.

If you want to see an extreme example of the weakening of old institutional arrangements and solidarities, look to the chaos in Albania. The recent unrest there began with an outburst of anger and resentment against the consequences of free market economics. The people involved were unquestionably working class. Yet in the absence of any institutional or ideological loyalties, the protests turned into a bad case of 'every person for themselves'. It was a mass outburst, but one which developed in a brutally privatised and individuated form. This was not some Balkan mystery,



THE WOMAN IN RED AND GREEN, FERNAND LÉGER, 1914

but an illustration in an extreme case of how social conflict can proceed in a situation of dissipated solidarities.

In today's circumstances class politics cannot be reinvented, rebuilt, reinvigorated or rescued. Why? Because any dynamic political outlook needs to exist in an interaction with existing individual consciousness. And contemporary forms of consciousness in our atomised societies cannot be used as the foundation for a more developed politics of solidarity. What most commentators have missed is that it has not only been a class outlook that has declined. The decline of class has been paralleled by a far more important and fundamental process—the decline of subjectivity. A mood has been created which discourages any idea that people can, by interacting with each other and their circumstances, shape their own destinies. Instead of acting as a history-making subject, humanity has effectively been recast in the role of object to which things happen that are beyond all control.

The increasing fragmentation of social experience has had a major impact on people's lives, helping to normalise a more privatised and individuated way of living. Many commentators claim that this more privatised existence has encouraged the development of a thrusting individual consciousness, of the kind they now associate with the 'greedy eighties'.

But they could not be more wrong. Without known points of contact and a reliable system of support, individuation will only encourage a sense of powerlessness. The sense of being on your own and of having to rely on individual solutions has led to a heightened consciousness of isolation. It has had the effect of altering the way that people see their relationship with the world, helping to induce an exaggerated sense of weakness and a fatalistic outlook. The numerous surveys which claim that people expect that the future will be worse than today is symptomatic of this trend. So is the powerful tendency continually to emphasise the negative side of every development. The disappearance of the elusive 'feelgood factor' is but an expression of a mood in which the anticipation of the worst possible outcome has become routine.

The heightened sense of individual insecurity that prevails today cannot be radicalised or harnessed to some kind of emancipatory project. This kind of consciousness can only fluctuate between passivity and a sporadic outburst of fear,



THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY, FERNAND LÉGER, 1914

of the kind that characterises public reaction to Dunblane or to Aids or to BSE. The coincidence of social passivity with outbursts of anxiety has helped to endow political action with a peculiarly conservative bias. Today's causes tend to be about the politics of survival—ban guns, save the trees, control population. It is ironic that at a time of so-called information revolutions and technological advances, so much of society's imagination seems fixed on the most basic aim of survival for its own sake. The view that little can be taken for granted informs a consciousness that does not trust itself.

The politics of self limitation

Probably the most significant development in the past two decades has been the alteration in the relationship between the individual and society. Individual attitudes are mediated through a complex of institutions and relations; classes are one important relation through which individuals make sense of the world. During the past two centuries, the dynamic of capitalist development and the resistance to it has served to widen people's horizons. Among other developments, it helped to forge a sense of human agency. The development of individual ambition and of a class-based vision of social change often expressed contradictory aspirations. But what such responses had in common was a perception of future possibilities, and the belief that human action could make an important difference.

Today, this human-centred view of the world has been replaced by one in which the range of possible options has been severely narrowed. This is most clearly expressed in the field of politics where, as the general election campaign has made clear, debate has become dull and technical. Politics matters less to people for the very simple reason that what people can do does not matter. This sense of impotence often takes on the form of attacking politics itself. Anti-politics, the cynical dismissal of the elected politician and the obsession with sleaze and corruption, expresses a deeply reactionary view of the human experience. It renounces the history-making potential of people on the grounds that trying to do something either makes no difference or makes matters worse. If this was simply a case of saying that there is no point voting for any of today's major parties, it would be fair enough. But the current cynicism goes way beyond that. The conviction that we cannot trust politics is ultimately a roundabout way of saying that we cannot trust anybody—including ourselves.

Instead of striving to achieve new goals, society now encourages the politics of self limitation. Contemporary culture pours scorn on those with 'excessive' ambition. Those who try to determine the outcome of significant aspects of their lives are dismissed as control freaks. People who refuse to publicise their weaknesses are said to be 'in denial'. Risk takers are denounced for putting others at risk. Heroism is no longer about going beyond the limits, but about being able to suffer and survive. Putting up with adversity is now described as bravery. And truly heroic acts are dismissed as the macho posturing of Don Quixotes. Human exploration, whether in space or in the scientific laboratory, is represented as a colossal waste of money or as positively dangerous to the planet. In schools, competitive sports are under attack and many teachers now believe that failing students is wrong because it undermines their self-esteem.

The overall effect of the culture of self limitation is to reinforce the sense of individuation. Isolation and the experience of insecurity provide fertile terrain for the culture of limits. People who feel that they are on their own can easily develop a sense of paralysis which seems consistent with the prevailing culture of the diminished subject. It is not surprising that people accommodate to this degraded state of affairs at a time when those who suffer the most innocuous set-back are offered counselling. Indeed society positively encourages us to revel in our weakness. Ordinary

interpersonal tensions are today often labelled as bullying or as an act of abuse that will scar the victims for life. In such a climate, the most elementary relationships become highly ambiguous, and an individual's responsibility for his or her own actions becomes obscured. We can trust nobody, and expect to do no more with our lives than survive in some kind of a permanent state of therapy.

The diminished human subject is underpinned by a highly conservative world-view, one that requires the denial of the essence of humanism. Traditional politics is indeed irrelevant in this environment. For the key issue today is not this or that policy, but the more basic struggle against the culture of limits. In this situation concepts like class politics or socialism are abstractions that remain external to an environment where the very belief in the human potential faces scorn and cynicism.

For a while at least, politics with a big P is indeed irrelevant. Those of us who want to do something face a more fundamental problem: how to strengthen the conviction that we have the potential for changing our circumstances. Whether this is done through appealing to self-interest or idealism or a belief in some higher purpose than survival is neither here nor there. There is a need to regroup all those who understand that when human beings cease to play for high stakes, to explore and to take risks or try to transform their circumstances, the world becomes a sad and dangerous place.

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Who do they think they are, asks Jennie Bristow

SAFE SPICE

The baby of the Surrey-based Safe Management outfit, the Spice Girls came out of nowhere late last year with their smash hit 'Wannabe'. Since then they have sold over 14 million singles and 10 million copies of their album, *Spice*, worldwide. The girls are now millionaires, and they are everywhere.

Yet to anybody aged over 10 who has ever seen or heard the Spice Girls, their massive appeal is far from obvious. Yes, they make some catchy songs, and no, they are not shy of showbiz, but what else do they have that others do not?

Let's face it, they are no opera singers, they are not exceptionally gorgeous, they are not particularly charming and they are certainly not fairy-tale icons of the Madonna ilk. In terms of musical talent and dance training, they are distinctly sub-Take That. As one of my bemused friends says, 'They are just like the kind of girls you might meet in Tesco'. Yet instead of stacking supermarket shelves with baked beans, the Spice Girls are filling them with cut-price copies of their album.

What the Spice Girls do have—indeed all they appear to have—is an image: a mysterious new concept called Girl Power. And without Girl Power, it seems unlikely that Emma, Victoria, Geri and the Mels would have got beyond the checkout.

Girl Power is an elusive concept. Everybody knows that the Spice Girls have it, yet there is some uncertainty as to exactly what it is. Emma Cochaine, associate editor of *Smash Hits* magazine and a personal fan, defines the image of the Spice Girls as 'knowing what you want and doing whatever it takes to get it'. When I asked wannabe Spice Girls Ellie, Jay and Tara, aged 6, 7 and 9 respectively, they came to a consensus that Girl Power was all about doing high kicks on stage.

Fair enough, but the Spice maidens are hardly the first professional wannabes prepared to spend their formative years 'doing whatever it takes' in countless auditions, or able to shake a leg on stage. There must be something more to Girl Power for it to have suddenly proved such a successful formula now. The Spice Girls' official book, entitled *Girl Power!*, defines it so broadly as to mean just about

anything you want it to, from when 'you help a guy with his bag' to when 'you believe in yourself and control your own life' (p6).

If you can bear to read through to the middle of the Spice Girls' book, however, you do get a slightly more satisfying explanation of this elusive idea. Right in the centre of *Girl Power!*, we finally discover what Girl Power is really supposed to be all about, printed in bright pink ink:

'Feminism has become a dirty word. Girl Power is just a Nineties way of saying it. We can give feminism a kick up the arse. Women can be so powerful when they show solidarity.'

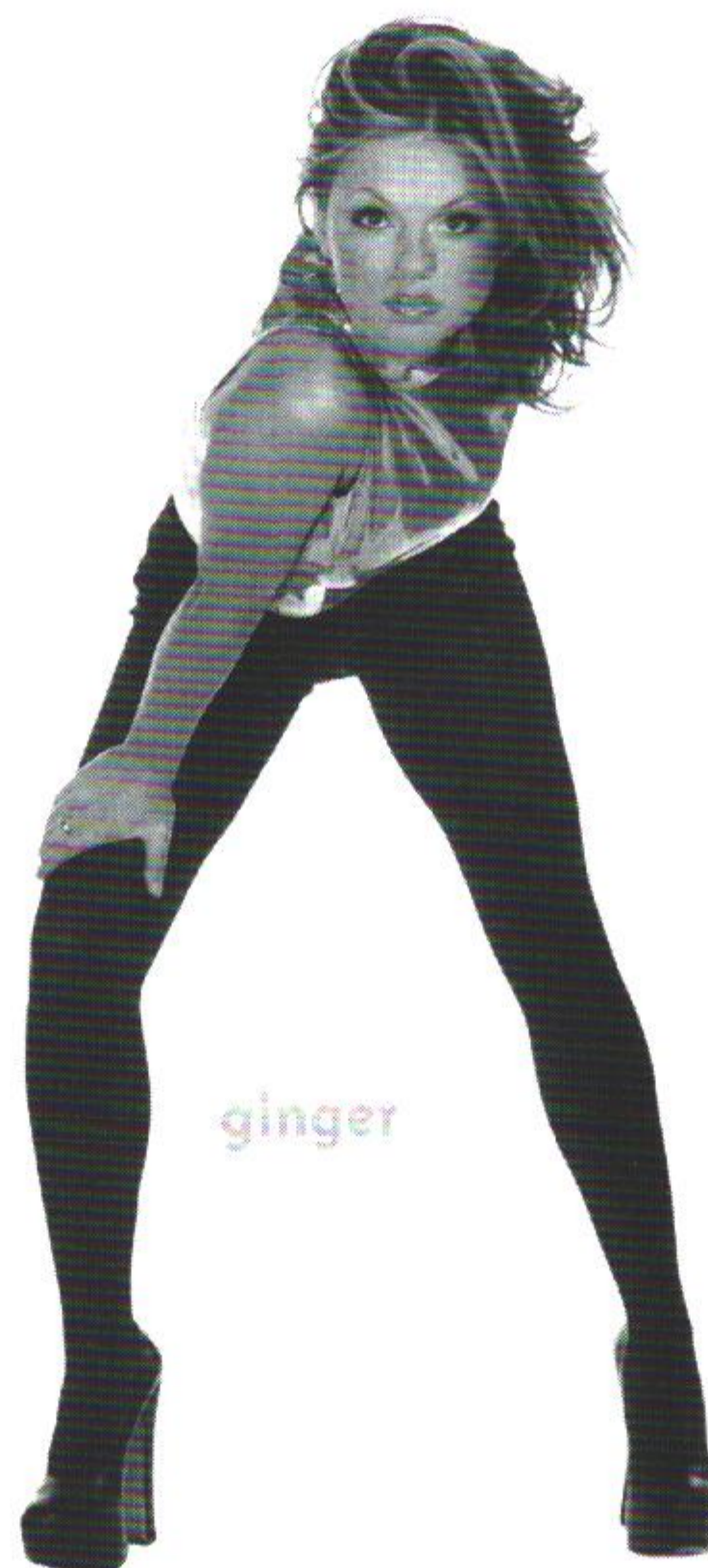
Scary stuff, and surely enough to have surreptitious male readers of *Girl Power!* quaking in their boots. But no explanation is complete without an illustration, and the illustration gives a slightly different spin on the message.

