

LIVING

MARXISM

HIROSHIMA THE WEEK

Anti-war conference

London, 28 July-4 August 1995

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VE-Day

Rape trials

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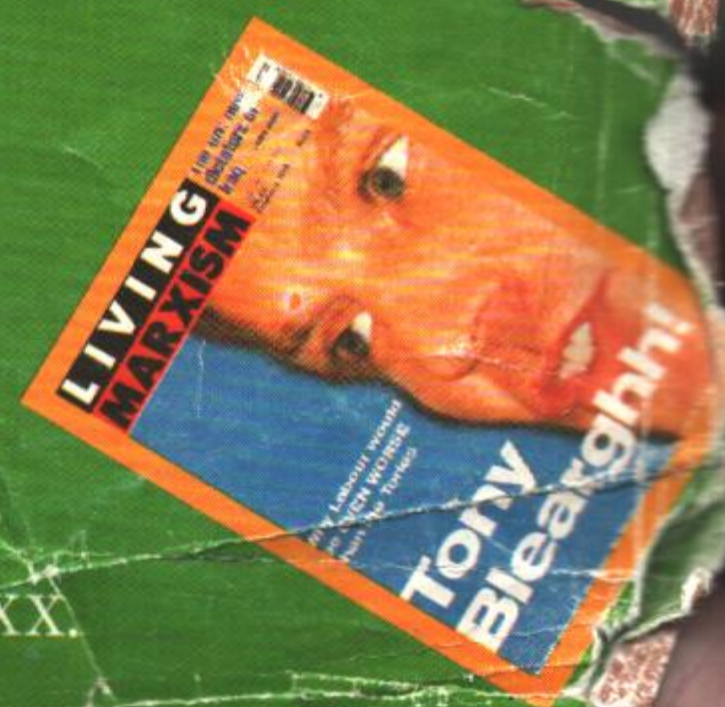
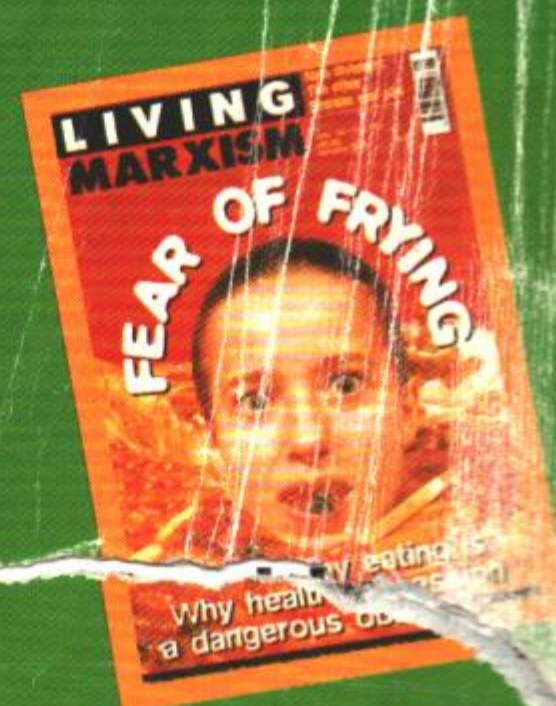
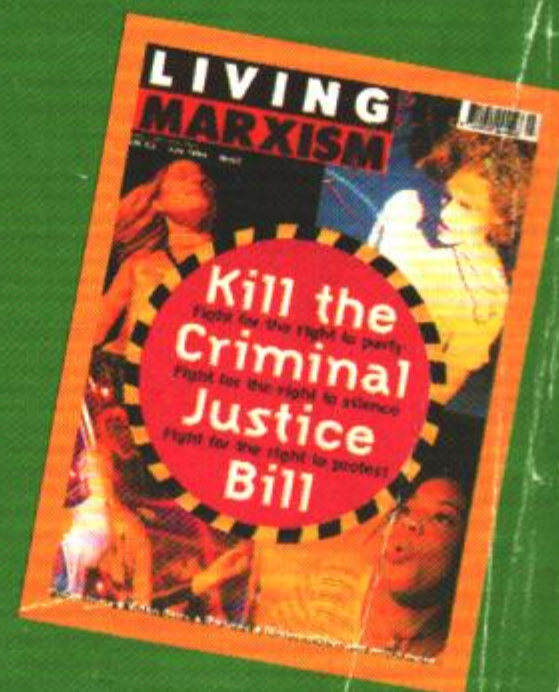
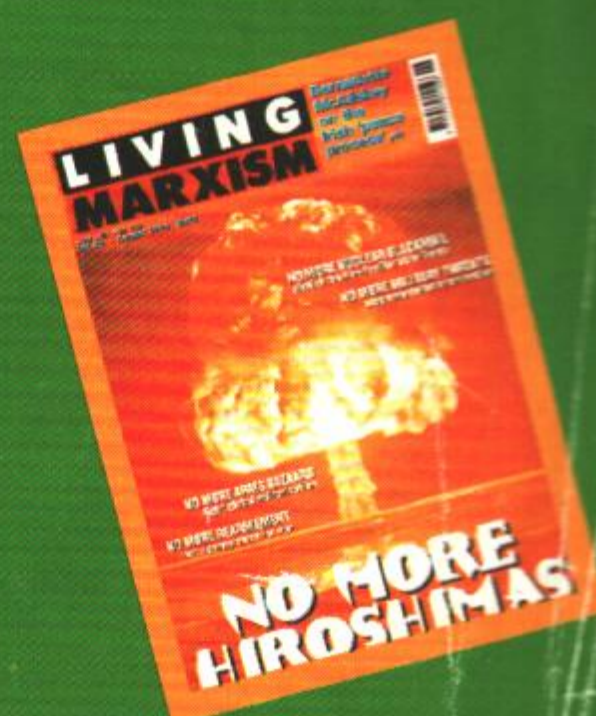
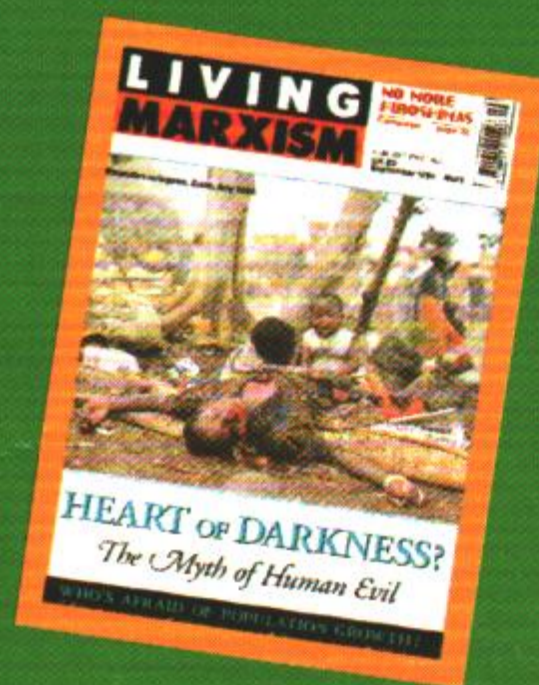
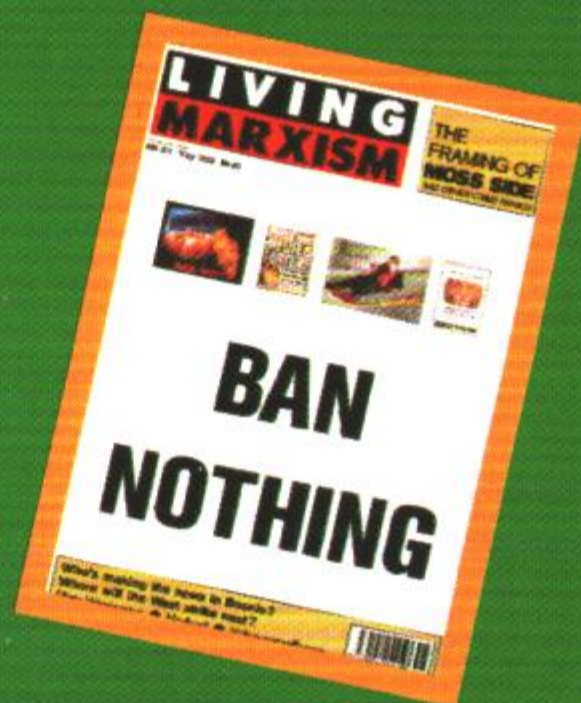
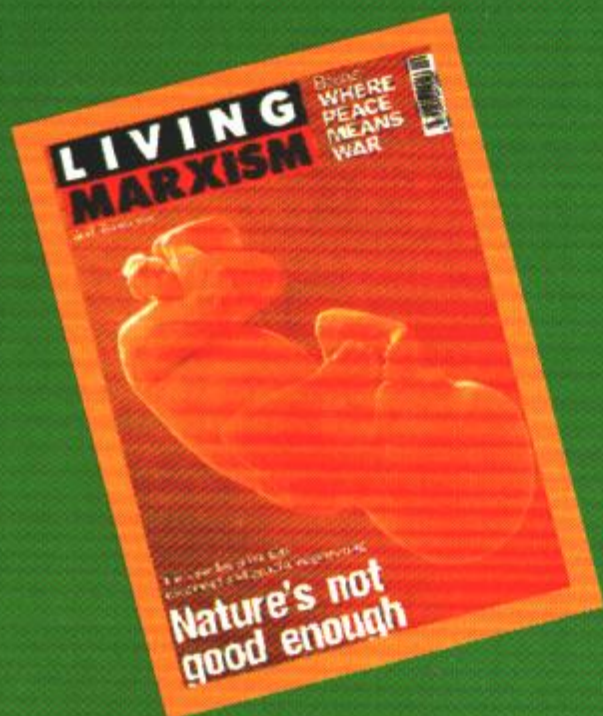
African Aids

IS
IT A
GIRL'S
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COVER PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER

Women first

Women, we are told, are starting to get on top at work and in the home. Everywhere from the Labour Party to Hollywood, it seems that 'feminine values' are now in vogue.

These trends are generally accepted as a good thing. But for whom? What does the change in the relative status of women tell us about the world we live in? This month's *Living Marxism* focuses on a key issue of our times.



Is it a girl's world?

page 10

Frank Furedi sifts through some of the myths and the misunderstandings about the 'feminisation' of society.

Danger: women's work ahead

page 14

Has the advent of 'flexible' working really boosted the status of working women? Or has the entire workforce been degraded to the level of what was once considered 'women's work'? Linda Murdoch investigates.

The Emily within

page 18

Promoting more women MPs might help Tony Blair's Labour Party, but what will it do for the rest of us? asks Ellie Lee.

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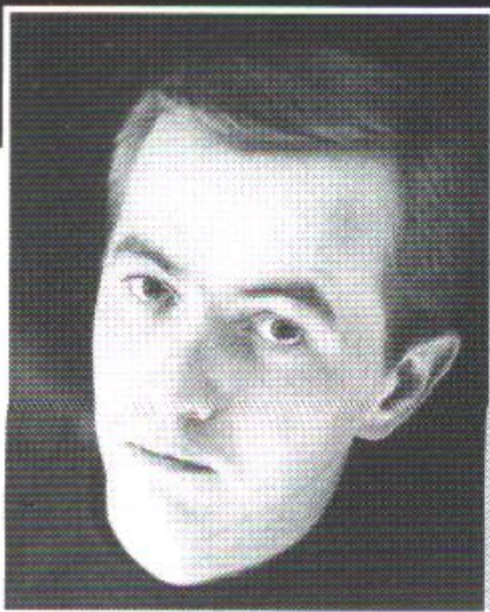
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Mick Hume

War and peace, then and now

Why are the British government and media so obsessed with the Second World War these days? After all, the fiftieth anniversary of VE (Victory in Europe) Day has attracted far more fuss than the tenth or twenty-fifth anniversaries ever did. Why should it be that the further 1945 retreats into history, the more it seems to dominate the news?

No doubt the authorities will claim that the VE-Day events are being staged out of respect for those who lived and fought through the Second World War. Yet strangely, the government is not usually so concerned about the feelings of British pensioners, millions of whom it condemns to bitter poverty on the lowest state pensions in Western Europe. Nor is the government normally so interested in the wishes of army veterans, as those who have fought for compensation for ex-soldiers affected by atomic bomb tests or 'Gulf War syndrome' could testify.

The real reasons behind the official obsession with the Second World War are to be found in the political problems of the 1990s. The British establishment is trying to use the past as a political tool to help it to cope with its crisis in the present. The further the global status of British capitalism and its rulers declines, the keener they are to summon up images of the defeat of Hitler, their last real triumph on the world stage, to remind everybody of Britain's historic greatness.

At the end of March, in London, the great and the good held a conference to discuss Britain's place in the world. Prince Charles said we should take pride in a way of life which foreigners still sought to imitate, and John Major said that Britain remained a nation prepared 'to give

a political lead' to the rest. But behind the brave words, the air of uncertainty about Britain's future in the post-Cold War world was palpable.

Henry Kissinger told the conference that the 'special relationship' with the USA was dead, and speaker after speaker struggled with the dilemma of how Britain could cope with a German-run Europe. Meanwhile, outside the conference hall, the pound plunged as the powerful German mark and Japanese yen secured victory on the foreign exchanges, and the Conservative Party plumbed new depths in the opinion polls. No wonder the British authorities prefer the black-and-white footage of VE-Day to the blinding colours of the fast-changing real world today.

However, banging on about the glories of the past is unlikely to do much to boost the standing of either the Tory Party or the wider British establishment in the present. Something like the anniversary of VE-Day is also a reminder of how much the world has changed. The old-fashioned nationalism of flag-waving and warmongering has lost its grip on the public imagination, especially among the young.

People might well turn out for the VE-Day jamborees in May. But, as John Major's government discovered last year in its botched attempt to celebrate the anniversary of D-Day, there is little stomach for tub-thumping Tory nationalism. In the run-up to VE-Day, much of the media coverage has been noticeably more sombre in tone, dotted with remembrances reflecting the fact that, for most people, the war was a bloody miserable experience. The government has felt obliged to organise the VE-Day events under the official banner of

peace and reconciliation, rather than as an up-front celebration of victory over the Hun.

This is all bad news for the traditional right-wing of the Tory Party. With its back to the wall, the Tory right fantasises about recreating the 'Falklands factor' which carried an unpopular Margaret Thatcher to victory more than a decade ago. Conservative MPs are so desperate to invent a little war that they even tried to take sides in a fishing dispute between Canada and Spain, in the hope that being seen to slap Johnny Spaniard in the face with a wet fish might win back some *Daily Mail* readers. Failing that, they are relying on re-running the Second World War and recreating the Blitz Spirit. But to no avail.

These are not Churchill's 1940s nor even Thatcher's 1980s. The economic and political malaise of capitalist society in the nineties has helped to undermine public respect for the state institutions—the monarchy, parliament and the church—which, Major told the March conference, are 'the bedrock of the nation and therefore of Britain's standing in the world'. There is no longer much cheap kudos to be won at home or abroad by playing 'Land of Hope and Glory'. The evocation of Britain's glorious past around the VE-Day anniversary is unlikely to prevent the Tories losing hundreds more seats in the May local elections—or to stop the international calls for the UK government to lose its treasured permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Nobody bar the odd nutter now believes 'the old lie' about it being sweet and decorous to die for your country. But the demise of the old war politics is no cause for complacency about peace. New lies are being used to justify global intervention by Britain,

the USA and the other big military powers today; new lies about preventing nuclear proliferation, defending human rights, protecting the environment, or even keeping the peace. The irony is that these arguments for intervention are most often associated with the critics of traditional militarism.

The imperial politics of the past might be dead. But the key assumption which underpinned them is still widely accepted. It is an assumption often expressed in the notion that Britain's armed forces or parliamentary institutions or public services are 'the envy of the world'. It is the assumption that Britain, along with the other Western allies, enjoys moral superiority over the rest of the nations and peoples on Earth.

Once upon a time that sentiment would have been spelled out by imperialists who asserted their right to rule the world in the language of racial superiority. These days Western intervention is more likely to be demanded by aid agencies or radical charities in order to prevent 'genocide' or defend human rights. Yet the implication remains the same; that the peoples of somewhere like Africa are not civilised like us, and the West must assume the right to go in and decide what is best for them.

In this way, the truth about where the threat of militarism and war lies is being turned on its head. If the current crop of Second World War and Vietnam anniversaries reminds us of anything, it ought to be that the power to commit instant genocide and destroy the world lies in the hands of the 'civilised' Western nations responsible for the Holocaust, the nuking of Hiroshima, and the carpet-bombing of south-east Asia. In the current debates, however, the threat of militarism always seems to be located 'over there', among the little militias of the Serbs or the Hutus. And the military powers of the West are criticised, not for throwing their weight around the world, but for failing to intervene forcefully enough in Bosnia, Rwanda or Burundi.

The way in which this discussion distorts the reality of militarism today becomes clear in relation to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This treaty divides up the world, between those who should and those who should not be allowed to have their fingers on the nuclear trigger. The basic rule is that 'we' should and 'they' should not. Under the treaty, only the permanent members of the UN Security Council—the USA, Britain, France, Russia and China—can legitimately have the bomb. Anybody else accused of attempting to develop nuclear weapons is threatened with terrible punishment.

At the time of writing, an international conference is set to consider the future of the NPT. The USA and Britain want a permanent extension. But other countries have complained about the double standards applied by Western powers which use non-proliferation as a stick to beat the third world, yet refuse to carry out their side of the NPT by abandoning nuclear weapons.

Many radical non-governmental organisations involved in the conference have endorsed these concerns about the double standards involved in the NPT. Yet in the end they all come down in favour of extending the treaty by five, 10 or X number of years. Why? Because, whatever their misgivings, they accept that there is a fundamental divide between the moral West and the immoral rest, and that the one is qualified to police the other.

As a consequence of this consensus recognising the West's moral superiority, the biggest military powers on earth are not only allowed to continue legally 'proliferating' their own nuclear arsenals. They are also able to use the NPT as a blackmail note with which to bring the third world to heel, destroying Iraq and threatening to annihilate North Korea, Iran, Libya and others in the name of nuclear non-proliferation. When you have New Age international peacekeeping like that, who needs the old war parties and flag-wavers?

Intervention in the third world or the East is now likely to be led by radical American NGOs rather than Nazi stormtroopers. Because of this, many people fail to see today's interventions as foreign interference in the affairs of others. But there are important continuities from the earlier age of imperialism. Every intervention, whether launched by the UN or some other international agency, is about dictating to those on the receiving end and imposing an agenda from without. And every demand for intervention in a trouble spot, no matter how benignly it may be motivated, still ends up making matters worse through its meddling. Most recently, the UN's own representative in Burundi was forced to complain that if mass killings did spread there from Rwanda, those responsible would be the NGOs and UN agencies who had been stirring things up and terrifying the local population with their constant warnings of impending genocide.

Nor should anybody believe that there is clear water dividing the military invasions of the past from the 'humanitarian' interventions of the present. Every Western intervention carries with it the seeds of another Hiroshima. After all, if the civilised agencies of the West have the right to dictate social and political matters to the rest, they must have the right to enforce those standards. If 'immoral' third world societies won't listen to the reasonable persuasion of the caring professionals, how, other than by military force, will the radical NGOs get them to abandon their 'barbaric practices'.

Few might rally to the old banners of war today. But those who accept the moral superiority of the West are helping lay the foundations for a new age of militarism. No wonder Britain's General Rose told the March conference in London that if there was one thing which would improve the effectiveness of future military interventions around the world, it would be closer cooperation with the aid agencies.

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No such thing as a free gene?

I agree with Joseph Kaplinsky's assertion that the idea of patenting genes is absurd ('Who owns your genes?', March). For a patent to be accepted it has to include an inventive method or step devised by the author(s). Such criteria can only be applied to diagnostic tests or research techniques based upon genetic research, not upon the research material itself, in its natural state. I believe this would be consistent with the government's formal declarations against gene-patenting.

However, the object of the article is to convey how capitalist pharmaceutical companies are impeding worldwide genetic research. This is achieved by 'owning' genes or gene fragments and only allowing access to scientists willing to give the companies first refusal on any patentable opportunities resulting from their research. Kaplinsky cites Human Genome Sciences and SmithKline Beecham as an example.

The interesting example I would like to give is Merck, Sharp & Dohme. This commercial company has decided to fund an independent sequencing initiative (*Nature*, 29 September 1994), which will create a database of genetic information for human genome researchers. Moreover, they claim not to impose any constraints similar to SmithKline Beecham. Can a profit-driven company really demonstrate altruistic concern towards the scientific community? Maybe a genetic researcher can provide critical insight?

On a technical note, I am intrigued by the diagram on page 35. If the letter 'C' of the DNA helical structure is supposed to represent capitalism, the illustrator clearly has no fundamental understanding of DNA. It should of course be paired in complementary fashion to the pound sign.

David Males *Cottenham, Cambridge*

Straight gays

Generally I enjoy reading *Living Marxism* but you do publish some strange articles. April's Marxist Review of Books ('Going straight') bordered on homophobia. Your reviewer Peter Ray must be straight because he seems to have some very stereotyped assumptions about lesbians and gay men.

He criticised the positive images campaign in Haringey for presenting gay men as parents living in stable relationships, and says that this is the same as being straight. But many of my friends are in exactly that type of relationship. Why should caring relationships be the exclusive preserve of heterosexuals?

Ray criticises Peter Tatchell for saying gay men are not as aggressive or domineering as straight men. But in my experience that is

true, and what is wrong with reminding society that the gay community is not anti-social?

Would Ray rather that Stonewall or Outrage presented gay men as perverts or child molesters like the tabloids do? There is a real debate going in the gay community about the best way to get justice. *Living Marxism* should join in rather than publishing this sort of article.

John Gilmore *Brixton, London*

Devolution is not democratic

Pedr Vickery (letters, March) argues that support for Scottish and Welsh independence movements can help bring about freedom in Ireland and England. The politics of the SNP and Plaid Cymru harbour no democratic prospects, but reflect, at best, a negative response to the failures of mainstream political parties. At worst, they pander to the most conservative, prejudiced and parochial elements in the two countries.

While the United Kingdom may be the territorial form of the British state, it is not identical with the British state. Challenging the territorial form is not the same as challenging the institutions of the state like the courts, army and police. Rather than expressing any demand by ordinary people in Scotland for more democracy, the devolution debate is about renegotiating the relationship between the state and the individual at the latter's expense.

Devolution means giving more power to regional or local authorities, but they are no more democratic than central government, and in some cases even less so. Devolution goes hand in hand with the idea of local control, and local control now translates as bringing the state more into everyday lives rather than pushing it further away; and of course there is no question of the state giving up any of its centralised powers.

We need a contemporary critique of the forms of the British state if we are to expose the ways in which the ruling class continues to rule. Without it, we can only wait and trust in what Vickery sees as the 'heart-warming propensity to collapse'.

Angus Kane *Edinburgh*

New school rules

I would like to bring to the attention of readers that schools are no longer about learning things like history and sciences, but are now concerned with turning pupils into law-abiding drones. The state installs its views in teenagers under a banner of anti-bullying, anti-truancy and anti-vandalism.

In my school there are anti-bullying campaigns which strongly urge teenagers who consider themselves bullied, eg, laughed at or

told to 'piss off', to grass up their fellow pupils. Anti-truancy campaigns are being introduced where members of the public patrol shopping areas looking for truants, which has resulted in some schools issuing pupils with ID-cards which apologise for the pupil being off school. Surveillance cameras have been introduced to help keep pupils in and the public out. There have also been talks given by various state bodies such as the DSS which lectured teenagers on 'why you should pay your taxes—you are selfish if you do not', and 'National Insurance is like a club...you get a membership card'.

Now all of this may seem fine to some people. But as someone attending one of these schools it can quite easily be seen that football matches are not the only testing ground for authoritarian controls such as ID-cards and surveillance cameras.

Tom Wall *Bristol*

Reason to believe?

I was very angered by Michael Fitzpatrick's article "'Recovered memory": a morbid symptom' (April). While I accept that memories are not photographically accurate representations and that they are shaped by the emotional perspective of a child's experience, I consider it highly dangerous to ignore such memories or to treat them as imagined. This article is a huge step backwards for anyone involved in counselling survivors of childhood abuse, and for survivors themselves, who need more than anything else to be believed.

I would be grateful if you could cancel my subscription.

Naomi Walker *Exeter*

The benefits of PMS

There is another reading of the debate about PMS which Ann Bradley ('Pre-menstrual tensions', February) misses. Rather than being an area of women's lives where they are out of control, it is often a time when women choose to take control of their lives—when they can see clearly the causes of their situation. Pre-menstrual tension is a force for good. It's the rest of the month we should worry about, when we seem prepared to put up with the shit life deals us.

The 'life pressures' Bradley talks about are not necessarily economic, and arguments about money are often a cover for something else. Well-off middle class couples often argue about money too. So while not going as far as Jan Painter, women are well advised to follow their perfectly rational pre-menstrual instincts and get rid of any of those selfish hypocrites that happen to be lying about.

Jane Birchley *University of Kent, Canterbury*

Boxing porn

I find it astonishing that a magazine which campaigns against militarism should have an article expounding boxing as a sport ('Shadow boxing', April).

Boxers are like soldiers. Both are generally drawn from the working classes, signed up with the promise of being heroes, trained and then let loose to attack each other because somebody else tells them too.

I do not think boxing should be banned, any more than explicit sexual films. But be under no illusions, both are pornographic. People watch boxing matches to see contestants get battered. All the talk of 'skill' and 'artistry' is disingenuous. In that respect the article is right: any bout that does not leave one of the pugilists dead or a drooling vegetable goes against the spirit of the game.

Paul Chown *London SW19*

Fun with animals

I agree with Ann Bradley ('Of hedgehogs and men', April) that what makes human life distinct from animal life is that we are consciously alive, not just biologically alive, and that this gives us the ability to exercise rights which animals are unable to do. But if we have the right to hunt animals because it is 'good fun', then why should we not have the right to torture them to death as well? After all, if 'it does not matter if foxes are killed', then why should the method be so important?

What most people find distasteful about the destruction of life, animal or human, comes down to whether or not they perceive it to be necessary. Organised agriculture which slaughters animals on a daily basis is considered acceptable because the majority eats meat. This is also the case with medical experiments which, on the whole, benefit the human population. The destruction of life for most people has to be justified in that there have to be benefits attached to such activity.

Controlling foxes in order to protect human interests is of course necessary, and if fox-hunting is the most effective method of doing this, then I have no qualms about supporting it. But engaging in or supporting the destruction of life (conscious or otherwise) simply because it is 'good fun' holds no water with myself or with the vast majority of people.

Kevin Reid *Egham, Surrey*

Ann Bradley's 'Of hedgehogs and men' disturbed me for a couple of reasons. If, as she asserts, death is the end of life forever, how does she know that animals have no capacity for abstract thought and therefore do not fear death as we do or experience death as we do? (When did she last experience death? Or why fear death if there is nothing afterwards?) Even given no capacity for abstract thought, an animal could well have witnessed similar deaths of others of the species, identified with this and retained the memory.