Immediately next to this feisty quote, there is a pull-out poster of the girls lying on a double bed, looking very cute and feigning sleep. They are cuddled up to each other like five-year olds (nothing sexual you understand), and stressing to the world that they are no threat to anybody. A particularly nice touch is that Emma (Baby Spice) is wearing cuter-than-cute pyjamas with little cartoon figures on them; only if you look closely can you see 'FUCK OFF!', in little red lettering, running through the pictures. It is about as dangerous as children whispering rude words behind their parents' backs.

This brand of 'Girl Power' really is a kind of ad agency version of what nineties feminism has become:



baby



ginger

a safe form of self-expression that has more to do with changing your hairstyle than changing the world. It is a strange combination of superficial bolshiness and girlier-than-girliness, of shocking appearance and utter conservatism. Girl Power appeals to the young punters because it seems to be pushing the boundaries of respectability; but it is acceptable to mums and tabloid editors because it is no real threat to anybody.

One of the Spice Girls' latest hits—the double A-side of 'Mama' and 'Who do you think you are?'—sums up the fusion of girliness and stropiness that characterises the group's image. On one side, the girls croon 'Mama I love you / Mama I care' more sweetly than any Shirley Temple clone, and released the single for Mothers' Day to make the point that 'your mum's probably the best friend you've got' (*Girl Power!*, p42). By the time you get to the other side, the girls have transformed themselves into bossy bitches from hell, screaming 'who do you think you are?' at anybody who might suffer from illusions about themselves, whether they be boyfriends or stars in the music industry. As Mel C says, 'we wrote it without thinking of ourselves and the irony of it' (*Girl Power!*, p44).

The Spice Girls can get away with suggestive lyrics and crude language, tattoos and pierced tongues,

because everything they do is constrained and tempered by their basic girliness and goodness. When 'Scary Spice' comes on TV and shouts, 'Baby Spice' is

there to neutralise the effect. When they release sexually explicit songs such as 'Two become one' ('I had a little love, now I'm back for more / Wanna make love to ya baby'), they make sure that they include a 'safe sex message' ('Be a little bit wiser baby, put it on, put it on') because 'we all think that's very important' (*Girl Power!*, p38).

Despite having become an international phenomenon, they swear that they will 'never, ever move away from home' (*Smash Hits*, 12-25 March 1997). And so it goes on.

Safe Management has managed to tap straight into one of the main cultural currents of our times. In the safety-obsessed 1990s it can be cool to be rude and outrageous, provided you never go too far and offend the new etiquette. As far as lifestyle and language are concerned, sexy clothes and swearing is in: as long as the sex is safe and the swearing is not sexist, racist or homophobic. If you go too far, like Brian Harvey, singer with the 'lad band' East-17—and try to suggest that young people should have sex, take drugs, or do anything but sing about being naughty—the moral guardians of the media world are down on you like a ton of bricks. But if you are girly, non-threatening and prepared to do 'a lotta good deeds for charidee',

singing about sex to six-year olds is okay.

Girl Power is a 1990s feminism in which girls can be superficially as rude as they like, provided they do not go beyond the limits of acceptable behaviour. And to

go beyond these limits, they do not have to do much at all.

The only time the Spice Girls have got any serious stick in their brief but loveable history (apart from the time Sporty Spice got called a 'Scouse Bastard' by 50 000 Man United fans) was when they 'came out' in support of the Conservative Party and against the European Union, and famously proclaimed Margaret Thatcher to be the first Spice Girl. Media-created market-friendly pop girlies are not supposed to have divisive opinions on such controversial matters as these, and there was much tut-tutting about them over-stepping the mark in search of sensationalist publicity. I thought it was the best thing they had ever done.

Now don't get me wrong, I hate Margaret Thatcher as much as anybody. But I also admire what she had: not 'Girl Power' in her head, but real power in the world. That really is something girls should really really want, and is certainly a lot more inspiring than wearing 'fuck' on your pyjamas. But when those who wet themselves over Geri getting her tits out on stage draw the line at her hinting that some real power might be a good thing, you can see that the Spice Girls' appeal will last only so long as they keep themselves unthreatening.

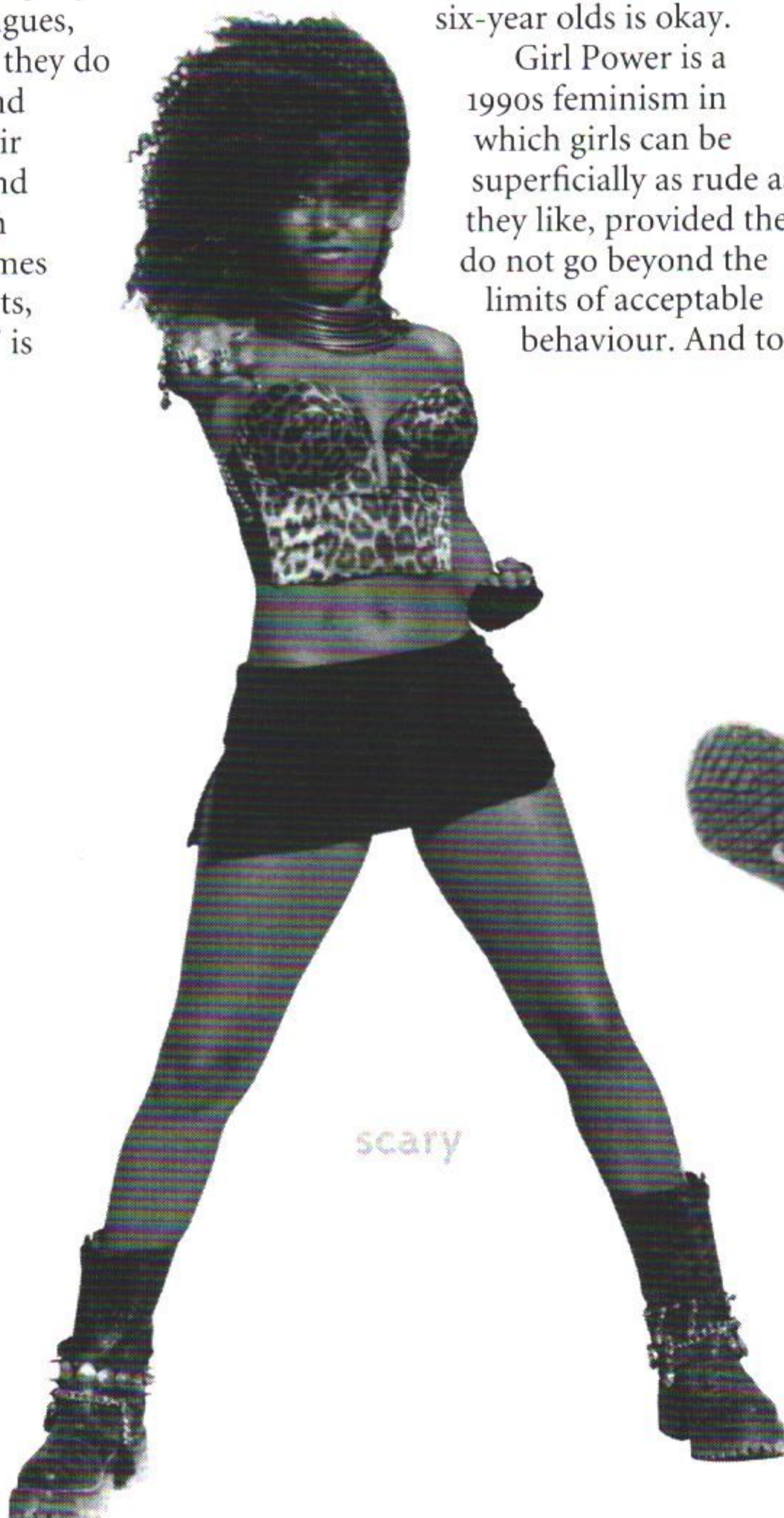
In their introduction to *Girl Power!*, the Spice Girls encourage their readers to remember that 'the future is female'. In a world where the girls next door are hailed as the voice of the nation, and boy bands try to look like harmless little girls (even to the point of Boyzone wearing dresses 'for a laugh'), they may well be right.

Scary, baby. ●

posh



scary



sporty



FUTURES

The furore over cloning confirms that cutting-edge science is highly unpopular today. John Gillott calls for scientists to get out of their bunker and win the case for their work

TIME FOR SCIENCE TO GET ON THE SOAPBOX

Dolly Parton says she is honoured that the world's first cloned animal has been named after her, since there is no such thing as 'baaaaad publicity'. But many others greeted the arrival of Dolly the cloned sheep with a mixture of disquiet, fear and anger. At a debate on genetics called 'The people decide', organised by the Wellcome Trust in March during National Science Week, only 32 per cent of the 450 members of the public present thought Dolly should have been made. On the broader question of 'Is human genetics research going too far?', the answer was a narrow yes—39 to 37 per cent—with the rest undecided. Research into a possible genetic influence on IQ got the thumbs-down by a sizeable majority.

The hostile reaction to Dolly, and the calls for further research to be banned on both sides of the Atlantic, has caused great concern within the scientific community. 'When I hear about research on human cloning as something that ought to be taken away, I shiver', said Harold Varmus, director of the US National Institutes of Health, anticipating the collapse of what he considers to be many areas of important research.