She is right to highlight the equating of veal calves with fetuses as a dangerous parliamentary manoeuvre, and I would support her defence of legal abortions. The evils perpetrated on foxes, veal calves and on a lesser scale the brutalised attacks on small mammals are symptoms of an alienated species thinking it is not part of the natural world, whereas abortion is a necessary evil under capitalism. **JC Gould** *Hove, Sussex*

Nick Warner (letters, April) gave a witty illustration of how animal welfare often attracts more concern than human welfare. Then he asks 'why can't people support both types of welfare?' It sounds reasonable. But it would be odd if I were to ask 'why can't we have compassion for both people and vegetables?', and completely absurd if I said 'why can't people support the welfare of humans and head lice?'. So why is it easy to differentiate between people and carrots or people and creepy crawlies, and yet so difficult when it comes to people and mammals or birds?

The difficulty arises because we tend to project human values onto things which are not human. Animal rights supporters want a cruelty-free environment in which animal welfare and human welfare are given equal weight. But the irony is that the concept of welfare is exclusively human, and, by the same token, only people could come up with the idea of cruelty to animals. The fact that we can even talk about animals and humans being of equal value is, perversely, an expression of our superiority.

The humanisation of non-humans is not just cute; it can also be downright dangerous. It is only when the distinction is blurred between what is human and what is animal that people can show more concern for an oiled duck than a charred Iraqi; and it is only then that people like Nick Warner can see the glaring contradiction, and articulate it with

wit and clarity, yet fail to see why it has come about or where it is leading.

Ian Yates *Bristol*

I'm afraid of global warming

John Gillott and Dominic Wood must be two of the most complacent people on the planet. Faced with a disaster of unthinkable proportions ('Who's afraid of global warming?', April), all they can do is applaud the idea of human ingenuity and adaptability. Don't worry, they say, humanity may have messed up the climate, but humanity will find a way of coping with it.

Some people have blind faith in God, Gillott and Wood seem to have blind faith in humanity. After the violent excesses of the twentieth century, this is a belief so rare that it surely qualifies for cult status. In any case, they do not even practise what they preach. Rather than applauding ingenuity in the abstract, it would be more appropriate to actually apply some ingenuity to reducing the effects of global warming.

The most puzzling and frustrating thing is that, after Gillott and Wood have scoffed at well-founded fears about global warming, they then go on to give quite a good account of how the social system known as capitalism makes the people of the third world especially vulnerable to the disastrous effects of climatic change. Then they go back to being the Beavis and Butthead of environmental debate. Is it that they cannot make up their minds, or maybe the prospective fate of the third world is too far from home for these lads to get steamed up about it?

Clare Tyler *Havant, Hampshire*

Snob culture

'A semi-permanent residue composed of three-chord buskers, punks, winos and Christian evangelists...mingle with the stench of urine.' Louis Ryan ('Rogers' Parisian folly', April) is entitled to his preference for the Lloyd's building rather than the Pompidou Centre, but the way in which he expressed it reminded me of the infamously snobbish complaint that tripping over the homeless tends to spoil one's trip to the opera. Who does Ryan think he is, and what's he got against songs with only three chords in them? If Ryan could write three-chord classics like *Heartbreak Hotel* or *Hot Love*, he'd be laughing all the way to the Lloyd's building.

Joe Holden *Northampton*

We welcome readers' views and criticisms

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Victims Anonymous?

If we want to see justice in rape trials or any other case, says Ann Bradley, we need a full disclosure of all the facts—including the identities of the defendant and his accuser

The recent trial of comic actor Craig Charles triggered an overdue discussion about the principle of anonymity in rape cases. Charles is the latest in a line of aggrieved men who have found that being accused of rape means their names are forever tainted, even after they have been acquitted by the courts.

The actors' tenet that any publicity is good publicity does not include the salacious press coverage of rape trials, especially if they involve the kind of seedy performance of which Craig Charles was accused. Gerard Depardieu may be able to survive the allegation that he took part in a village gang rape when he was 14, but that was many years ago—he is now a sophisticated Oscar-winner and dines out on his peasant origins. By contrast, the allegations against Craig Charles suggested that this star of children's TV was now a vicious thug without an ounce of self-control or self-worth.

According to his accuser, Charles and two other men (one of whom was never traced) turned up at her home in the early hours, snorted coke, tied her up and subjected her to a five-hour ordeal involving rape and indecent assault with cocaine, an olive oil bottle, a pen and an orange. Charles said they had knocked on the woman's door while looking for breakfast in Soho after a night on the razzle and that she had put on a sex show for him and his mate. Much was made of the fact that the woman was a stripper obsessed by Charles (her ex-lover) and distraught at his impending marriage.

The case was a messy affair of their word against hers. There was no forensic evidence; it had apparently taken the police 30 hours to find a qualified female doctor to examine the woman, during which time she had washed. Having heard all the evidence, the jury saw fit to bring in a verdict of not guilty, and so Craig Charles is not guilty. Except that it doesn't feel that way to him.

Charles was subjected to three and a half months of prison on remand, where he says he was 'locked up for 23 hours a day and forced to urinate and defecate into a bucket in front of other people'. For nine and a half months the press drooled over the details of the case. Craig Charles 'the guy in that rape case' is probably now better known than Craig Charles 'the last human in the Universe in *Red Dwarf*'. Even having been found innocent, he can expect to pay a penalty. He lost contracts while in custody, and lost his fee from a series on safe sex. I think we can safely assume that we will not be seeing Charles involved in any programme to do with sex in the near future—or, come to that, advertising olive oil or oranges.

Charles, and several other men recently found not guilty of rape, have complained bitterly that they have been pilloried, while their accuser—who, since they were found innocent, must have lied—is protected by rules which insist that the alleged victim of rape cannot be identified. As Charles put it in a post-trial statement: 'The fact that my name and address along with my picture can appear on the front of newspapers before the so-called victim has even signed a statement proves that anonymity for rape defendants is a must and the law must be changed.' But how should it be changed? Charles wants anonymity extended to the accused as well as the accuser, or at the very least, as he argued in an opinion piece in the *Guardian*, 'it should be a simple matter to make all aspects of cases like this *sub judice* until reasonable doubt as to the validity of the accusation is allayed' (6 March 1995).

This sounds like common sense. Most of us are left uneasy by cases such as this and the 1993 Kings College date-rape saga, when a young male student was tried by the media—and became a national emblem of men's appalling behaviour towards women—

A critical look at the conventional wisdom on social, moral and sexual issues.

TABOOS

before being acquitted in a court of law. However, the principle of anonymity is more of a problem than it seems.

A basic principle of the legal system is that justice should not just be done, but be seen to be done. For those of us who are deeply cynical about the impartiality of the judiciary, and believe that the legal framework is more about maintaining social order than arbitrating between individuals or protecting the vulnerable, the 'seen to be done' aspect is particularly important.

The principle that legal rulings should be subjected to public scrutiny and comment is an important one to defend. Of course, we all know that this principle is not applied in practice, and that much of the machinations of the legal system takes place behind the closed doors of the police station, the Crown Prosecution Service's offices and the judges' chambers. But the principle of transparency remains important. Without it, there is no possibility of questioning the basis on which decisions are taken.

At present, the principle of *sub judice* allows the authorities to decide what the public should and should not be allowed to know. The argument that more court proceedings, such as rape cases, should be carried out under the blanket of censorship can only reinforce the notion that it is legitimate for magistrates and judges to rule in secret. It reinforces an elitist notion that, unlike m'learned friends, the public is incapable of making intelligent judgements on the basis of the facts.

It is arguable that all anonymity and *sub judice* rules contribute to the creation of a climate of prejudiced ignorance around court cases. The principle of the transparency of the law is an important one in general, but it has a particular significance when it comes to the issue of rape.

If men and women are to appear as equal before the law they must be treated equally. The practice of shielding women behind a veil of anonymity simply encourages the notion that as a sex women are too feeble to bring charges and stand by them in public.

Those who argue that women's identity in rape cases must be kept anonymous believe that if accusers were named it would dissuade them from bringing legitimate accusations to court. This is a possibility, although feminist writer Germaine Greer argues that, given the way rape victims are treated by the police and the courts even under current rules, if you 'have the guts to enter the rape lottery in the first place and to see it through, you've probably got the guts to stand up and face the man or men you're accusing'. In reality, the cloak of anonymity is very thin

indeed. Any woman who seriously fears that her identity will be revealed to her family, friends and colleagues would be unlikely to submit to a court appearance or a signed statement about an alleged rape.

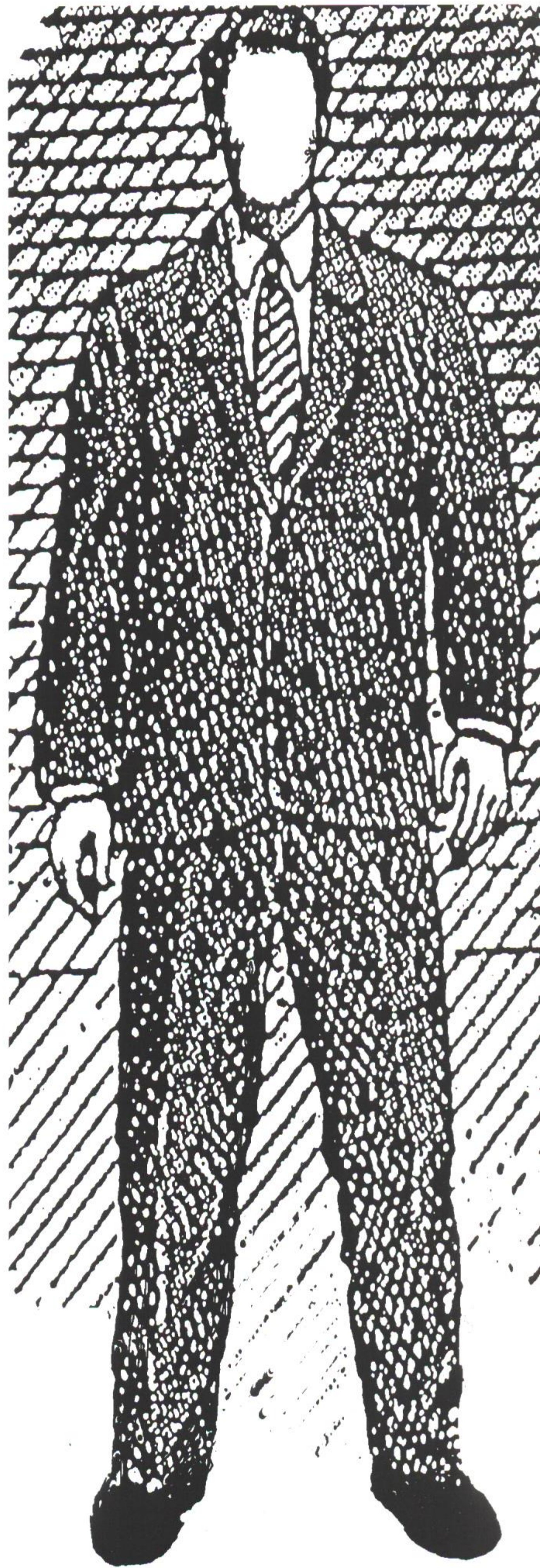
The concern that rape victims should remain anonymous also endorses the notion that to be raped is shameful. This is not a judgement that we apply to any other crime. Nobody argues that a woman who has had her house burgled should remain anonymous because it is such a shameful experience. No woman should need to feel ashamed if she has been raped; she has had a crime committed against her just as much as anybody else who is assaulted. For her identity to be shrouded in secrecy implies that she is in some way partly responsible for the situation.

Rape should not be treated differently to any other violent crime. It is perceived as different because it involves sex, and sex is something to which society attaches great significance. However, it is surely absurd to argue that rape is really a worse assault for the woman who experiences it than, say, having her fingers cut off or her face slashed.

Critics of the current anonymity rules say that they are unjust, allowing men like Craig Charles to be publicly vilified while the false accuser can remain anonymous or sell her story to the tabloids. Yet their alternative proposal, to change the rules so that *both* parties remain anonymous, is no better. Nobody accused of any other crime is allowed to remain anonymous. We expect to know the names of those who are accused of perpetrating fraud, theft and murder, and we should expect to know who is making the accusation. The same goes for rape.

To argue that any legal case should be conducted under wraps is to suggest that the courts can be trusted to reach verdicts away from the scrutiny of the public gaze. It also assumes that we, the public, are incapable of drawing rational conclusions from the information presented to us. To argue that rape cases should be subject to special anonymity provision encourages the notion that rape is a crime which taints its victims, that they should feel ashamed and hide their identity as though they are responsible.

Rather than demanding that rape defendants like Craig Charles as well as alleged victims should be granted anonymity, we should insist that the maximum information be made available to the press and the public. The greater the degree of openness and transparency, the more chance we have of seeing that something approximating justice is done.






men and women.

Working women

...of women in the...
the civil service is still only...
The final figure has more than double...
...relations. At the level of...
for the provision of equal opportunities...
for women has been won and many...
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...male and female...
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as the female proportion of the...
workforce increases at a steady pace.
A change in the relative position...
of women is evident at all levels of...
society. Middle class women with...
a university education have clearly...
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their male counterparts far more...
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Education Careers Service Unit,...
women graduates now find it easier...
to get jobs than men. Six months after...
graduation, 46 per cent of women have...
permanent jobs, compared to 42 per...
cent of men. There has been an erosion

Is it a girl's world?



This is not a man's world any more. That is the conclusion reached by social commentators today.

Many experts have identified an inexorable trend towards the economic enfranchisement of women. The popular media is fascinated by the feminisation of cultural life, reflecting a climate in which the feminist comedian Jo Brand can be taken seriously on the BBC's *Question Time*, and where lesbianism and androgyny can be presented as fashionable. Social scientists point to the feminisation

of public attitudes towards everything from parenting to TV violence, and argue that 'macho' aggression has now been widely rejected in favour of the more 'feminine' values of caring and sharing. They suggest that one of the fundamental features of the postmodern age is the renegotiation of the traditional relationship between men and women.