The fact that such cutting-edge work as cloning caused such a reaction should have come as no surprise. Anything which involves the manipulation of nature is now likely to provoke a combination of public anxiety and vehement criticism. Society has all-but abandoned many of the principles which provided a supportive environment for experimental science. Consider the changes:

- Society once linked scientific progress to social progress and believed the future would be better than the present; today any such sense has been lost.
- Society once believed that through science we could improve upon

nature for our benefit; today this is condemned as 'playing God' and 'colonising the future'.

- Society once thought it could cope with any side-effects of scientists' actions; today it fears a runaway world full of man-made risks.
- Society once believed in the intrinsic value of increased scientific knowledge; today it is worried that abuse will outweigh the benefits of new knowledge.
- Society once celebrated scientific experimentation and expertise; today it looks to ethicists and regulators for protection from experimentation while critics talk about 'bringing science down to earth'.
- Society once believed in the *value* of science; today critics talk about the oppressive *values* of science.

How should scientists, especially those engaged in work in contentious areas, and the funders of such work, respond? Here's my four point plan.

1. TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Scientists should start by being open about their work, giving an honest explanation of what they are doing, why they are doing it, and the possibilities it opens up. There is no mileage in trying to avoid criticism by keeping science a secret. People are not stupid, and the critics will draw out, distort and bemoan the implications, even if the scientists try to keep the lid on.

Ian Wilmut, leader of the team that made Dolly, has been praised for his patient and friendly handling of the media. But in some ways he has been a poor model. Worried about a backlash against his own area of research based on animal cloning, he has at times tried to downplay the possibility of useful

research linked to human cloning. More positively, other scientists have gone out of their way to insist that we keep open the possibility of research linked to the cloning of human cells. Robert Winston in the UK and leading researchers and funders such as Varmus in America have ensured that these issues are not ducked by explaining some of the benefits of work in the human field—such as culturing cell lines in treatments for cancer, as well as for studying the basic elements of cell development and the ageing process.

Another immediate example of the need for openness and explanation concerns research into genes and IQ. Scientists involved in this work, and the Medical Research Council as a funder of scientific research, are pretty coy about what they are up to. At the Wellcome Trust debate on human genetics, Professor Peter McGuffin of Cardiff presented a defence of research into genetic influences on everything but IQ, despite the fact that the IQ work is an interest of his. What is the problem? Presumably scientists are scared of provoking a backlash because the public image of their work smacks of eugenics. But that is all the more reason why the issue should be openly debated.

I can see reasons to do the work. For a start, we should never be scared to find the truth. And the claims made—that genetic factors account for 50 per cent of IQ variations across the population—are pretty staggering. If there is any truth in them there are some obvious implications of the work we ought to at least consider. What do the scientists involved think? It would be useful to know.

2. DON'T LET THE CRITICS SET THE AGENDA

The critics of science are often allowed a free hand to plant in the public mind the idea that experimental work is of limited value, probably dangerous, and open to abuse. Thanks to a concerted

As James Watson, co-discoverer of the structure of DNA asked, 'if we don't play God, who will?'

◆ effort by some scientists and funding bodies, this imbalance has been partly rectified in relation to the cloning debate (see 'Send in the clones', *LM*, April 1997): while the team involved and leading figures such as Robert Winston have explained the various agricultural and medical benefits likely to flow from the work, others such as Richard Dawkins have sought to play down the threat of abuse by ridiculing the way in which cloning has been compared to the atomic bomb. And as others have pointed out, if anybody can think of any specific terrible abuses of the technology, we should move to close them off as we do in relation to abuses of other technologies.

A mistake scientists often make is to think that stressing the extent of 'regulation' is the way to deal with public unease. In practice it often serves more as a false reassurance. Those involved in promoting the cloning work have tried this tack. In the report they rushed out, the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee has taken a relatively (compared to some other countries) enlightened approach to the cloning issue. Yet even this report is more concerned to stress how regulation restricts any moves towards human cloning, than to explain why research relating to human cloning and the cloning of human embryos might be useful. Stressing the extent of regulation might seem clever in the face of hysteria, but in the absence of a positive case being made for work in the human field, it can only confirm public suspicion that there is something terribly dangerous going on; in which case many would probably say they preferred an outright ban to regulation.

3. TAKE THE FIGHT TO THE ENEMY

Scientists need to shift the whole terrain on which issues are discussed. Rather than giving ground, scientists should take the fight to their critics.

For example, there is undoubtedly public unease about the risks associated with genetic modification and the release of genetically modified organisms. That should be the cue for a forthright campaign to convince people of the possible benefits. Instead, the critics have been allowed to twist public anxieties so as to put many scientists on the back foot.

A recent report by the Centre for the Study of Environmental Change at Lancaster University, 'Uncertain world: genetically modified organisms, food and public attitudes in Britain', put it like this: 'In the lay public sphere, there is little familiarity with GMO technology, but (our research suggests)

well-grounded, if still largely latent, anxieties about the implications of the technology itself.' In fact the evidence does not show that the fears are well-grounded. Indeed, we have many years experience with GMO technology and GMO release without any problems becoming evident. The Lancaster team are exaggerating the problems in order to pursue their Green agenda. But instead of saying, 'thanks for the sociological data on public attitudes, but never mind your loaded spin on the science', the top science journal *Nature* conceded ground, reporting the issues under the headline 'Risk and the inadequacy of science' (2 January 1997).

Every time environmentalists accuse science of interfering with future generations or 'playing God', many scientists run for cover. But it should be the critics who have to do the explaining. The powerful argument for making modifications is that nature is a source of disease and that it can be improved upon by human design. As James Watson, co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, puts it, biologically speaking 'We are the products of evolution, not some grand design which says this is what we have and that's it....People say we are playing God. My answer is: "If we don't play God, who will?"'

To get the message across, experimental and forward-looking scientists need to push through the logic of the argument in relation to genetics. And they will have to challenge some of their more conservative colleagues as they do so.

For example, a consensus has been established that germ-line gene therapy—which affects future generations because the modifications are made to eggs and sperm or the cells which produce them—is a bad idea in principle: 'such gene therapy is just too dangerous to embark on' says Baroness Warnock. 'Positive' gene therapy, in which we do not merely seek to replace a defective gene with a normally functioning one, but rather try to improve upon nature—say by strengthening resistance to cancer—is also publicly rejected by most in the scientific community.

This cosy consensus should be challenged by a public defence of the distinct possible benefits of genetic modification in expanding the limits of medicine. Scientists have too easily accepted the argument that altering the germ-line or effecting 'positive' changes to the genome is a terrible idea because it will mean affecting the genetic make-up of people in the future. There is a simple response to this argument: *not* making a change when it is possible to

do so is also a choice to affect future generations, and a bad one.

4. COME OUT OF THE CLOISTERS

Ultimately, scientists need to make a broad argument for the benefits of scientific advance in society. Robert Oppenheimer argued that 'it is not possible to be a scientist unless you believe that knowledge of the world, and the power which this gives, is a thing which is of intrinsic value to humanity'. Today, however, any broader notion of social progress has been lost, and with it has gone the easy association between scientific advance and social benefit. It is now more common for rapid scientific advance in fields such as genetics to provoke suspicion, since the loss of belief in social progress has encouraged profound doubts about humanity's ability to cope with the knowledge science brings. Experimental science sits uneasily with a conservative society.

Unfortunately, leading scientific voices are in danger of ducking the challenge this situation creates. Having given ground to the critics in areas such as environmental risks, *Nature* puffed out its chest on the cloning issue and declared: 'The history of science suggests that efforts to block its development are misguided and futile.' (6 March 1997) This may be true generally, but *Nature's* comment smacks of complacency and myopia.

We should not assume that what was true in the past will hold good in the future. The climate has changed in such a way as to call into question the accepted values of the past 200 years. While bans might not be on the agenda, a cautious attitude by funding bodies and subtle forms of self-censorship by scientists may well hinder research in more sensitive areas, if it is not already doing so. And a successful call to limit public funding for key areas cannot be ruled out if the only argument for scientific progress is that 'resistance is futile'—even the fearsome Borg were stopped in the end by Jean-Luc Picard and company.

Does *Nature* want or expect science to advance alone in a sea of conservatism and superstition? Are we to settle for a modern version of the Dark Ages, with scientists taking the place of monks, cloistered in their monasteries with their books while barbarism rules all round them? If this idea is unappealing, then I suggest that, metaphorically speaking, it is time for scientists to cast off their monastical mind-set and make a broader case for science as a component of social progress. The response to Dolly should give cutting-edge scientists a wake-up call to arms. ●

DR MICHAEL FITZPATRICK

Doctoring an unhealthy society



In the opening chapter of his election special *Why Vote Labour?*, MP Tony Wright castigates the Tory government over the return of 'diseases such as tuberculosis and rickets'. He thunders that these 'Dickensian diseases' are the product of 'poor nutrition and bad social conditions' in a society in which 'nearly one in three babies' is now born in poverty, a 'return to Victorian values with a vengeance'.

The link between social disadvantage and ill health is currently all the rage in medical journals and conferences. At a symposium last month, Dr Iona Heath, a radical North London GP, declared that 'the greatest contemporary challenge facing the discipline of general practice is to find an adequate response to the malign effect of poverty on the health of patients'.

I have followed the poverty-health debate with some bemusement. On one level, it has always seemed so obvious that rich people are healthier than poor people, that detailed surveys of the differentials were of little interest. However, the sheer scale of recent research and discussion of these issues has prompted me to look a little more closely.

My first question is—can it really be true that poverty has suddenly become such a major threat to public health in Britain? I work in Hackney, a borough which is classified as having high levels of deprivation. Yet to draw a parallel between the poverty in Hackney today and that in the nineteenth century seems far fetched. I have, over the past decade, seen a couple of cases of rickets and a few more of TB, but these are far from being the everyday diseases they were in East London up to the 1940s.

When I was a medical student I saw many children suffering from malnutrition in Africa, but I have never seen such a case in Hackney. Many of my patients live on fairly rundown council estates, but conditions of overcrowding, cold and damp are much less common today than they were even when I started in general practice. Central heating—until fairly recently the privilege of the middle classes—is now virtually universal.

According to the *Election Briefing* published by the *Economist*, the real income of the average person in Britain has increased by 39 per cent since 1979. It is true that those on higher incomes have done best, but it is only the bottom 10 per cent who have experienced a decline in real living standards. These figures confirm my impression that, while most people are better off, a small section of people, often suffering from a combination of social and medical problems, for some compounded by the effects of discrimination against ethnic minorities or refugees, have experienced increasing hardship.

I fully accept a definition of poverty in relative terms: to participate in society everybody needs not only enough resources to ensure physical survival, but sufficient to ensure a customary standard of living. I also recognise one of the key themes of the current debate, that relative poverty is associated with a relatively high level of ill health and probably contributes to an early death. But what I cannot understand is how relative poverty of the sort that exists in Britain today can lead to a rising incidence of rickets or TB.