Working women

So what are we to make of the trend towards the feminisation of society? Women are still far from achieving equality with men. But there have been some important changes in gender relations. At the level of ideas, the case for the provision of equal opportunities for women has been won and many prejudices have been challenged. It is now difficult for anybody but the most isolated bigot to put up a plausible case for limiting a woman's role to that

of a mother or a housewife. Such stereotypes are especially alien to the outlook of younger women, many of whom rightly or wrongly believe that they no longer suffer from discrimination or any social impediments to their progress.

It is certainly true that women continue to be greatly under-represented in the corridors of power. For example, the proportion of women in the top three grades of the civil service is still only 10 per cent. Yet that figure has more than doubled since 1984. In other areas of society, women's position relative to men has also improved—most strikingly within the education system. In higher education, the gender gap between male and female students has closed, as demonstrated by the growing number of educated young women competing for jobs. The labour market too has become much more feminised, as the female proportion of the workforce increases at a steady pace.

A change in the relative position of women is evident at all levels of society. Middle class women with a university education have clearly gained most, and now compete with their male counterparts far more directly. According to the Higher Education Careers Service Unit, women graduates now find it easier to get jobs than men. Six months after graduation, 46 per cent of women have permanent jobs, compared to 42 per cent of men. There has been an erosion

**Is it
a girl's
world?**

of the lines of demarcation between so-called male and female professional jobs.

The change in the relative position of women has been most dramatic within the working class. The cumulative outcome of deindustrialisation and the expansion of the service sector has been a significant shift in the balance of employment between the sexes. The loss of traditional male jobs and the creation of female jobs has been the main pattern of development on the labour market during the past 15 years. (For a full analysis of the changing composition of the workforce see p14.)

Lazy men

'My son is working as a woman on a farm', a middle-aged woman told me the other day. Her son worked as a fruit-packer, a job which was hitherto considered 'women's work', in the farmlands of Kent. This transgression of the old sexual division of labour is a sign of the times. At least he had a job. Many young working class men find that there is no 'male work' for them. In many working class communities there is now a greater proportion of women at work than of men. Newspaper columnists, bishops and politicians have made much of the indolent and unproductive young men who seem to find no place in society. As a counterpoint to their predicament, the success of women in adapting to new circumstances has been highly praised.

There are many contending explanations for the feminisation of society. For some, the key influence has been that of the women's movement in questioning society's prevailing norms and values regarding sex roles. In this atmosphere of questioning, it is argued, women became more assertive and succeeded in altering the balance of power in their favour.

Other explanations point to the evolution of new patterns of interaction between people in what they consider is the 'postmodern condition'. According to postmodernists, the conventional boundaries have given way to a more fluid situation in every sphere of life, whether political, cultural or sexual. The boundaries that separate female from male identities are no exception to this trend. From this perspective, traditional sex roles and their conventional definitions belong to another age. Such rigid roles and ways

of doing things are seen as inconsistent with contemporary realities. The shift in boundaries is particularly evident among the younger generations, where the polarisation of attitudes between female and male is far less distinct than among their elders.

Feminine values

It is sometimes suggested that women are better able to adapt to new circumstances because they are more flexible and more in tune with the demands of the new service economy. Some commentators contend that it ►

Women, we are told, are starting to get on top at work and in the home. Everywhere from the Labour Party to Hollywood, it seems that more 'feminine values' are now in vogue.

What does the change in the relative status of women tell us about the world we live in? Frank Furedi sifts through some of the myths and the misunderstandings about the 'feminisation' of society

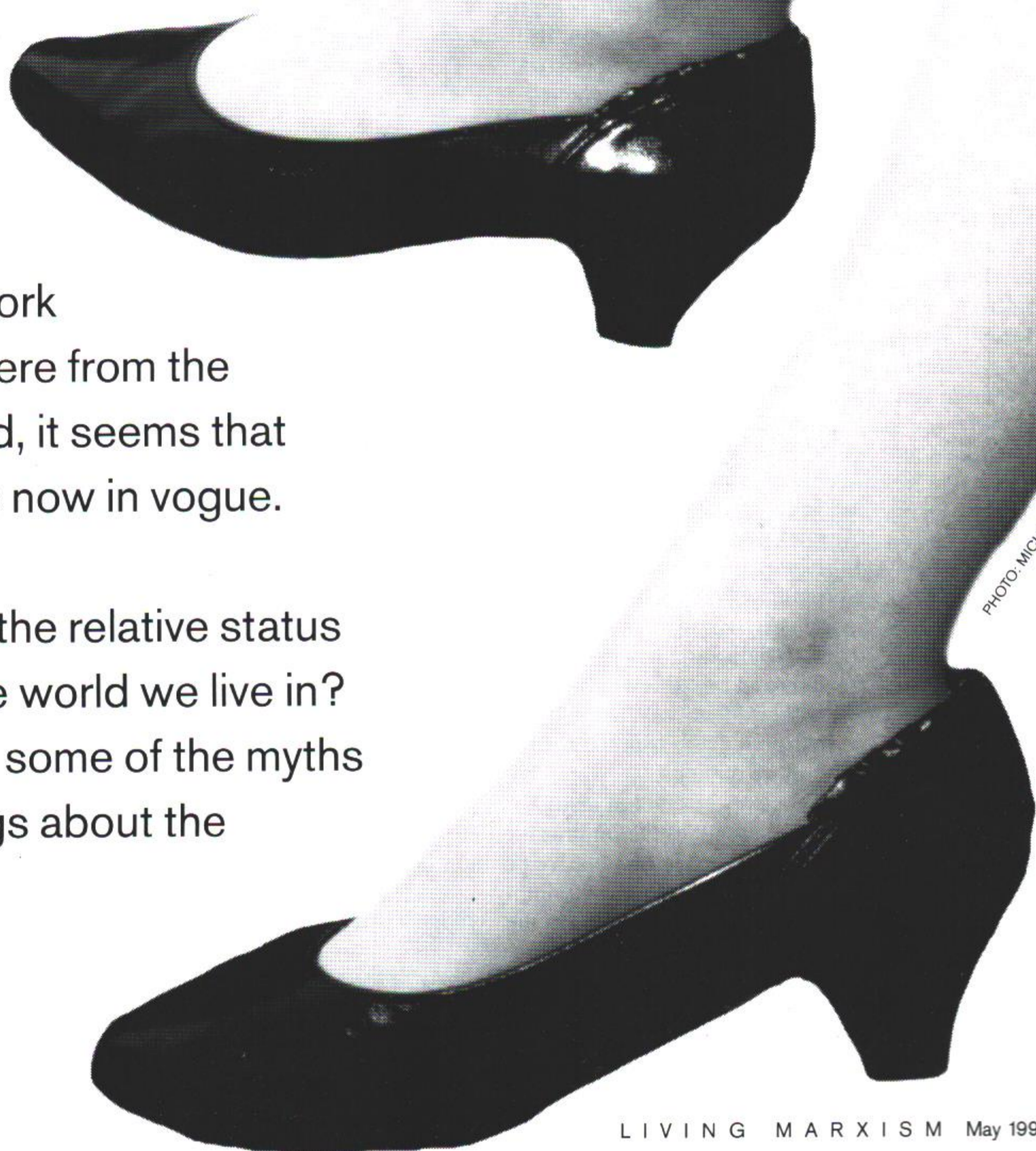


PHOTO: MICHAEL KRAMER



is this harmony of female identity with the fluidity of postmodernity which accounts for the process of feminisation. It appears that supposedly feminine traits such as sensitivity, tact, flexibility and caring have become the virtues of the postmodern era. These trends are believed to influence notions of masculinity and the behaviour of men. Macho values are definitely out.

The 'feminine virtues' which employers admire are accommodation, resignation and passivity

Men are now publicly exhorted to cry, to open up and show their feelings. The feminisation of masculinity is part of a self-conscious attempt to question traditional roles.

There is no doubt that the relationship between femininity and masculinity in contemporary society has been substantially modified. It is also certain that no single factor can account for such a development. The changing aspirations of women have played an important role in this drama. However, these new aspirations did not emerge in a vacuum. Instead, the changing structure of postwar Western societies has interacted with the changing position of women to influence female aspirations.

Marginal loss

Probably the most important development has been the profound structural changes which the capitalist economy has experienced during the past two decades. The decline of manufacturing has had an important impact on societies where individual identity is intimately linked to work. The overall effect of deindustrialisation has been most severe for men, especially working class men whose entire way of life was so bound up with industry. For women, whose role in industry was always more marginal, deindustrialisation has posed fewer traumas and raised fewer questions about their identity. Whether that can be interpreted as a triumph for women is far more dubious.

In fact, at the level of analysis, it is irrational to talk of the feminisation of society. Changes in the relative position of women do not necessarily imply any fundamental alterations to the distribution of power. Nor is it useful to define modes of behaviour, values and characteristics as essentially feminine or masculine. The very

attempt to expand the definition of femininity so as to cover new areas leads to confusions. Attributes found in one sphere of life—say, the home—can mean something very different in another—like the workplace. Take the way in which feminine values are now said to qualify women particularly well for the 'flexible' workplace of today.

The appropriation of flexibility as an attribute of the female identity can be highly ideological. It is far from clear why men should be any less flexible than women. Openness to choices and new demands is the outcome of experience in society, not of biology. In any case, the term flexibility can be defined in many ways. When employers talk about a flexible workforce, what they have in mind is one that is cheap and compliant. The postmodern virtues of a flexible lifestyle are often lost on working women, who have to juggle domestic responsibilities with doing part-time and insecure work at a wage barely above the poverty line. It could be argued that the 'feminine virtues' which many employers admire are those of accommodation, resignation and passivity.

Part-time wages

Experts who swear that women genuinely want to work part time or on a temporary basis miss the point; for many the choice is between a part-time job or no job at all. The attempt to present insecure casual work as a response to women's demands turns reality upside down. In the past this was considered the type of work that was 'fit for women' and certainly not for men. It is ironic that some observers write of the rising aspirations of women in one breath, while praising the virtues of flexibility in the workplace in another. Not surprisingly the reconciliation of female ambition with part-time work (and part-time wages) is rarely explored.

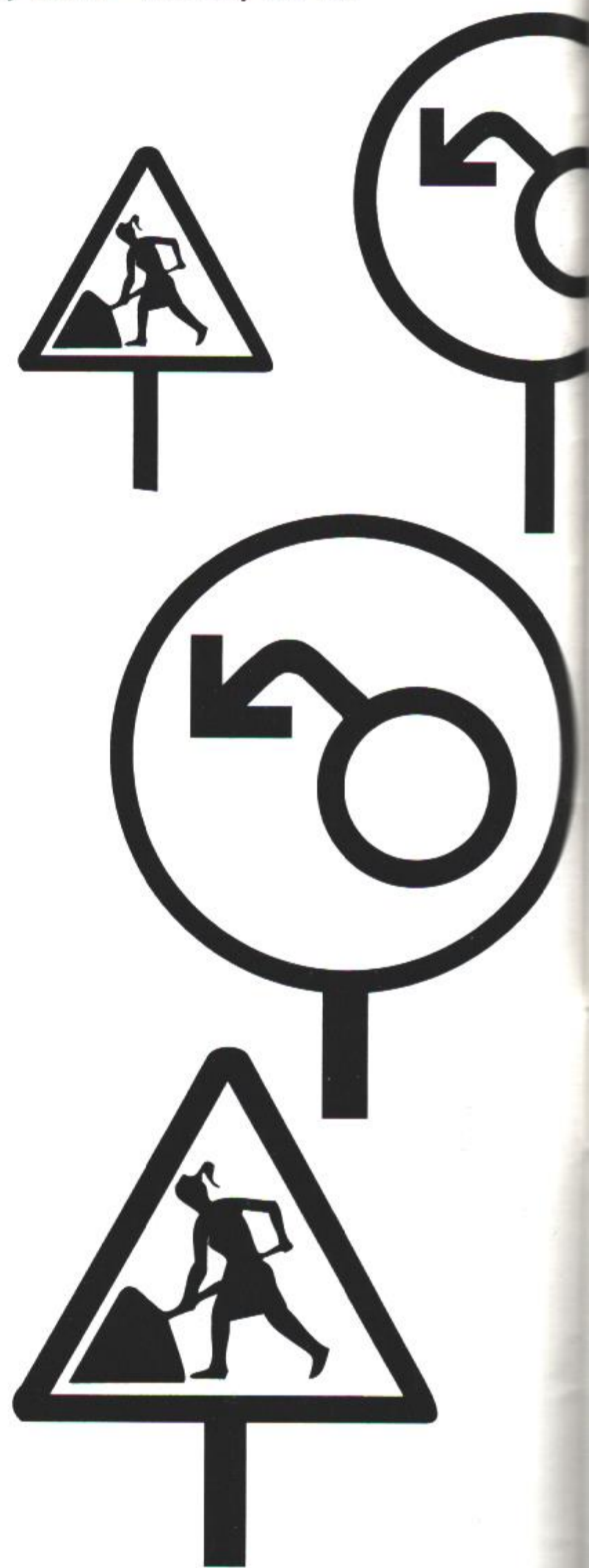
It would be a mistake to interpret feminisation as the replacement of the masculine with the feminine. The relationship between the old male roles and the new female ones is not symmetrical. Feminisation does not mean that more women are doing what men used to do. This point is clearly illustrated in the changing character of the labour force. The growing proportion of females in employment does not mean that men's jobs have been given to women. What the mass of new women workers is doing is not commensurate with what men did in the past. A new part-time job is not the equivalent of an old full-time one. Nor is the temporary character of work comparable with the old long-term employment which is today, sometimes sneeringly, called 'a job for life'. The overwhelming majority of new jobs are

less secure, less stable and less well paid. In other words, they are worse.