FURTHERMORE, WHEN I READ CLAIMS that one third of babies in Britain are born into poverty and that this experience of deprivation explains significant differentials in various indicators of infant mortality—all of which have been steadily declining for decades—I begin to suspect that the statisticians are taking leave of the real world.

All this leads to more questions—why all this concern about poverty and why now? After all, in the 1980s the famous Black Report on inequalities and health and its successor 'The health divide' were alternately suppressed and dismissed by the government as the work of dangerous left wingers. Yet now that the left has collapsed, its old cause of health inequalities is flourishing as never before.

This paradox forms the starting point for some excellent recent work by David Wainwright ('The political transformation of the health inequalities debate', *Critical Social Policy*, November 1996). Wainwright

emphasises that the underlying concern in the new health inequalities debate is not so much with the poor as with the wider problems of society. This point is confirmed by a more recent article which links increasing inequality to declining social cohesion, which in turn leads to rising crime, falling productivity and damage to democracy (I Kawachi and B Kennedy, 'Health and social cohesion: why care about income inequality?', *British Medical Journal*, 5 April). The discussion of health inequalities shifts to the question of how to control the 'underclass'.

Wainwright focuses on the initiatives that emerge out of the health inequalities debate. On the one hand, there are exhortations to the government to implement policies that reduce poverty and guarantee services to the poor. As he observes, at a time when the pro-market policies of both major parties point in the opposite direction, such pleas are little more than empty rhetoric. On the other hand, various health professionals are engaged in projects directed at policing the personal behaviour of the poor.

Commenting on a survey of more than 100 community health initiatives, Wainwright notes that many are oriented towards regulating the behaviour of young people, using the issues of alcohol, drugs or safety. The more 'person-centred' initiatives tend to have an individualistic focus on stress management, personal and social skills and healthy lifestyles. He is critical of their use of the concept of 'empowerment' to describe activities which elevate survival over social engagement and encourage passivity and acquiescence.

In the Victorian era, radical activists engaged in missionary work among the poor of East London, preaching the virtues of temperance, thrift and clean living. In our secular age, much of this work now falls to GPs and other primary healthcare workers, who preach the gospel of health promotion, against smoking and drinking, for safe sex and exercise and a healthy diet. Meanwhile the system that generates relative poverty alongside relative wealth guarantees that doctors and undertakers will never be short of work.

Auture . censorship

Crash is finally due to hit British cinema screens this summer, after months of breast-beating and bans. Producer Chris Auty told Peter Martin about the making—and mauling—of director David Cronenberg's film of JG Ballard's book

Signs of the times

'I'm very upset. I was supposed to be going on a visit in February, but then all the trouble started.'

I hope to goodness it can be sorted out.'

Norman Wisdom on the crisis in Albania, where the 82-year-old funny man was once mobbed by comedy-starved Albanians shouting 'Oh, Mr Grimsdale!'. For 40 years, Norman Wisdom's were the only Western films allowed in the country. The late dictator Enver Hoxha believed his on-screen persona as the put-upon Norman Perkin to be suitably 'proletarian'.

'The Navy came back to me and said they were slightly worried. They wanted an act that was guaranteed to be squeaky clean and politically correct. With the sort of

'THE COPY-CAT ARGUMENT' IS JUST A JOKE,

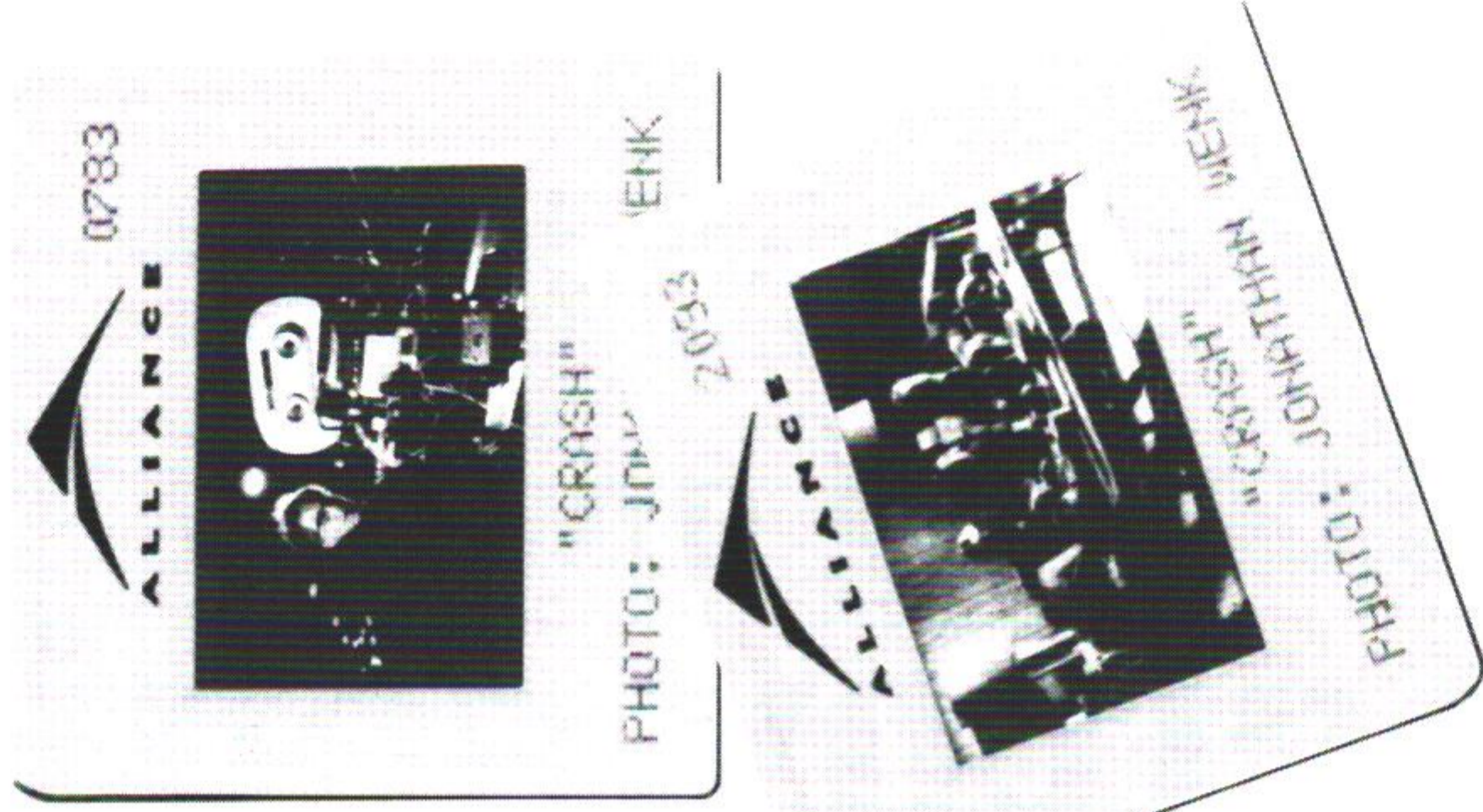
'I'd read the book at Cambridge. I thought it was incredible, also probably unfilmable. It's a great piece of modernist literature and presents all sorts of problems for a screenplay writer. Three years ago David Cronenberg delivered a script which Jeremy Thomas, Hercules Bellville and I—the three directors of The Recorded Picture Company—read overnight. He had managed to devise a script which was like a concerto: it had that simplicity and elegance. Five weeks later a new draft arrived, slightly further simplified so that you really had the four characters at the centre as a kind of quadrille. At that point we knew we wanted to make the film.'

'By the end of Cannes [1995] the film was in effect financed. We shot it in Toronto on a closed set through the autumn. We just finished post-production in time to make it to Cannes [1996], where the film was selected to play in the main competition. The screening was extraordinary. About a quarter of the audience whistled and booed, and about half cheered and gave it a standing ovation. The film received the Special Jury Prize, which

'There are only three grounds on which one can object to the film: that it might be likely to cause copy-cat incidents; that the sexual behaviour of the protagonists is perverse, and that perversity should never be explored; and that it is morally neutral—the Alexander Walker [*London Evening Standard* film critic] argument.'

'To take them in turn. The copy-cat argument is just a joke. It implies that the film is violent, and the film is not violent. I suppose the only copy-cat incident you could induce with the film is to encourage teenagers to fuck in the back of cars in car washes. Or to test drive cars head on into each other, which I simply do not believe people will do. There is no evidence that it has happened anywhere in the world where the film has been released. Or it might somehow induce teenagers to become obsessed with cars,

twentieth century, in an age of telephony and computing where more and more emotional experiences are occurring in cyber-virtual contexts.



is encapsulated in this, the concept is that it is a mass medium in which the unsophisticated audience is potentially capable of not seeing the line that divides fiction from life. I simply do not believe that. If you have children it is perverse to believe that. Any child has a clear grasp of the boundary between life and what they see on the box.

'I am more concerned about violent actualité footage from the news which is brief and decontextualised as far as a young person is concerned, than I am with fictional output,

shows Jim does it was not felt they could guarantee that.' Richard Astbury, head of Combined Services Entertainment, explaining the decision to drop Jim 'Falklands' Davidson from a show on the aircraft carrier *Illustrious*

'I would like to affirm that my relationship with the Forces remains as strong as it has ever been.' Jim Davidson

'I'm going to sue you, ref, if I get my leg busted.'

Portsmouth Royal Navy football player, whose threats caused the referee to halt the game while he sought assurances from the manager that he would not be prosecuted

A two-day seminar is to be held in Stoke-on-Trent to explore the tensions and problems of being not black, not female, not gay—and usually in the wrong'. The event is for voluntary sector managers.

'This is the last thing we need. He should not be entering nude pictures in magazine competitions. He is supposed to be an ambassador for Sussex County Cricket Club.' An 'angry member', complaining about the behaviour of Nigel Bett, the club secretary, who appeared naked in *British Naturism* magazine

provoked considerable controversy because it became clear that the jury had been split. They nearly came to blows over it.

'Britain was one of the very few countries where we had not got a distributor. We agreed a deal with Columbia Tristar. After quite a bit of fuss I have to say, because the reaction of some of the distributors in England intimated what perhaps we should have known beforehand, which was that England was going to be problematic for the film. At the beginning of September when we still had not finalised the deal, but we knew who the distributor was going to be, I submitted the film directly to the British Board of Film Classification for censorship. We expected a couple of voices saying Cronenberg is a sleaze monster and everyone else to say "we loved it" or "we hated it". No, we did not expect what happened. [The BBFC refused to grant *Crash* a certificate until six months later in March 1997.]

'During the summer it had opened in France. Three quarters of a million people went to see it. It was the controversial film of the summer. It was also only a 16 certificate and was seen throughout provincial France without a problem. In Italy a small Catholic group called for the film not to be shown and a judge in chambers simply heard a petition from both sides on the same day, looked at the film and said there was no case to answer. The film played perfectly happily. There was a small protest in Buenos Aires which was resolved in a similar way.

Despite a hate campaign by the *Daily Mail*, the ban imposed by Westminster council, and two Tory ministers advising other local authorities to copy-cat Westminster's action, the director of the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) has finally passed *Crash* uncut for public exhibition. But this is no triumph for freedom over censorship.

BBFC director James Ferman only passed *Crash* for release after it was given a clean bill of health by special reports which he commissioned. Among Ferman's expert witnesses were Dr Paul Britton, the forensic psychologist who masterminded the failed police attempt to sting Colin Stagg for the murder of Rachel

but as David Cronenberg points out the obsession of youth and testosterone with the car is a function of the modern age since the war. The iconography of the car and the teenager is something which exists already. So I think that is a nonsense.

'On the second argument, you cannot restrict depictions of human life to only those aspects which you find pretty and pleasant. There are aspects which are darker than that, and if you do not explore them life would be poorer and art would not exist. So I think that is a nonsense.

'The third argument, that the film is morally anarchic, is not something I agree with. I think it is a deeply moral film. It depicts a world where people become very disconnected from their own lives. The point about the crash at the beginning is that it is literally a point of impact between two people, who discover that they are connected suddenly by virtue of the impact. The whole film can be read as a fable about the ghostliness of highly technologised modern life. The central characters are desperately in search of meaning and love. The need to make contact as symbolised by the crash is an effort that we all need to make over, and over, and over again, unless we are to become ghosts or zombies of a technologised era. The film is addressing a subject that is central to the end of the

Nickell on Wimbledon Common; and a group of disabled people who were asked to view the 'sex, wrecks and calipers' film and report on whether it offended them.

This means that public access to films now depends on the mapping of our minds according to the dubious tenets of criminal psychology, and the personal feelings of minority groups exercising what *Independent* columnist Thomas Sutcliffe rightly described as 'an entirely illusory human right—the right not to be offended' (20 March 1997). The right of rational individuals to free access to visual material, and the freedom of the majority to make up our own minds, have dropped out of sight, prompting

I think it is a very important thing, and I am still taken aback that in England people seem unable to take that reasonably.

'Neither the book nor the film is written with a moral primer, but both are written as anxious contemplation of what happens when emotion drains out of our daily life into a kind of technological ether. That point is much stronger in the film than in the book. The fact that the film does not have a morality chapter at the end saying these people should be punished, does not in my view mean it is a sort of immoral product; precisely those statements which are open are the ones that tend to have the strongest artistic carrying ability. *Macbeth* does not require someone to stand up and say "killer, murderer, seducer" for the point to be quite clear to everybody.

'The copy-cat argument has only ever been applied to moving pictures, perversely. People think that with literature there is a sufficient gap between the art form and the consumer's perception of reality. Nobody mistakes a book for real life, and that is kind of simple because of the way the semiotics of text is encoded. If you move a stage up, to theatre, the same argument applies: a theatre audience cannot possibly mistake what is happening on stage for life. As soon as you turn to film, and the entire history of film censorship

where clearly the encoding of the fiction is an elaborate piece of work and people are used to those generic ideas of what constitutes an artistic frame. That's where Alexander Walker's argument falls down, that the film has no moral frame. Everybody who sees the film sees its aesthetic frame, and with the aesthetic frame goes some sense of what the artist thinks that life should be. The distinction that applies here is between Catholic sensibilities and the Anglophone-Protestant tradition, symbolism versus realism.

'In my personal capacity I am a convinced libertarian. I do not believe in censorship and I do believe that people should be able to choose. I do feel that there is a certain age threshold with children. In a climate where there is no censorship one would hope that artists are less interested in the boundaries they have to get round, and more interested in what they are trying to say. If there is classification, which I think there should be, it has to be independently administered. There is quite a swell of pressure to bring film censorship into some sort of statutory framework, and there have already been moves in that direction with the Video Recordings Act.

'I have yet to hear somebody explain to me how if you intend to have a democracy you can decide which elements of the democracy are sufficiently intelligent to protect the rest of us. Apart from anything else I find that those powers are often vested in the judgement of people whom I do not respect.' ●

ALL'S NOT WELL THAT ENDS WELL

that 'defending artistic freedom' is fast becoming a euphemism for censoring that which does not qualify as art. We should have unhindered access to films with no artistic merit whatsoever, even if it is only to bin them after a few frames. The point is that we need the freedom to decide for ourselves.

For all their talk of artistic freedom, today's film people are more inclined to self-censorship than pushing back the boundaries. Ted Turner and Jane Fonda paid several million dollars for *Crash* but still did not want to release it. When George Romero, who made the gore-fest *Night of the Living Dead*, can appear in a BBC2 documentary and warn that directors like himself and Cronenberg are in danger of going too far, we really have got something to worry about. ●

Andrew Calcutt

alt culture . sport

Signs of the times

Ashford Town footballer Tom Parks put in an extra 90 minutes before the away fixture at Merthyr Tydfil—hiding in the toilet on the team bus in an effort to avoid passport officials at the Welsh border. He did the same on the way back, before asking manager Neil Cugley if it was safe to come out.

British Airways is considering dropping the Union Flag from its plane tails, to encourage a more 'international' image. Britannia Airways has dropped its 'Royal Service' because it believes the word 'Royal' no longer confers 'kudos'. Now Ribena has dropped the Royal Warrant from its label. All this at the time Lady Thatcher has controversially decided to adopt a regal mode of address for her

KING OF THE RING

'We all have a moment when we're at the top of our game. For Muhammad Ali, the fight would be the crowning achievement in an extraordinary career. He was a king amongst kings—Ali was King of the World.' This is how executive producer David Sonnenberg accounts for the title, *When We Were Kings*, of the Oscar-winning documentary about the legendary Rumble in the Jungle, when Ali knocked out George Foreman to regain the world heavyweight title in Zaire in 1974.

Director Leon Gast has interspersed footage of the build-up and the fight alongside new interviews with George Plimpton and writer Norman Mailer, who were commentators at the time, and film-maker Spike Lee. More than 20 years on, Plimpton and Mailer are still excited by Ali. Mailer is moved to laughter and near to tears as he recalls the occasion when Ali commented on how well he was looking. Mailer says he felt so happy and excited he had to go and urinate.

Ali excelled at perhaps the most violent of all sports, threatened to 'torture' his opponents, and stood up to the authorities when he refused the draft saying, 'no Vietcong ever called me nigger'. *When We Were Kings* is an unashamed celebration of the strength, aggression and power embodied in him. It is a timely reminder that these are qualities to be admired, not frowned upon as 'masculinist' character defects.

When We Were Kings opens in May. **Jim Minton** is a lifelong boxing fan

PHOTO: HOWARD L BINGHAM/POLYGRAM



comedy YOU SADOWITZ BASTARD

PHOTO: SUE TERRY



Jerry Sadowitz offers to show Timandra Harkness a trick or two

Jerry Sadowitz is known as the bad boy of comedy, so offensive that a Canadian audience member once punched him unconscious only three words into his act. Mind you, the three words were 'Good evening, Moosefuckers'. Recently, however, Sadowitz has been performing card tricks and other close-up magic in intimate venues. But he insists that he is not going soft. 'I'm sure a lot of people will think the close-up magic is selling out. It's something I've been doing for years and years, that's all it is.'

The virtuosity of Sadowitz the magician is all the more impressive for being understated—this man does things with a grapefruit that you would not believe. In his magic show the rude persona is confined to throwaway flashes (after a gag about child abduction: 'I'll probably get blamed for the Dunblane massacre now'), which are easily absorbed by the audience. But hopefully the Sadowitz holiday

BOXING IN A CORNER

new letterhead, which includes the Queen's coat of arms.

'I should have said the capitalist system is based on stealing.'

Lord Soper, when pressed on the subject of whether stealing from supermarkets can be justifiable

'That inch'll do us.'

Mike Hicks, General Secretary, Communist Party of Britain, explains why he's backing Blair despite his view that there's 'barely an inch' between Labour and the Tories

'I didn't throw the ball hard, I just picked it up and threw it over my head like you do from a throw-in. A steward forced his way into the crowd and grabbed me. Another fan jumped on him and dragged me back and some other supporters formed a circle around me.'

Kevin O'Neill (13) who was ejected from Grimsby Town's football ground for throwing the ball in the Tranmere goalkeeper's face

'The boy admitted throwing chewing gum at the goal-keeper. He did not give the ball back to him, he threw it at him with some vigour and followed it up with a V-sign.'

Grimsby Town safety officer John Tuke's version of events. That chewing gum can be pretty dangerous in the wrong hands.

'Boxing is no longer socially acceptable. That is illustrated by who markets and sells it—Sky TV, almost exclusively now. They started by outbidding like they did with football but now the BBC and ITV just don't want to know. They get too much flak because there is so much controversy attached to it.' Jonathan Rendall is a boxing journalist, ex-manager of retired World Boxing Organisation featherweight champion Colin McMillan, and now author of *This Bloody Mary is the Only Thing I Own*. His new book, which is sharp like a good fighter's jab, suggests that we are witnessing the end of boxing as a noble art.

'The grass roots are dying', Rendall explained. 'When I first got into boxing writing,

which was only in 1987, every paper had a couple of correspondents, a number one and a number two like they do for football. The Amateur Boxing Association finals were at the Albert Hall and they had 300 words on it. Now the papers only cover big professional fights and they are trying to move the ABAs—to a smaller dinner show—in Birmingham'.

Boxing is held in bad odour, even by its own: 'Ten years ago if you polled people in boxing most of them would say at least in public that Ali's already evident Parkinson's Syndrome was nothing to do with boxing, but now you would find very few people who wouldn't say that boxing had something to do with it.' When Rendall interviewed Lennox Lewis recently the World Boxing

Council heavyweight champion told him boxing was 'evil'.

Rendall reckons that boxing will continue, but downgraded to a Disneyworld sideshow. 'Las Vegas is a microcosm of the whole thing. Boxing was important because the high rollers would come to Vegas, the hotels would comp out the high rollers, and it really made a difference to them on the drop they get in the casinos. Whereas now the casinos are owned by the Disneys, the multi-nationals, not the *Mafiosi*. They still put on the big fights but not in the same way. Boxing is now a heritage tourist attraction, like you go to the wildlife park to see the bears.'

This Bloody Mary is the Only Thing I Own is published by Faber & Faber price £14.99.

Mark Collings writes for *Amateur Boxing Scene*, and trains amateur boxers at St George's club in East London

OPORTO: NEITHER HELL NOR HILLSBOROUGH

After partying in the main square of Oporto (sun up, shorts on, shirts off, drunk—in March) the heave-ho to get into the ground was a good crack, apart from a brief flurry of police batons. Panicked by the numbers (10 000 approx) the police tried to slow the rush of away fans getting in, but had a sudden change of heart when their crowd-control barriers were returned to them by air-mail. And then we were inside the ground, on our own huge if crumbling terrace, with no cops or stewards to control us.