Changes in the labour market reflect wider changes in society. The feminisation of work is part of the structural transformation of economic life. The changing character of work is bound up with the process of economic reorganisation. On a fundamental level, Western capitalist societies have become exhausted. The economic and political elites find it increasingly difficult to engage with people's aspirations for a better life.

Relative success

For many people life has become more insecure and the experience of work more alienating than before. This decline in the conditions of work is expressed in the new jargon of flexibility and feminisation. In reality, the celebratory language of feminisation obscures the lowering of expectations and the fall in the quality of life. At the level of work, what we see is not an improvement in the position of women, but a deterioration in the position of men. What has improved is the relative status of women compared to the men they know—but only for the



negative reason that the men's economic status has been forcibly lowered.

The change in the relative status of women has coincided not just with the economic but also with the political reordering of society. In this sense, the adoption of 'feminine' values can be seen as reflecting the loss of direction and lack of certainties in capitalist culture today.

Keep-your-head-down

Many of the traditional conventions and values have failed to make the transition to the contemporary era. That is why there is such a fevered discussion about the crisis of morality and the meaning of community in Western societies. These discussions are not just about abstract philosophical principles. They are about the ability of the authorities to regulate individual

behaviour and to indicate what is right and what is wrong. Since conventional morality has not yet been replaced by any alternative system, there is considerable ambiguity about acceptable forms of behaviour. This is particularly the case among the younger generations, whose rules of conduct are more makeshift and ambiguous.

The absence of consensus about modes of behaviour coincides with a number of important developments. In an era of economic stagnation and political decay, a general climate of insecurity about the future encourages conservative keep-your-head-down attitudes. This is demonstrated by a considerable degree of passivity among the majority of people, and a general reluctance to engage with broader social issues. A culture of low expectations is palpable. There is little demand for big ideas or for far-reaching solutions. This is the uncertain climate in which individuals are trying to negotiate their roles and redefine rules of conduct. The tendency to devalue hard, uncompromising 'macho' values, and to upgrade supposedly feminine ones like flexibility and compromise, should be seen against this background.

In the context of the overall climate

of conservatism, the feminisation process clearly lacks any impulse towards liberation or taking control of your life. The spread of so-called feminine values is consistent with the contemporary conservative dynamic. For all their sins, traditional male attitudes were associated with competitiveness, control and power. Such attitudes and ambitions are not appropriate for a society which lacks the capacity to reward its citizens. A caring and sharing and sometimes anti-materialist culture is far more harmonious with the state of contemporary capitalism.

In the past many ambitious and sensitive women reacted against the stereotyped role of wife, mother and little woman to which they were assigned. They regarded with scorn the conventional assumptions about weak and passive femininity. Indeed many of them sought to assimilate certain characteristics seen as masculine, on the grounds that these were associated with independence, strength and power.

Macho postures

Although there are still women who express such sentiments, there has been a change in the temper of our times. In today's conditions, as men appear more insecure and less in control, their traditional characteristics seem not so much a sign of strength as so much posturing. Since the economic and social changes discussed here have had a disproportionate impact on men, the crisis of masculinity is far more sharply defined than any problems to do with femininity. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that masculinity often seems to exist only in a defensive form, as a reaction against feminisation. It lacks appeal even to many men and is unlikely to inspire emulation among experimental and ambitious women. But the fashionable alternatives offer them no way forward either.

Setting current trends in the wider context of what has happened to society, the only conclusion to be drawn is that feminisation has little to do with fulfilling women's aspirations or with the intrinsic merits of what are seen as feminine values. Instead, the change in the relative position of women coexists with the overall decline of society and the degrading of the work experience. At an ideological level, the bold pretensions of masculinity have been traded in for the low expectations of a caring femininity. In a society which cannot provide its citizens with full-time employment, and when people fear that the future will be worse than the past, the spread of values associated with postmodern 'femininity'—like acquiescence, flexibility, and passivity—is likely to be encouraged.



Has the advent of 'flexible' working really boosted the status of working women? Or has the entire workforce been degraded to the level of what was once considered 'women's work'?

Linda Murdoch investigates

Danger: women's work ahead

The sisters, it seems, are doing it for themselves. The *Guardian* heralded this year's International Women's Day with the declaration that in 1995 women are going to work and men are embracing the family.

The statistics do appear to lend some support to the view that women have taken a major stride towards equality at work. Women now make up 49.6 per cent of the entire workforce—up from 37.9 per cent in 1971. Women are entering the professions at a greater rate than ever before. In accountancy, law and medicine, female entry is now on a par with male. And the next generation of women are already forging ahead. In education, girls now out-perform boys from 'O' levels through to university degrees. Last year 46 per cent of girls achieved five or more A to C grades at GCSE, compared with 37 per cent of boys.

However, a closer look suggests that the employment data tells us more about the changing character of the workforce as a whole than about a leap in the status of working women. Rather than women gaining equality in a man's world, it seems that the man's world of work is changing in such a way that using women workers has become more advantageous for employers.

Women are being taken on because the economy has been restructured to expand the kind of jobs which traditionally have been seen as 'women's jobs'—that is temporary, part-time and generally low-paid. Today, although women make up almost half the workforce, half of them are in part-time jobs, many in sectors renowned for low pay and poor working conditions: retail, public services, hotel and catering, and cleaning.

There is an important class differential in the experience of the new army of working women. The majority of women entering the jobs market do so near the bottom; the average female worker still earns around 40 per cent less than the average

male in work. There is, however, an influential minority of middle class women taking advantage of their academic gains to break through into better jobs (often, incidentally, employing working class women to do their cleaning or childcare for them at home). But even these well-heeled women are pitifully represented in the top jobs and salary grades. Recent surveys show that just 2.8 per cent of senior managers and 9.8 per cent of managers are women. And women managers still earn 16 per cent less than their male counterparts.

Why do women suffer inequalities in the workplace? Women have traditionally been seen as 'flexible' workers, for whom going out to work is less important than raising a family at home. A woman's identity is assumed to be shaped by her family situation. A man has long been defined by his job first and his other commitments second. A woman's responsibility for her family has been assumed to supersede everything else. Modern society organises on the principle that young women will work until they start a family, and then combine some waged work with childcare. It is assumed that women's careers will be interrupted, and that their main concerns will be outside the workplace.

Worst of both worlds

Because women's involvement in the workplace is compromised by the demands of their role in the family, they have traditionally been employed in a limited range of jobs. Female senior managers are few and far between, not simply because of boardroom sexism, but because employers are reluctant to invest in training and establishing a senior manager who may soon be applying for maternity leave. Part-time jobs, or jobs with shorter hours (such as teaching) have usually been filled by women because they can be combined with taking and collecting children from school, shopping and getting the dinner ready.

What has been described as female 'flexibility' has really always been a symptom of women's disadvantaged position in society. In the past those campaigning for women's rights have called for the resources that would allow women to be integrated fully into the workforce—such as childcare facilities—to be made available. Currently there is no childcare provision for two-thirds of pre-school children in the UK, and none for the 8.5m children of school age.

Now, however, it seems that attitudes are changing. Millions of working women can still only get part-time work. But instead of being seen as a problem, this situation—which many women have struggled to escape from for two decades—is today being presented as a model for the employment market of the future. Moreover, it is presented as a model for the employment of men as well as women. And these developments have been welcomed by prominent feminists as a major move towards equality.

Just about every newspaper and magazine and many books—see, for example, *Jobshift* by William Bridges—have argued that changes in the nature of work have improved women's position in the labour market. The new orthodoxy has it that recession, the pace of technological change and the information revolution all but spell the end of the old 40-hours-a-week-for-40-years working life. Instead, we are told, survival in the new, highly competitive and globalised environment requires flexibility at work. Several Department for Education and Department of Employment papers argue that Britain's future depends upon evolving a 'flexible' workforce which is not attached to the 'job-for-life' mentality, but can adapt to differing demands on their time.

Women, it seems, fit the bill. According to employers, women are the workforce of the future. In its pamphlet *The Best of Both Worlds* (1991) the Department of Employment advised employers how to move into

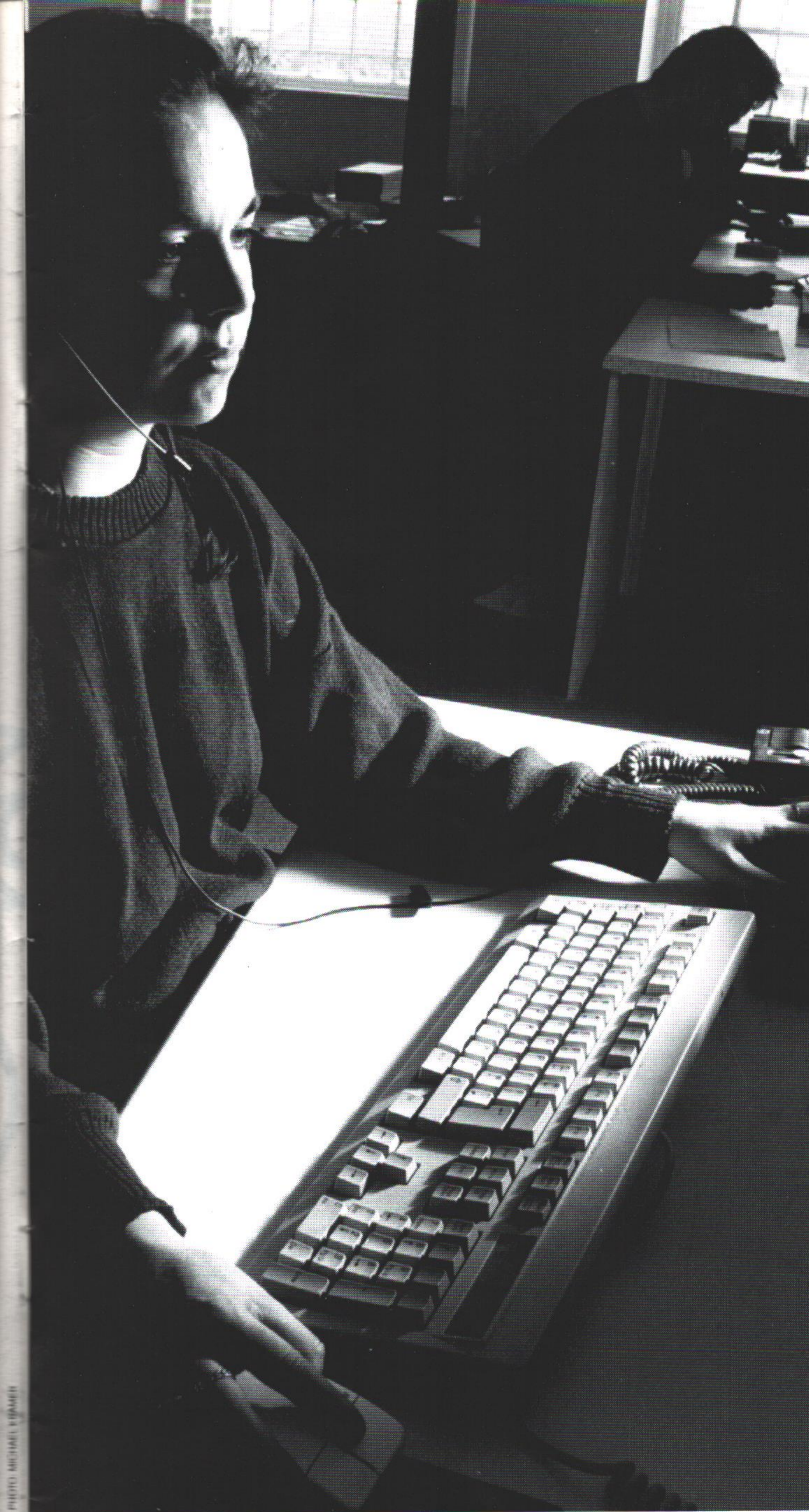


PHOTO: MICHAEL V. DAVEN

the nineties. It says that women deserve the best of both worlds, and that society should enable women to work and have a family at the same time. 'The traditional pattern of nine-to-five, 40-hours a week no longer suits a large proportion of the working population. Many people prefer different working arrangements because they have children or other relatives to look after.' The pamphlet encourages employers to extend flexible working schemes to allow women to return to work. It implies that in return for employers helping women to achieve the correct balance in their lives between home and work, women can help employers to achieve more flexibility.

'Future is female'

Even prominent feminists have accepted that the new patterns of work are beneficial to women. The major work in the field, *The Century Gap* by Labour Party frontbencher Harriet Harman, claims that what we are witnessing is nothing short of a revolution. Women, she says, have taken a great leap forward into the twenty-first century while men are still stuck in the twentieth. And she believes the motor force of this revolution is part-time work. 'Employees' enthusiasm about the flexible working practices that have been introduced show us that women—and a growing number of men—expect and appreciate an increasing degree of control over when they work.' To Harman, the increasing flexibility at work has allowed women to lead a more equal life, sharing both work and family responsibilities. For her, it seems, this is what equality between the sexes is all about.

The notion that a reduction in working hours, more part-time jobs and flexible working is a good thing *per se* has gained considerable currency. Today, it is no longer taken for granted that what a person does for a living is the main source of their identity. The positive use of leisure time, whether it be for gardening, learning a language or voluntary ▶



work, is viewed as equally worthwhile. It is accepted that people can develop themselves just as much through leisure as at work.

It is certainly true that there is more to life than work. But there are still definite reasons why people need good, secure full-time jobs.

In simple financial terms, part-time hours or other flexible job arrangements are no substitute for full-time work. On average, a woman working

Not only does the changing structure of the workforce constitute little benefit to most women. Just as worryingly, it reflects a real deterioration in the position of working men.

employers lose nothing by employing women in this way.

The growth of part-time alongside the destruction of full-time jobs is a reflection, not of women becoming

The rise in part-time female work has been mirrored by the shedding of full-time male labour

part-time earns just 49 per cent of the hourly income of men in full-time work. If they are to have sufficient spending power to meet basic needs (not to mention enjoy their leisure time), people need full-time jobs, whoever they are.