So I was there when Manchester United dismissed FC Porto from the European Cup. But back in the square the next day, I wondered if I had been at a different match. The conversation had turned to the appalling treatment we received at the hands of the Portuguese authorities, and how close

we were to disaster etc. On returning to the hotel one of the suited Johns I had vaguely noticed asked me if I was all right. The logo on his jacket identified him as 'Special Projects Security' and I recalled seeing knots of them looking too officious for their own good—or ours.

It turned out that, at our expense (my standing ticket cost £50), United had despatched a 150-strong security unit to protect us. Well, thanks but no thanks. From the age of nine I have been going to Old Trafford without a nanny and I certainly do not need one now.

Back in Britain, headlines about 'the Hell that was Oporto' and 'a Hillsborough waiting to happen' were everywhere. OK, during a

brief volley of plastic bullets fired by witless cops, half-a-dozen United fans were injured. Unfortunate, but hardly hellish. Indeed if Oporto was a hell-hole, book me a season ticket to Hades. The Hillsborough analogy trivialises that very real disaster, besides being totally inaccurate—the terrace we were on could easily have accommodated another two or three thousand.

If the whingers have their way, a foreign football excursion is destined to become as exciting as a trip to Thurrock Lakeside or the local garden centre, with approved fans whisked from airport to stadium just in time to view the game from hermetically sealed boxes, free from all abuse and infection. Now that would be hell.

Bantering with Porto fans and taunting the Portuguese police resulted in no injury whatsoever for 99.9 per cent of United fans. The only time I was threatened was by a group of Reds who were sounding off about Portuguese brutality compared to English fair play. I could not help but point out to them that the British police were not noted for their kid-glove treatment of black people, Irishmen or anyone else who gets in their way—like the 96 people they sent to their deaths on that big, crumbling terrace at, where was it? Oh yes; Hillsborough. ●

Alec Turner has been a Manchester United supporter for 35 years

from aggravated comedy is coming to an end. 'I've been getting encouragement to do it again because Britain is ready for it', he announces. 'Material that's in my head at the moment is offensive to everybody. I'm making sure the material is more offensive.' Britain may be ready, but are the promoters? 'I've got an act inside me, but where am I going to do it? I have to get commercial backing but I've got to make sure it's not acceptable. I don't want a stand-up show to be acceptable, ever.'

Sadowitz, the man who once got his prick out on live television, sees the pressure to be TV-friendly as a severely limiting influence on comedy. 'Most comedians in this country, if they weren't given TV publicity, wouldn't get the backing. People in the business are very lazy and short-sighted—if they can't see an instant shiny presenter they're not interested.' His frustration at being kept off TV surfaces in his magic show. 'I hate poofs', he quips, 'unless you work in television, of course'. Then he switches to self-mockery: 'You'll notice the venues are getting smaller and smaller. I'm starting to feel like Hitler in his bunker.' On his card table, 'Hitler' maps out his battle plan: 'This is ITV—over here, the BBC.'

If the fat controllers will not let him on prime time, and some backers are backing out, it is not because Sadowitz lacks an audience. The magic show is sold out a week ahead, with devoted fans queuing up for returns every night, and at the Edinburgh festival last summer he was performing three different shows and filling the house with all of them. He is in a strong position, then, to be scathing about other British comics.

'Most of them are terrible', he declares. I offer a few exceptions. He dismisses them as 'crap and totally forgettable', then attacks the comics who appeared at the London Palladium in March to support the Liverpool Dockers. 'I don't even think of them as comedians, I think they're just desperate people trying to get publicity with their limited talent.' So are there no new talents to take over from Billy Connolly and Alexei Sayle, whom he still admires? 'I'm fucking here', he says.

Sadowitz is not planning to play the Edinburgh festival this year. 'Not if I can help it. It's a big bloody meat market. It's all a media circus, but if I come up with some novel idea that I fancy doing, I will go up.' So what does he plan to do next? 'I plan to have a wank, actually. You can join me if you like.' ●

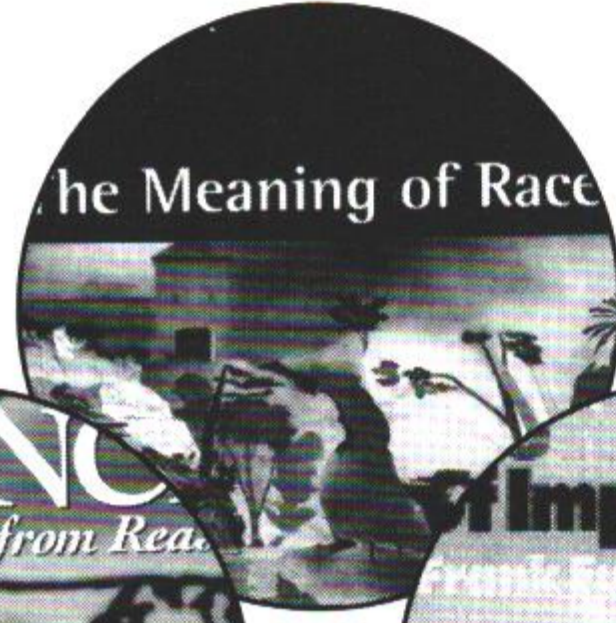




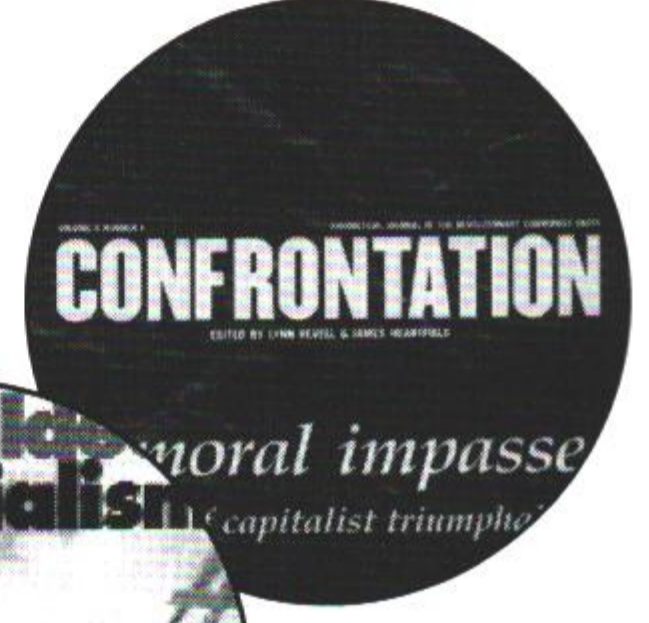
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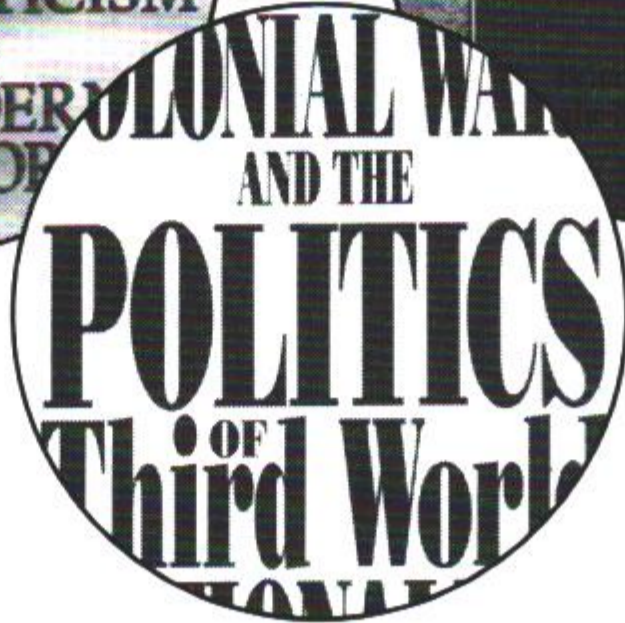
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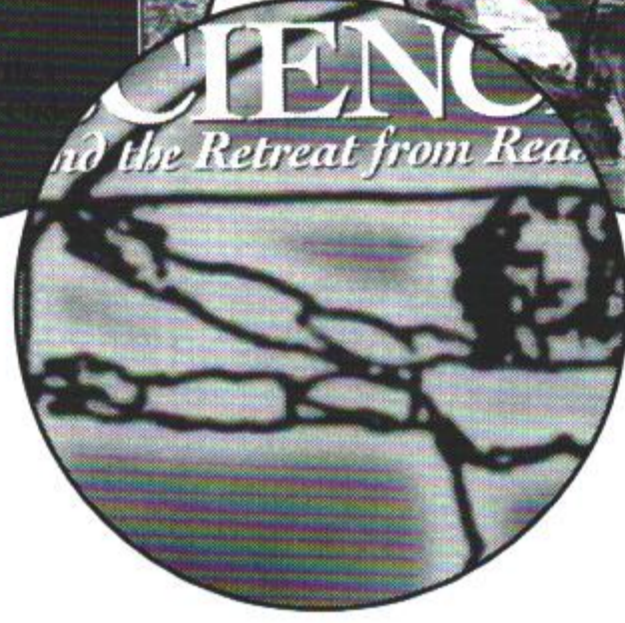
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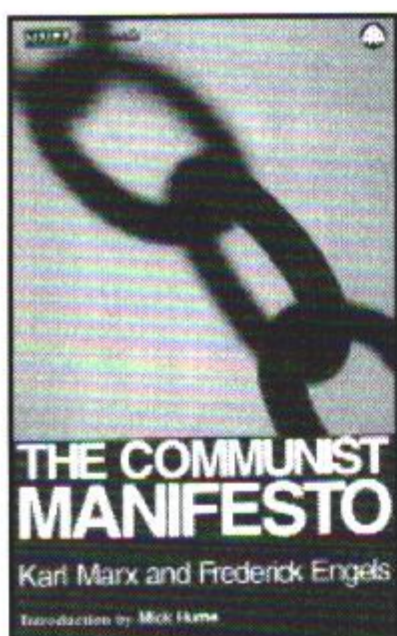


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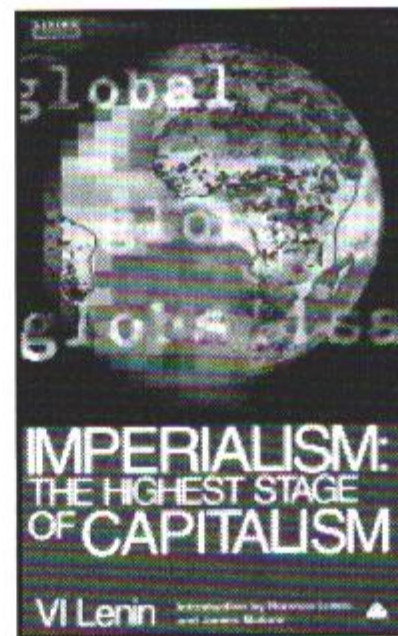


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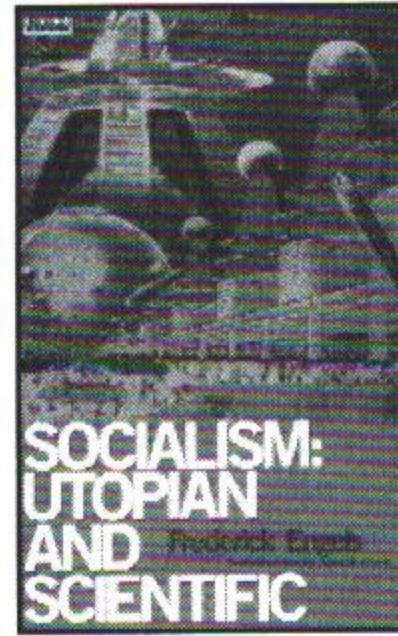
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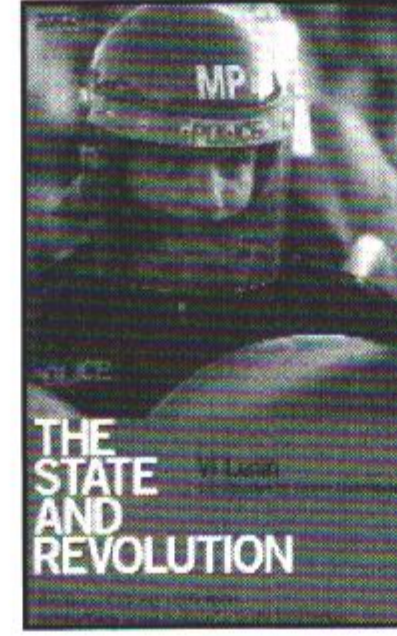
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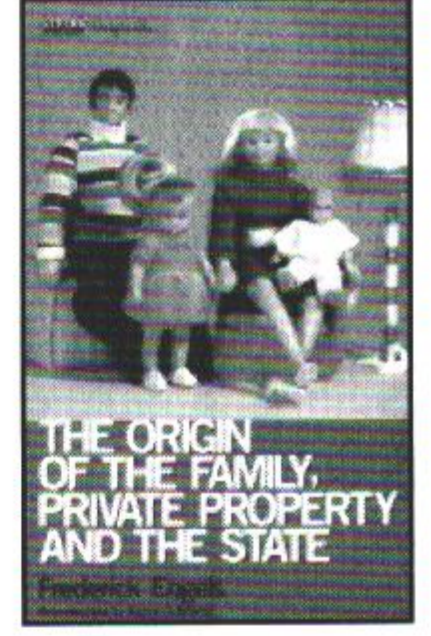
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READING

BETWEEN THE LINES

The Hegel revival is an attempt to bury him as well as praise him, according to JAMES HEARTFIELD

HISTORY ENDS WITH A WHIMPER

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GERMAN SOCIALIST PHILOSOPHY: THE GERMAN LIBRARY VOL 40,
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TWO CENTURIES AGO EUROPE WAS PLUNGED into a war between reaction, represented by capitalist England and Imperial Russia, and Revolutionary France, led by the gallant Corporal turned Emperor Napoleon. Napoleon's army marched across Europe introducing a written system of laws, and sweeping away the old regime of arbitrary rule. In every town, the invading Napoleonic army was supported by the middle classes—democrats who wanted to see a free market, constitutional democracy and an open legal system. One of those who welcomed Napoleon was the German philosopher Georg Hegel. Hegel's philosophy was written in the obscure language of German idealism, but its content was a distillation of that revolutionary movement across Europe.

In 1989 the division of Europe between the Stalinist East and the capitalist West came to an end with the collapse of the Berlin Wall. The last great social conflict between left and right appeared to have been brought to a close. US policy expert Francis Fukuyama, a fellow of the Rand Corporation, famously suggested that we were at the 'End of History'. Fukuyama's argument drew on the ideas of Hegel. According to Fukuyama, Hegel taught that once all conflicts were resolved the historical

process was complete. The victory of the free market over its rivals—principally Soviet Communism—meant an end to conflict and so an end to history (see 'The end of history', *National Interest*, No16, 1989).

Fukuyama's thesis renewed interest in the German philosopher. The attraction was clear. Here was a set of ideas that combined the birth of democracy in Europe with its culmination in the end of the Cold War. In Fukuyama's contentious reading (challenged by long-standing Hegel scholar HS Harris in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*) Hegel's philosophy anticipated the triumph of the market and the end of political conflict.

There is another reason for the interest in Hegel's thinking today. For a hundred years Hegel's thought was closely identified with the revolutionary communism of Karl Marx. Marx developed his ideas, first of all, through a critique of Hegel, whose teaching was close to an official philosophy in Germany when Marx was growing up. Marx said that to be understood Hegel had to be turned on his head, or more properly, from his head onto his feet. Marx thought that there was much of worth in Hegel, if only his idealistic arguments could be reinterpreted in a more practical way. In particular Marx was drawn to the emphasis on historical progress ♦

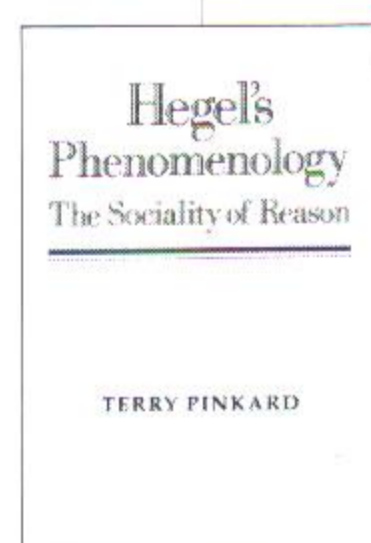
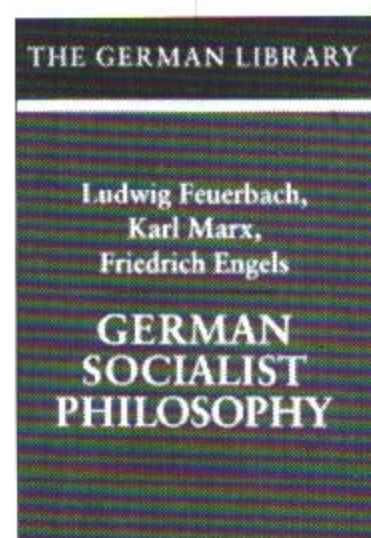
HEGEL'S NOBLEST AMBITION, TO UNDERSTAND HUMAN SOCIETY AS HISTORICAL IN ITS VERY NATURE, IS ESPECIALLY PROBLEMATIC IN TIMES WHEN THE POSSIBILITIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE ARE SO FORCEFULLY DENIED

and even revolutionary change in Hegel's work. After his death many Marxists claimed that Marx's work was the completion of the Hegelian philosophy—which was enough to make Hegel suspect in the eyes of the Cold War ideologues. The end of the Cold War has made it acceptable to reappraise Hegel's work, though not always for the best reasons.

A posthumous association with Karl Marx was not the only cross Hegel had to bear. For most of this century Hegel has been seen as an apologist for German nationalism. English and American writers were joined by the Austrian Karl Popper in denouncing Hegel's 'Prussianism' and connecting that with the worst currents of German nationalism. The veteran Israeli Hegel scholar Shlomo Avineri makes a convincing case that much of Hegel's association with German nationalism was something that his nineteenth-century defenders talked up after his death, faced with the charge that Hegel was not nationalist enough (*The Hegel Myths and Legends*). Nonetheless, Hegel's elevation of the rights of the state over those of the individual, seemed to many Cold War thinkers to be evidence of the common intellectual roots of the communist menace in the East and fascism in the West. Volunteered to play that part, there was little chance that Hegel's ideas could get much of a hearing.

Many of the Cold War prejudices arraigned against Hegel in the past are now in abeyance. For example, the freedom of the individual was a central principle of the Cold War ideology, albeit one that was more often honoured in the breach than the observance. Today, Hegel's more qualified support for individual rights seems closer to the 'communitarian' mood. During the Cold War the idea of a 'civil society'—a central component of Hegel's political philosophy—would have seemed a suspiciously middle-European alternative to the free market. But as middle class politics across the Western world has adopted the 'civil society' slogan raised by Eastern European dissidents, Hegel seems better suited to the times.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE WILLINGNESS OF TODAY'S ideologues to find their own concerns reflected in Hegel's work is likely to distort what he did have to say even more than his past vilification. Hegel himself would probably not be too worried about that. Every philosophy, he said, only summarises the thinking of its age, and today's Hegel scholars are no different. What they see in his work tells us as much about them as it does about him. In particular the scholars' emphasis upon the most obscurantist parts of Hegel, his tendency to see social conflict in idealised terms of 'recognition', 'esteem' and 'honour', sheds light on the limited perspective of today. These narrowly psychological interpretations of struggle, celebrated in Axel Honneth's



The Struggle for Recognition, tend to displace a more materialistic view of history, where real differences lie behind conflict.

We can also learn something about today's ideas from those parts of Hegel's thought that are an anathema to contemporary thinkers. In particular, Hegel's noblest ambition, to understand human society as historical in its very nature, is especially problematic in times when the possibilities for social change are most forcefully denied. For Hegel, human society is not eternal or unchanging, but constantly renewing itself, as man's understanding of himself and of his world progresses. This historical character of Hegel's work makes the idea that he is a champion of the End of History so one-sided.

Rather than attack Hegel's historical approach directly, Axel Honneth and Terry Pinkard both go around the houses. Honneth is a follower of the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas, who pioneered a view of society modelled on communications theory. Pinkard, by contrast, is an American, more influenced by the common sense approach to social questions. Ostensibly, Honneth takes issue with Hegel's idealism rather than his historical approach, writing that 'the validity of his thoughts hinges, in part, on Idealist assumptions about reason that can no longer be maintained under conditions of post-metaphysical thinking' (p1).

Pinkard nurses a similar view, though he expresses it rather differently. Pinkard's book is a reworking of Hegel's classic *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel explains history as the development of 'Spirit', manifested in the progress of human institutions, as they develop from primitive communities, such as the Ancient Greek city states, the Roman Empire and so on towards modern democracy. Hegel's point is that each new human institution gives form to Spirit, so that it can come to terms with its weaknesses and move on, giving rise to newer and higher forms of human organisation. This is of course a highly idealised version of human development as the subordinate part of the development of Spirit, or what Hegel sometimes calls the Idea.

Pinkard deals with this in an admirably commonsensical way by simply asserting that 'Spirit' is not a euphemism for God, but is rather a euphemism for society (p9, p135). Once this assumption is made, Pinkard goes on systematically to translate the metaphysical account found in the *Phenomenology* into a sociological one. Where Hegel's book is often painfully distorted by the abstruse logical style imposed by his idealism, Pinkard's is admirably down-to-earth. But, like the otherwise excellent *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, it tends to defend Hegel by turning him into a late twentieth century American liberal, often at the cost of obscuring his unique contribution.