In addition, no matter how educational and fulfilling it might seem, private leisure time cannot bring the sense of identity and challenge you get from working with others. This is particularly true for women who, because of their childcare responsibilities, are more likely to spend hours at home in isolation. Women in the 1970s and 1980s fought for the right to work not only to get a wage, but because they had ambitions and aspirations to fulfil.

Pin money

Part-time or other 'flexible' work and an 'interesting hobby' do not measure up to the sense of self-worth that comes from a full-time job. The recession and the huge shakeout of full-time male jobs has seriously undermined society's expectations of work. People no longer expect a job to bring them security, advancement and self-development. Indeed, many people associate work with nothing but stress, low pay and insecurity. As people have lowered their expectations of fulfillment from work, so the other activities made possible by flexible working—leisure pursuits or even men staying at home with the children—have come to be seen in a more positive light. In reality, however, most people have little choice about the 'flexibility' of the jobs they are offered these days. In other words, the idea of enjoying increased leisure time, of both partners equally bringing up children and having the 'time' to do other things instead of work, is simply making a virtue out of a necessity.

How the workforce has changed

	1971	1994
Women in full-time jobs	25.2%	26.6%
Women in part-time jobs	12.7%	23%
Men in full-time jobs	59.4%	45.1%
Men in part-time jobs	2.7%	5.3%
All jobs	100%	100%

(*Employment Gazette*, December 1994)

The figures in the table above demonstrate that the progressive rise in part-time female work over the past two decades has been mirrored by the shedding of full-time male labour. While the proportion of men working full-time has fallen by around a quarter, the proportion of women working part-time has almost doubled. These trends have nothing to do with meeting the needs of women, and everything to do with meeting the needs of capitalists.

Faced with the ravages of recession and falling profitability, the government and employers have closed down loss-making operations and sought to drive down labour costs. In the process, three million full-time male jobs have been lost over the past 15 years. Most of these jobs were cut through deindustrialisation, and have not been directly replaced by female jobs; there are no part-time women coal miners or shipbuilders or steelworkers, for example. Instead, economic activity and employment in Britain has become more concentrated in sectors like retailing and financial services. Many of these sectors have always been associated with part-time work, and have become more so; in 1993, for instance, Burtons, British Airways and British Home Stores were just three of the better-known companies to cut full-time jobs and make staff work part time instead. The expansion of part-time work in the service sectors has brought many more women into the labour force.

It is not difficult to understand why employers are happy to employ part-time female workers. Part-timers have to wait five years for any kind of employment protection. This makes them far more 'flexible'—they can be hired and fired with ease. Employees who work less than 15 hours a week have no rights at all, and this affects an increasing number of women on so-called zero contracts, homeworkers and other such 'flexible' contracts. In particular, part-time workers have no right to maternity leave, so

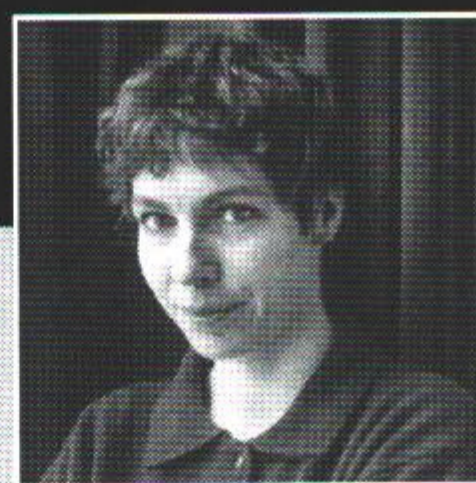
more equal with men, but of the restructuring of the entire labour force towards complete flexibility. Compared to their major competitors, British employers face less legislative and other constraints on their freedom to hire, fire and impose flexible working practices (see *Employment Gazette*, February 1995).

All women's work now

At least 38 per cent of the labour force—9.7m workers—are now categorised as 'flexible' by the Department of Employment (*Labour Force Survey*, Spring 1993). Half of working women fall into this category. The figure for working men is lower, at 27 per cent, but that is up significantly from 18 per cent in 1981. So men, too, are increasingly having to accept flexible working practices such as short-term contracts, teleworking, freelance work and temporary jobs as a substitute for permanent full-time employment.

Indeed, the Dept of Employment's narrow definition of flexibility almost certainly seriously underestimates the scale of this trend. According to an authoritative report released in April by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, a mere 35.9 per cent of the entire working population in Britain held full-time, tenured (ie, not temporary) jobs in 1993, down from 55.5 per cent in 1975. This can only mean greater job insecurity, poorer working conditions and poorer wages for millions of working men and women alike.

The high-profile, relative success enjoyed by a minority of middle class women should not be allowed to blind us to the negative impact of the wider trends. What we are witnessing is not the kind of equality which would mean the conditions and living standards of working women being pushed up to the best standards achieved by the male workforce, but the dragging down of the entire world of work to a level once disparaged as 'women's work'. It is good for neither women nor men. ●



The real cot death scandal

There cannot be a new mother in the country who has not worried just a bit about cot death. The condition now known as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) has received high-profile publicity since the death of TV presenter Anne Diamond's child in 1991. It has touched a nerve with many because of the deeply distressing nature of a condition that can steal a healthy child's life in the dead of night. We often fear most what we do not understand—and nobody seems to understand cot death. A new theory crops up every couple of months: sleeping positions, chemicals in mattresses, central heating, single-parenthood, poverty, 'over-wrapping' and now passive smoking.

The causes attributed to cot death are variable, but one thing appears consistent. The media attention and the interest expressed by health officials in a specific theory is in direct proportion to the responsibility it attributes to the mother's actions or lifestyle. So the plausible theory that chemicals used in cot mattresses may react to cause toxic gases attracts widespread indifference. Yet the latest theory that cot death may be a consequence of passive smoking receives widespread publicity, as does the idea that the position you allow baby to sleep in is all-important (on his back is said to be safest).

Both of the favoured theories seem to be illogical. Babies everywhere have always slept every which way. Yet SIDS was only described as a medical phenomenon in 1953. Of course it may have gone undiagnosed in earlier times, accepted as 'just one of those things' in an age when infant death was far more common. But studies which have tried to situate the condition in a historical perspective suggest that the syndrome is genuinely modern, and that incidence of it peaked between 1968 and 1988.

This not only calls into question the notion that sleeping positions cause cot death; it also challenges the passive smoking theory now being pushed by the paediatricians closest to the medical establishment. If smoking was a major factor it would seem reasonable to believe that cot death incidences would be highest at times when smoking was most popular—such as the 1930s and 1940s in Britain. Similarly you would expect to see SIDS at its highest rates in southern European countries and in Russia where more people smoke. Yet neither of these scenarios is true. Anecdotal evidence from cot death support groups seems to suggest that there is no statistically significant difference in cot deaths between the children of smokers and non-smokers.

Even if you could show that a majority of people who lose babies to cot death are smokers, that would not mean that maternal smoking causes cot death. An association between factors is not the same as a causal relationship. Women trying to rear children alone, or in poverty are more likely to smoke, they are also likely to bed their children down on older, secondhand mattresses and, perhaps, have less

time to spend checking on baby. It could be that smoking is a 'marker' for poverty, and that poverty is a high-risk factor, but Mrs Bottomley is showing no interest in this particular aspect of the problem.

But then a link between cot death and poverty or deprivation would be difficult for the government, given that it immediately raises the issue of what can be done to alleviate the deprived conditions in which many women are forced to raise children. This is not an issue that the government wants to grapple with. A serious investigation of the chemicals-in-mattresses theory could prove awkward for the authorities too, raising all manner of questions and problems for the departments of trade and industry and of health.

It is far better for health officials to absolve themselves of any responsibility for the problem by highlighting parental smoking or the failure of parents to check on their sleeping babies every few minutes. Once again the responsibility is dumped at the feet of parents and especially the mother. If your child dies, it is your fault for not living the healthy and responsible good life we have been exhorting you to live.

This message will be readily taken on board by many people (it already has been taken up by most mainstream health writers), because it fits into an established pattern of blaming mum's behaviour for all manner of problems, from children's health to their school marks and their behaviour at football matches.

But while we may react against the accusation that a child's educational problems are a consequence of our failings rather than of underfunded schools, it is more difficult to shrug off the notion that our actions may be endangering the health of our own children. That is what makes health panics such a useful means for the authorities to reinforce the notion of responsible parenting.

Cot death is not, in fact, a significant health problem, which is why the government, despite the protestations of Anne Diamond, is under no pressure to do anything meaningful to address it. In 1993 there were 442 cot deaths in England and Wales. Of course that is 442 too many, and each is an individual tragedy, but 442 is a tiny proportion of more than 700 000 babies born that year. The only thing that will motivate the government to take up cot death is if they can use it as a hook on which to hang another message. The 'back to sleep' campaign, which stressed the need for maternal vigilance to ensure baby was sleeping in the prone position, offered just that. It provided a chance to ram home the message that any woman not obsessed with her baby in the night as well as the day was not just a poor mother, but was risking her child's life. The smoking connection carries the same message even more potently.

Nearly every health message we receive these days is politically loaded. Health warnings should carry political warnings. ●

Once again the responsibility is dumped at the feet of the parents

More women in parliament will improve the quality of public life, according to the lobby group Emily's List, led by Barbara Follett of the Labour Party. Based on the campaign which has financed women candidates for the US Democratic Party since 1985, Emily's List has been launched here to change the male-dominated atmosphere of 'the house'. It also offers potential parliamentary candidates training in public speaking and handling the media.

Labour has introduced all-women shortlists in some constituencies in order to ensure the selection of more women as parliamentary candidates. The 1993 Labour Party conference agreed to all-women shortlists in 50 per cent of the seats where Labour MPs are retiring and in 50 per cent of all marginal seats, where Labour has most chance of winning. Amid a continuing battle with embittered male Labourites who have lost the chance to become MPs, the first six all-women shortlists have now been used to select candidates.

Labour has a system of quotas designed to help women fill 40 per cent of decision-making posts at every level of the party. In elections to the shadow cabinet, Labour MPs have to vote for at least three women—regardless of whether they think any women candidates have stood on a platform worthy of support.

Harry or Harriet?

The Labour Party may be leading the way but the rest are following. Indeed the Liberal Democrats can claim that they were the first to encourage shortlisting of women candidates as part of their selection rules. Even the Tories have tried to catch up. Conservative Central Office is pressing constituency parties to give serious consideration to the selection of women candidates.

Emily's List has been attacked for promoting only middle class women who have opportunities anyway. The *Daily Mail* has condemned those associated with Emily's List as politically correct 'loony ladies'. Except of course nobody disagrees with the principle of promoting women. Even the *Mail* says 'there is a need of course for far more women in parliament'. Is there?

The assumption that having more women in parliament is a good thing in itself is highly questionable, and the arguments for electing women as women, rather than on the basis of their politics, is extremely dubious.

Supporters of quotas argue that parliament is too 'male-dominated', and so things that matter to women are sidelined. Certainly there is a lot of fighting to do to achieve worthwhile

The Emily within

Promoting more women MPs might help Tony Blair's Labour Party, but what will it do for the rest of us? asks Ellie Lee

equality for women in British society. But what exactly would the majority of women gain from having 80 or 90 new female Labour MPs?

There is no reason to believe that simply because they are female, women MPs will better represent the interests of women or promote more enlightened views on any social issues. As it happens the most vocal defender of women's access to abortion services in the present parliament is a man, Harry Cohen. Another Harry, Harry Barnes, is at the forefront of a parliamentary campaign to win access to legal abortion for women in Northern Ireland. Labour's committee of women MPs refuses to raise the controversial issue.

The decade Margaret Thatcher enjoyed as Britain's only female prime minister was marked by the promotion of Victorian family values, and a forthright attack on working people of either sex. A look at parliament today suggests that some of the most reactionary elements are in skirts. Elizabeth Peacock wants young offenders flogged on TV before the weekly National Lottery

announcement. Ann Widdecombe was the first MP to praise the Pope's latest encyclical which condemns the use of family planning and the new reproductive technologies. Of course, these are not Labour women, they are Tories and represent Tory values—we should expect that.

Moral agenda

But is Tony Blair's New Labour any better? Last summer, Blair voiced his disdain for single parents when he told Brian Walden that he did not think 'it is a helpful way to bring up children. I disagree with what they have done. It is a matter of common sense'. This kind of 'common sense' single women can well do without. Now Blair has indicated that a Labour government would discourage couples from parting by removing some of what he sees as the financial incentives that favour single people. So much for a commitment to women's independence.

Blair's desire to promote a moral agenda also runs through his attitude to reproductive rights. Despite a recent conference commitment to support

PHOTO: PRESS ASSOCIATION



Barbara Follett (second from right) and friends celebrate the imposition of all-women shortlists for Labour candidates at the party's 1994 conference

women's right to choose to end an unwanted pregnancy, the pro-choice position has never been reflected in Labour's manifesto and has now been quietly dropped.

There is a huge difference between promoting women in the Labour Party and promoting women's rights in society—and the first has never meant that the Labour Party meant to do the second. The promotion of the Labour Party as the party that promotes women is entirely concerned with gaining electoral advantage.

High-flyers

Firstly, it is a cynical means to appeal for women's votes. Labour identifies the 'gender gap' as the key to its disastrous electoral fortunes. A briefing written by Labour frontbencher Clare Short sums up the case: 'In 1992 the Tories had a 10-point lead over Labour amongst women, compared with a four-point lead amongst men—a "gender gap" of six points. If we had won as many women's votes as we did men's Labour would be in power now. So better representation for women within the

party forms a crucial part of our strategy to win power.'

A second part of Labour's approach is to attract ambitious and powerful women to their side. Aware of their image as the 'losers' party' Labour is sensitive to its past inability to appeal to middle class career women, traditionally more at home with the Tories. Blair wants to be seen to support ambition and a desire to get on, as well as making Labour the party of the family. Promoting women within the party sends out a message that professional women as well as mothers can trust Labour, and those who want a career in politics should join its ranks. Mo Mowlam MP epitomises the idea that a career woman's place is in New Labour. She promotes herself as 'married to her job'—'I don't regret not having children: because my work is fulfilling I don't feel that loss'. Pushing to centre-stage a generation of high-flyers, professional women from university backgrounds, is designed to give Labour new appeal.

Emily's List is about boosting the standing of the Labour Party, not raising the social status of the majority

of women. But the problem goes further. The 'feminisation' of the mainstream parties through the artificial promotion of some middle class women is part of the creation of a new, elitist political class and culture that is hostile to democracy and to the mass of working people.

The promotion of women is crucial to the transformation of the new Labour Party into a party of the cultured elite. For the past decade the Labour leadership has tried to break from the old trade union bureaucracy, and throw off its image as the traditional party of the working class. What could demonstrate an abandonment of the old values better than a commitment to the promotion of new women? This is how one woman delegate described her experience of the Labour Party conference in 1993, as compared to previous years: 'We [women] are everywhere. My first conferences were dominated by serried ranks of men in grey suits almost all of whom called me "luv". This year "the delegate in the grey suit" called to the rostrum to speak was Glenys Kinnock.'

Macho democracy

Shaking off the old association with working class organisations has been a difficult process for Labour, provoking resentment among its allies in the unions. Completing the transformation through the 'feminisation' of Labour has made this transition easier. Under the banner of promoting women in public life, the move to embrace the middle classes could be packaged as an apparently progressive step. So who could disagree? Who could dare challenge the idea that promoting women was a good thing?

In practice, however, the feminisation of Labour, and with it the impending feminisation of the houses of parliament, is a recipe for reaction. Under the guise of introducing 'feminine values' to politics, essential components of democracy are being called into question. The democratic principle of candidates being elected and held accountable on the basis of their views is being casually torn up in favour of a system of quotas and appointments. And the basis of democratic debate, the clash of clearly opposing ideas (something politics needs much more of today), is being vilified as too macho and confrontational.

The promotion of women within the Labour Party brings no benefits for women other than the favoured few who are being promoted. More poignantly it provides a language in which parliament can justify moving further from the people.

(Additional reporting by Lucy Robinson)

A nation never again

Sinn Fein's endorsement of 'cultural diversity' confirms that Irish nationalism is finished and everything is now negotiable. Mark Ryan examines the meaning of the 'peace process'

When John Major and Ireland's Taoiseach John Bruton issued their joint Framework Document in February, many interpreted the proposed cross-border bodies as another step towards a united Ireland. Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams gave cautious praise to what he called the document's 'nationalist ethos', while Unionist leaders denounced it for the same reason. It looked like the day of Irish nationalism had nearly come.

In fact every assumption of the Framework Document is anti-nationalist. There is no concession to Ireland's right to form one independent nation state. Instead what is proposed is a series of institutions and bodies which will rearrange relations between the two parts of Ireland and between Britain and Ireland. Those institutions, the document argues, should reflect and respect the 'full and equal legitimacy and worth of the identity, sense of allegiance, aspiration and ethos of both the Unionist and nationalist communities [throughout Ireland]'. This simply means that there could never be any justification for a united Ireland, unless, by some strange coincidence, the entire population of the

country adopted the nationalist 'identity'. The soldiers and border posts may fade away but under the terms of the Framework Document British dominion will remain over Irish affairs.

The acceptance by the Irish government and even more importantly by Sinn Fein of the legitimacy of diverse 'identities' and 'traditions' in Ireland marks the end of Irish nationalism. Ireland will never be a nation. The end of even the aspiration to form an Irish nation means that Britain's ruling elite is free to rearrange its relations with Ireland. In this spirit, the Framework Document makes clear that both traditional nationalism and Unionism are redundant.

End of partition?

The border will remain between North and South, but in time it will come to have as much significance as the border between England and Wales. Instead, in the new Ireland envisaged in the document, the future lies in developing cross-border bodies which would be responsible for coordinating policy between the two states on issues ranging from trade to welfare, and for presenting a single begging bowl to Brussels. The document states that the British government would impose

no limits on the scope of the administrative functions to be carried out by these bodies.

As has been argued before in *Living Marxism*, the end of Irish nationalism has made both Unionism and partition redundant (see 'Changed utterly: Ireland after the ceasefire', February 1995).

From an administrative and economic point of view, partition never made any sense. The dislocation of the two economies and their separate attachment to the world market certainly contributed to the economic stagnation of the whole island. However partition was never an economic measure. Rather it was a response to the challenge to British domination posed by Irish nationalism after the First World War. As a way of disarming that challenge and dividing the nationalist movement, it certainly worked, despite the fact that nobody in Ireland supported it at the time (including the Unionists, who wanted to keep the whole of Ireland under British lock and key). Now that Irish nationalism is dead, the nuisance of partition can finally be removed.

The fact that a war of words continues between the British government and Sinn Fein over

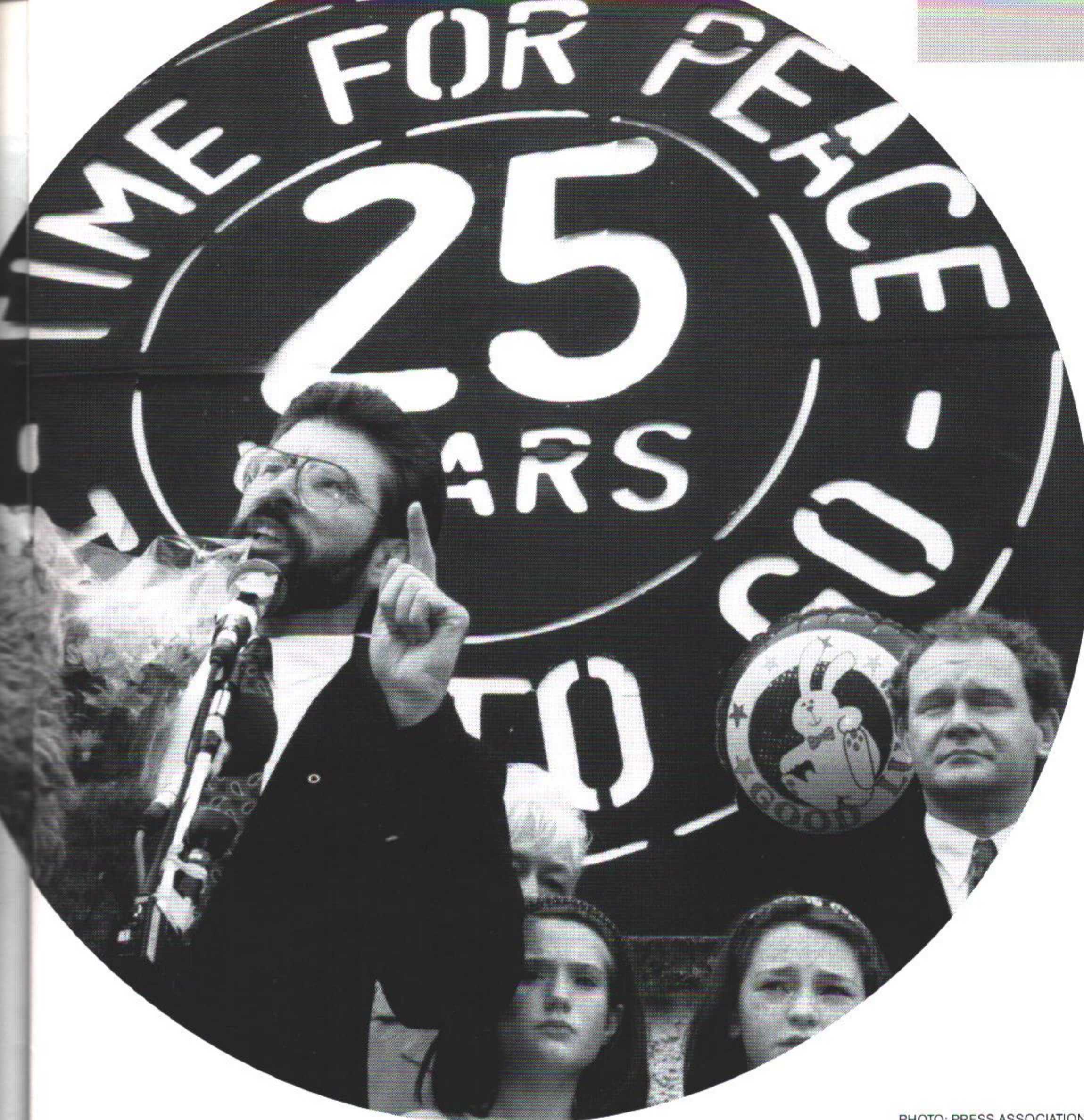


PHOTO: PRESS ASSOCIATION

Gerry Adams: no longer asking for an Irish republic, just 'parity of esteem'

surrendering arms disguises what is really taking place. There was a time when the republican movement called for unconditional and immediate British withdrawal from Ireland. Since the start of the 'peace process', however, the republicans have scaled down their claims with breathtaking rapidity.

Sinn Fein spokesmen now claim their right to a place at negotiations on the basis that they represent 12 per cent of the Northern electorate. It is a long way from claiming to represent the Irish nation as a whole to claiming to represent just 150 000 of its citizens. With this argument, Screaming Lord Sutch could probably make a bid for talks with a government minister. At times it seems that all the republicans want is official recognition of their existence. For Gerry Adams a handshake with Bill Clinton is considered a major triumph, while Martin McGuinness craves a handshake with a junior minister at Stormont.

In its desperation to enter talks with the British government, Sinn Fein has adopted the language of cultural identity. This is the jargon which advocates 'respect for cultural diversity'. Sinn Fein's reasoning appears to be that if it demonstrates its respect for the Unionist identity, then the British government is

more likely to respect it as a representative of the nationalist identity. But cultural identity has only meant anything in Ireland as an attack on republicanism, which was castigated for not respecting the traditions and heritage of Unionism by accepting the division of the country. Now that Sinn Fein has itself adopted this language, it is coming up with some mysterious proposals.

Nobody had much doubt as to the meaning of phrases such as 'Brits out' or 'national self-determination'. Either you were for it or against it. What Sinn Fein now stands for, you could neither be for nor against since it is difficult to ascertain its meaning. This is well illustrated by a contribution to the peace process debate, a 'Charter for justice and peace', written by leading Sinn Fein member Tom Hartley.

Charter fudge

It seems that like John Major's government, when Sinn Fein loses political direction it responds by issuing another charter. Hartley's charter is a detailed exposition of measures which should be taken to advance peace and reconciliation. There is much grandiose talk of covenants and transitional periods.

But what does it all mean? Take the first paragraph, on self-determination.

Self-determination was always the republicans' strong point. It meant majority rights on the island as a whole. The British assertion of the rights of a Unionist minority in the north-east meant denying the rights of the majority. With Hartley, however, the old language of self-determination is mixed up with, and made pretty meaningless by, the new language of cultural identity.

Second Coming

'The harmonious exercise of the right to self-determination', he says, 'must follow a period of national reconciliation (the 'transitional period')' (*An Phoblacht/Republican News*, 9 March 1995). But the right to self-determination only ever arose where it was in dispute. Its harmonious exercise would be almost impossible. As for the 'transitional period' of national reconciliation, that must by definition last forever, or at least until such time as harmony reigns supreme. Perhaps Tom Hartley is trying to prepare us for the Second Coming.

The crowning achievement of the charter is the final section on cultural rights. Declaring his commitment to 'cultural pluralism', Hartley stresses the need to promote local and national cultures. Even by the dubious standards of British multiculturalism, Ireland is a remarkably homogeneous country. The Irish are all nearly the same colour, speak the same language (English), and apart from the north-east share the same declining religious affiliation. This means cultural difference must be invented. 'Official documents', Hartley says of the new Ireland, 'will be made available in languages used by ethnic minorities in Ireland, such as Chinese'.

Unfair to Arabs

No doubt Hartley's virtuous initiative is a result of intensive lobbying of Sinn Fein by takeaway owners throughout the country. But why stop at the Chinese? Surely Ireland's Arab community will be offended if others are privileged, and will demand official documents in Arabic. Where will it all end? Perhaps it is just as well that the period of national reconciliation should last forever, since if Tom Hartley ever got into power, he would turn the Irish civil service into a Tower of Babel. In the meantime he could devote his talents to the cause of international reconciliation by lobbying the Chinese government to print their official documents in Irish.

Previous outbreaks of republican resistance ended in heroic defeat, but always with the pledge to try again in more auspicious circumstances. The final phase of the last 25 years is descending into low farce. It is a truly ►

◀ pitiful end to a once powerful movement, and a poor tribute to those who fought and gave their lives for Irish freedom.

For 200 years, the nationalist challenge has dominated Irish politics. Every political, religious and cultural organisation was organised either in support of it, or opposition to it. Now that it has collapsed, all those institutions are redundant. Everything is negotiable.

The Irish government has declared its willingness in the Framework Document to remove Articles 2 & 3 of the constitution which lay claim to the North. Since these articles were only ever a response to the republican claim to national leadership, the pretence of wanting a united Ireland can be quietly dropped.

The Unionists too are in disarray. The parties associated with the loyalist paramilitaries, the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party sense which way the wind is blowing and are ready to negotiate everything. The older generation of Unionists has lost all its bearings and seems to wish only for a return to the good old days of confrontation. The generation of Ian Paisley carries too much baggage from the past to adjust to the new reality.