Interestingly, Pinkard's approach has the same effect as Honneth's. Honneth objects to Hegel's idealism, and

THERE IS NO 'RIGHT TO BE OFFENSIVE' IN COMMUNICATIONS THEORY WHICH SAYS WE SHOULD ALL MIND OUR P'S AND Q'S SO AS NOT TO CAUSE OFFENCE TO OTHERS OR A BREACH OF THE QUEEN'S PEACE

proposes to remove it. Pinkard just pretends that Hegel is not an idealist and reinterprets him accordingly. Both, in their different ways seem to be doing the same thing that Marx did when he stood Hegel on his feet, making a materialist out of an idealist. However, though they are all attacking Hegel's idealism, what they end up destroying is something very different altogether.

The difficult thing about Hegel's philosophy is that its weakness, its idealism, is very closely related to its strength, its historical approach. Hegel understands that human development implies progressive change and revolution. But he understands that development in idealist terms. It is not humanity that is making progress, but God, through the medium of humanity. Where both of these authors suffer is that they simply strip out the idealist side of Hegel's thought. In the process, they strip out the historical side too. By secularising Hegel, they are bringing him into line with the contemporary conditions of 'post-metaphysical thinking' where all Grand Narratives are rejected. But in rejecting Hegel's 'Grand Narrative' of the Spirit's passage through the world, these critics succeed in dehistoricising him.

THIS AHISTORICAL APPROACH TO HEGEL CAN BE seen in Pinkard's chapter called 'Modern life's alternatives and possibilities', in which he sets out various ways of looking at the world. The comparable section of Hegel's *Phenomenology* is called 'Spirit'. In that section Hegel does not so much set out different possibilities, as outline an idealised development in the way that people have understood human institutions. For Hegel, the development is driven by the development of God's self-understanding, which is clearly a superstitious way of looking at it. But Pinkard's treatment is in many ways a step backwards, rather than an advance. In seeing different viewpoints simply as alternatives or possibilities, any sense of progress, human or divine is missing. Pinkard asserts that the Enlightenment is superior to Ancient Greece, but from his perspective there seems no reason why this is necessarily the case, since all ages are simply possible alternatives.

This is an approach that acknowledges change happens, but trivialises it, by removing any idea of change for the better, or progress. Pinkard seems to be more rational because he talks about societies instead of 'Spirits'. But as an American pragmatist, it is not for him to judge whether any one form of society is superior to any other. Unlike Francis Fukuyama, Pinkard does not have to assert the End of History to cut off the possibilities of radical change. Rather than defending society as it is, Pinkard concentrates on undermining the case for change, by calling the idea of progress into question.

Axel Honneth's approach is more combative. He positively attacks the concept of an ideal development in favour of a more ethical approach, such as can be found

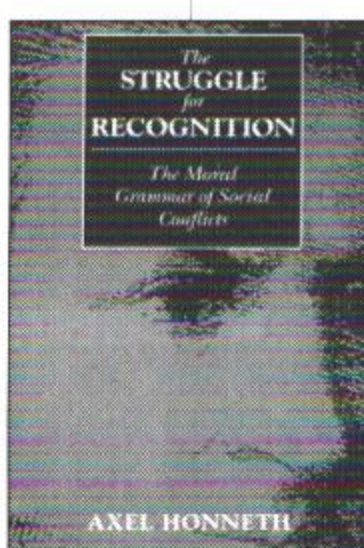
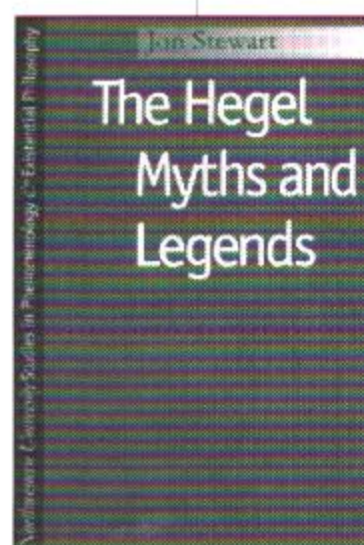
in Hegel's earlier manuscript 'System of ethical life'. According to Honneth, Hegel's turn towards spiritual development, or what Honneth calls 'the philosophy of consciousness', in the *Phenomenology* is a wrong turning. 'The turn to the philosophy of consciousness', writes Honneth, 'allows Hegel to completely lose sight of the idea of an original intersubjectivity of mankind' (p30).

What Honneth means by the 'original intersubjectivity of mankind' is what he takes to be constant in human history. According to the 'communications theory' that Honneth subscribes to, the idea that society is organised around the subject is wrong, regardless of whether 'the subject' is the individual subject of classical liberalism, or the collective subject, the working class, of socialism. Privileging the subject, warn communication theorists, can only lead to megalomaniac policies as one subject tries to impose its will on all the others—like dictatorship, or 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. Instead, it is the communication between subjects, 'intersubjectivity', that should be the basis of social organisation. This is a theory that models society on communication between subjects.

Nothing wrong in that, you might say, except that it leads to a denigration of the idea of free subjectivity, that people should be in control of their own lives. Rather than persuading people to subordinate their interests to God, or the nation, communications theory seeks to persuade them to restrain their own desires in favour of the general conditions of respectful communication, what Habermas called 'the ideal speech situation'. In plain language this is the proposition that we should all mind our p's and q's so as not to cause offence to others, or worse still a breach of the Queen's Peace. There is no 'right to be offensive' in communications theory, because we are all constrained to let other people communicate without challenging them.

Hegel's theory of civil society seems well suited to this oppressively genteel outlook, especially when it is divorced from his ideas of revolutionary change. Rejecting the economists' account of the market as a state of natural competition, Hegel emphasised the struggle for social recognition as the driving force. As people fought to have their claims recognised by others as valid, the resolution of that conflict would be the mutual recognition of each by all as competent and responsible subjects, worthy of respect.

The concept of 'civil society' was always a conservative element in Hegel's theory. As the veteran Marxist István Mészáros points out in *Beyond Capital* (1995), 'civil society' is simply an idealised picture of the market, from which all fundamental contradictions and problems have been removed. The concepts of 'communicative action' and 'original intersubjectivity of mankind' also smuggle an idealised version of the market into the picture as if it were a natural or necessary feature of all



societies. In this way the possibility of historically superseding the market is ruled out of consideration. Honneth might not use the term End of History, indeed he allows a space for debate about the future of some social institutions. However, the boundaries of change are circumscribed by the 'original intersubjectivity of mankind', which on investigation turns out to be little more than the values of the market.

Starting from a rejection of Hegel's idealism, Honneth ends up rejecting historical change and idealising the market as 'intersubjectivity'. This is not just any idealisation of the market, though, but one whose features are particularly well suited to the ascendance of an essentially middle class version of what is acceptable in polite society. Describing social conflict in terms of psychological drives, like the need for recognition, is a way of minimising the more prosaic claims of economic interest. Honneth berates the Marxists for failing to understand that what the working class was really struggling for was social recognition, not higher wages.

Of course Marx never accepted that the goal of socialism should be restricted to claims for higher wages, but rather ought to be to reorganise society as a whole, so that people were not dependent on wage labour to live. But setting that aside, the idea that real social conflicts can be resolved at the level of 'recognition' is clearly a lot cheaper than paying proper wages. Having started out trying to make Hegel less spiritual and more secular, Honneth only succeeds in elevating spiritual satisfaction over the secular needs. This is the End of History, not with a bang but with a whimper.

While both Pinkard and Honneth fail to secularise Hegel without turning him into an apologist for the status quo, the latest volume of the German Library reproduces the solution worked out by Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, under the title *German Socialist Philosophy*. This is particularly welcome for the chance to see Feuerbach's original criticisms of Hegel that inspired the young Marx.

According to Feuerbach, Hegel's error is not that he has arbitrarily introduced God into the picture. On the contrary, he says, Hegel mistakes man for God. The attributes of Spirit—human development, self-understanding—are in fact the attributes of man. What goes under the name of God in Hegel is man himself. This seems close to Pinkard's solution of taking Spirit to be a euphemism for society. However, the point of Feuerbach's critique is that you have to do more than just ignore the development of Spirit in Hegel, you have to reattribute that development to man himself.

The contemporary mood of disenchantment is quite different from Feuerbach's critique of religion. Today's postmodernists downgrade belief in order to downgrade humanity. Even reason and progress are today

denounced as 'religious beliefs', by which is meant that they aspire to too much. By contrast Feuerbach knocked God off of his pedestal to elevate mankind.

Taking up Feuerbach's materialism, Marx also criticised him for not going far enough, in his 'Theses on Feuerbach', reproduced in *German Socialist Philosophy*. There Marx argues that the mystification of human society was not inevitable, but a product of a society that was itself out of control. 'The latter', he wrote, 'must be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionised in practice'. More prosaically he added 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it'.

READON READ ON READONREADON READON READON

AS IF

Blake Morrison, Granta, £14.99 hbk

Why did two 10-year-old boys batter James Bulger to death in 1993? Part-biography, part-autobiography, Blake Morrison's *As If* is a fascinating, frustrating, sometimes repulsive, but entirely gripping attempt to answer this question. Morrison spends much of the book relaying aspects of his own life—what it is to be a child, a parent. It is an attempt to understand the 'why' through self-exploration.

At first Morrison appears to go along with much of the media attitude of the time, that the boys, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, were evil, 'dwarf killers' and deserving of all the punishment society can dish out. He compares Venables and Thompson to the feral boys in William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*—childhood at its most barbaric. But Morrison has his doubts about the public baying for blood, too.

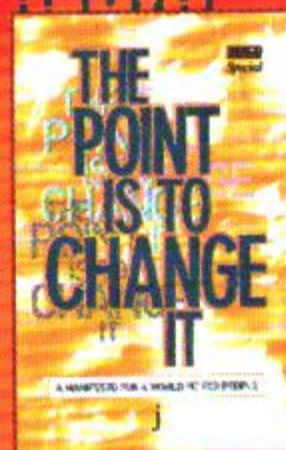
The most fascinating part of the story is an account of the boys' interrogation and trial. Much of this moves the reader to reach his own answer to the 'why'—the boys' 'normality' immediately after the killing, their fear more of their mothers finding out what they had done than the murder itself. Morrison's view, that Venables and Thompson are too young either to understand the consequences of their actions or to pay the 'adult' price for murder, is refreshing in comparison to the ongoing campaign to keep the boys in prison for life. Yet Morrison is committed to the idea that society has something to learn from this horrific, but isolated event. He concludes that it must be our own sick society, which created the 'monsters', which should be held to account. In the end he, too, is baying for blood, demanding that blame be apportioned. In his reluctance to blame the children, Morrison (self-confessed 'Bulgerite') blames the rest of us for allowing what he sees as the 'death of childhood', for the destruction of the idea of childhood innocence.

Irene Miller

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in the general election...

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