Irish indifference

That Irish nationalism and Ulster Unionism are finished is certain. What will replace them is far less so. Whatever new political structures are worked out by the British and Irish governments, they cannot have the strength or durability of the institutions of the past. In fact the Framework Document is by its nature a futile exercise. Evolving cross-border bodies may lead to new administrative arrangements. But will anyone really care who sits on an all-Ireland committee for consumer affairs?

Durable political structures emerge from real struggles to decide the future of society, not from dialogues in universities and committee rooms. Nobody ever had to write a Framework Document for nationalist Ireland. The framework was created by a life-and-death struggle for power between the Irish and the British state. And because people had invested so much in the struggle, the institutions which did emerge won fierce allegiance on every side. Parity of esteem, cultural diversity and other vacuities might sustain the mild interest of academics, community workers and leading members of Sinn Fein, but will not inspire many others for very long. As long as the people of Ireland remain indifferent to their political future, such nonsense might pass for a real framework. But indifference will not last forever.

After the ceasefire

Kevin Kelly on what's changed for Belfast nationalists

Born and brought up in Belfast, two moments will always stand out in my mind. The first was 2am on 5 May 1981, when I was awoken by the sound of banging bin lids to be told that Bobby Sands, IRA volunteer and MP, had died on hunger-strike. The second was 11.30am on 31 August 1994, walking down Grafton Street in central Dublin, when I heard the news of the IRA ceasefire.

The struggle that I had always supported had ended with the British army and government still in control of the Six Counties. I was totally devastated. Yet when I got to a TV set, there were thousands of republicans celebrating, my friends and family included, and Gerry Adams holding carnations and champagne outside Connolly House, the Sinn Fein HQ in West Belfast.

Eight months on, what has changed for working class nationalist communities in the North? British soldiers off the streets in the cities, some border roads reopened, some exclusion orders lifted, the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein dropped. Not much to get excited about. In fact, if it had not been for the IRA campaign, the British can claim, none of these measures would have been imposed in the first place.

Pick up the Belfast nationalist paper, the *Irish News*, since the ceasefire and you would find no shortage of stories of continuing harassment by the security forces. The week before the release of the Framework Document on 22 February was typical enough. British troops launched punitive raids and searches in South Armagh. In West Belfast, the RUC raided pubs and social clubs, badly beating local people in the process. The RUC also arrested seven republicans in Derry and beat up a brother and sister in the main street of Dungannon for the crime of being, as the officers put it, 'Fenian shit'.

The only surprise in all this was perhaps that the RUC in Derry would display such open contempt for republicans engaged in the peace process, by arresting two Sinn Fein members who were delegates to the much-hyped Forum For Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin. But then the RUC recognises, like its masters in Whitehall, that there is not much Sinn Fein can do about it now that the republican movement has invested all its hopes in the peace process.

It would be wrong to think that nothing had changed. Alongside its old boot-boy tactics, the RUC is engaged in a massive charm offensive in a bid to worm its way back into republican areas where it has feared to tread for 25 years. They turn up in local shopping areas to distribute leaflets on crime prevention, or appear at schools on the Falls Road to act as lollipop men and tell children not to talk to strange men.

Few people in West Belfast have been taken in by these cheap ploys from the force that has shot, beaten and imprisoned many of their community. But nationalist expectations have been lowered.

Talk of British withdrawal is rarely heard in my native Andersonstown today. Instead, the new phrase on everyone's lips is 'parity of esteem'. In an ideal world my family, like other nationalists, would dearly love to see a British withdrawal. But in practice, the nationalist community has begun accommodating to British rule. The very demand for parity of esteem implies that the Northern state must be reformable after all—an idea that was anathema to republicans not so long ago.

People in West Belfast who rejoiced at the time of the ceasefire are now uncertain about the future. Deep down, all the people I have spoken to seem resigned to the fact that Britain is going nowhere—although none will say so out loud. My republican friends become angry when I suggest that the anti-imperialist struggle has been defeated, but their denials are half-hearted. There is a reluctance to call a spade a spade. After 25 years of struggle, that's not surprising.



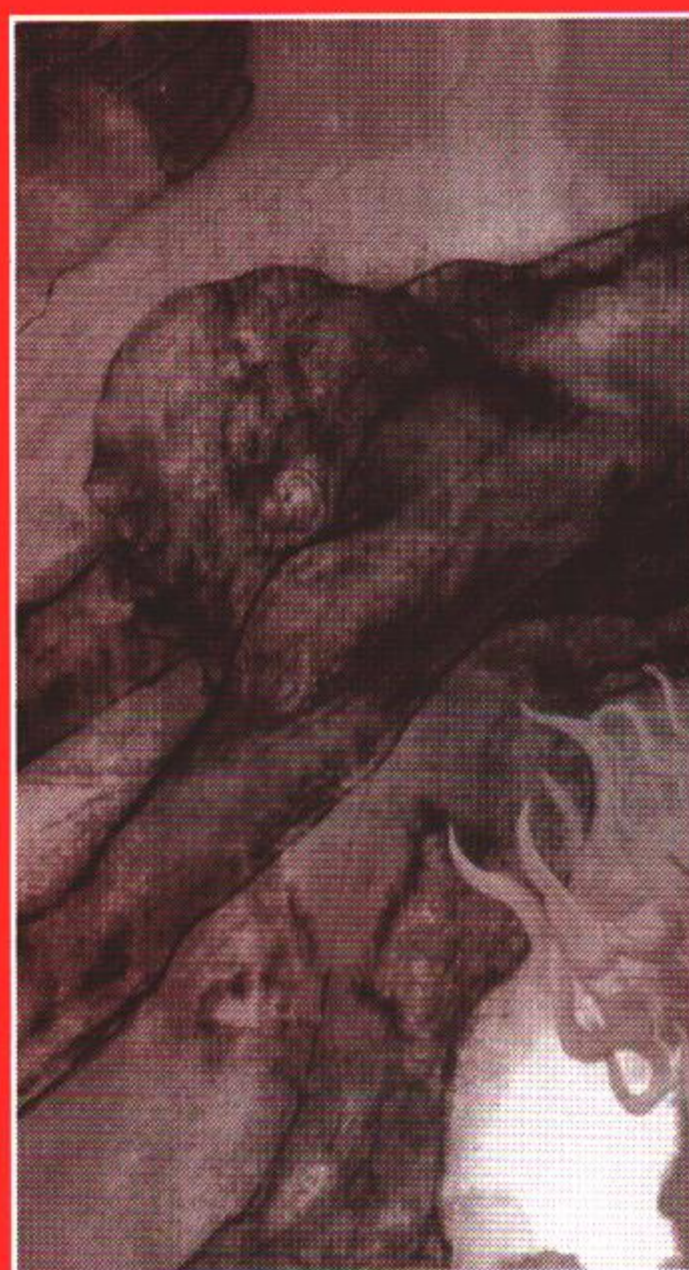
After the ceasefire, many republicans thought that a secret deal must have been brokered with the British, and a united Ireland was just around the corner. Some IRA leaders were pledging to renew the struggle if they did not see substantial progress towards Irish unity within three months. Eight months on, Irish unity is right off the agenda, yet there is no real criticism of the Sinn Fein leadership.

Many nationalists in West Belfast have virtually stopped discussing the future of the struggle. Increasingly, their time is taken up with the same problems and preoccupations that working class people in Liverpool or Newcastle would face. They were actively engaged in trying to shape the future. Now they have been made spectators to somebody else's peace process.

When Gerry Adams went to Washington to meet Bill Clinton, the *Guardian* announced that the Sinn Fein leader was achieving 'the ultimate goal'. I might be wrong, but I always thought the goal of Irish republicanism was something more than lunch with the leader of Western imperialism.

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- **Professor Frank Barnaby**, author of *Role and Control of Weapons in the 1990s*
- **Joan Hoey**, director of the London International Research Exchange and author of *Images of Japan*

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HIROSHIMA THE WEEK

Introduction to Marxism

Convenor: Mick Hume

Everyone is looking for 'the big idea' but Marxism is the only theory that aims to change the world. This course is for people who want to know how Marxism works.

Historical materialism • Scientific socialism • Class struggle and revolution
• The role of ideology • The party and the working class

Recommended reading

K Marx and F Engels, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1991

H Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* (Vol II: The politics of social classes, Chs 1-11), Monthly Review Press, 1978

F Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Fontana, 1969



Understanding Japan

Convenor: Daniel Nassim

Are the Japanese a race apart? This course looks at the formation of Japanese national identity, and explores the relationship between Western images of Japan and the Japanese perception of themselves.



Japan v the West • The Japanese: a race apart? • The cult of uniqueness
• Are the Japanese racist? • The Pacifist superpower

Recommended reading

I Buruma, *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, Jonathan Cape, 1991

I Ozawa, *Blueprint for a New Japan*, Kodansha, 1994

E Wilkinson, *Japan Versus the West*, Penguin, 1990

Capitalism at an impasse

Convenor: Phil Murphy

Does economic growth create more problems than benefits? This advanced economics course challenges the orthodoxies on global economic problems, environmental restraints and ageing populations.

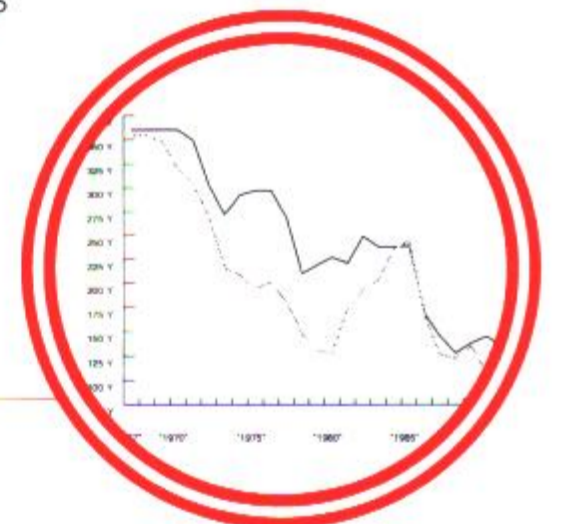
Problems of a global economy • The environmental constraint • Burdens of an ageing population
• What has happened to productive activity? • How capitalism tries to cope

Recommended reading

H Grossmann, *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalist System*, Pluto Press, 1992

P Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, Fontana, 1994

R Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for Twenty-First Century Capitalism*, Simon & Schuster, 1991



Genes and behaviour

Convenor: Helene Guldberg

Are we simply a product of our genes? With genetic theories back in vogue, this course aims to demystify the relationship between genetic make up and human behaviour.

Natural born killers? • Is variation all in the genes? • Sex and society • Biology as ideology
• Changing our genes, changing ourselves

Recommended reading

M Gribbin and J Gribbin, *Being Human: Putting People in an Evolutionary Perspective*, JM Dent, 1993

J Harris, *Wonderwoman and Superman*, Oxford University Press, 1992

LS Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*, Harvard University Press, 1978



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Modern militarism

Convenors: Kirsten Cale and James Wood

• War crimes: from Nuremberg to Bosnia • The rise of air power • Spies and superhighways • Narco-terrorists and nuclear suitcases • What is genocide?

Morning Courses

The question of fundamentalism

Convenors: Adam Eastman and Tracey Brown

Many see fundamentalism as the greatest challenge to Western values. Are mad mullahs and Christian evangelists a threat? This course separates the fiction from the facts.

The limits of tolerance • What makes Islam fundamentalist? • Fundamentalism on the home front
• The revenge of history • Cultural wars: reworking the myth

Recommended reading

G Keppel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, Polity Press, 1994

BB Lawrence, *Defenders of God: Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*, IB Taurus, 1990

MC Moen, *The Transformation of the Christian Right*, University of Alabama Press, 1992

The sociology of contemporary capitalism

Convenor: Frank Füredi

This advanced course will examine and question contemporary theories of capitalist society, in order to explore the social dynamics which give rise to them.

Market and society • Conceptualising change • Social structures • Culture and society • The new etiquette of capitalism

Recommended reading

G Mulgan, *Politics in an Anti-Political Age*, Polity, 1994

C Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, WW Norton & Co, 1995

A Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, Blackwell 1994

Myths of Confucian capitalism

Convenors: Sheila Phillips and Lynn Rawley

The Far East economic miracle is supposed to be the product of an Oriental work ethic, free trade and hands-off government. This course looks behind the myths of Confucian capitalism.

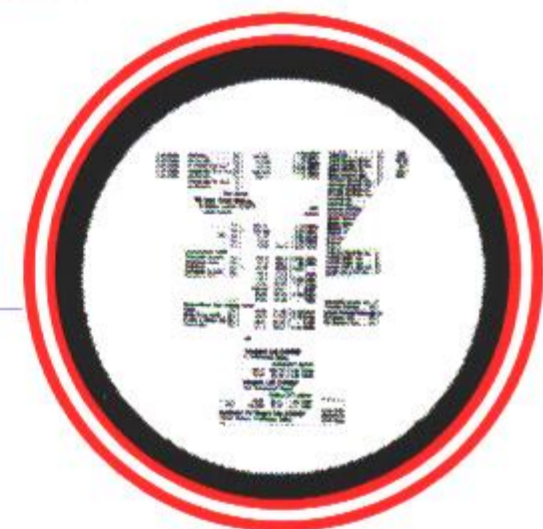
The miracle of the East • Hard work • Free trade • Minimal government • The Confucian model

Recommended reading

JC Abegglen, *Sea Change: Pacific Asia as the New World Industrial Centre*, The Free Press, 1994

B Emmott, *The Sun Also Sets*, Simon & Schuster, 1989

C Hampden-Turner, and F Trompenaars, *The Seven Cultures of Capitalism*, Piattkus, 1993



In search of belief

Convenor: Suke Wolton

This course is an investigation of anti-humanism in modern thought. While rejecting religious or natural theories, new postmodernist influenced ideas blame human consciousness for the problems of the age.

Modern morality • Alienation • The new absolutes • Anti-humanism • The secular religion

Recommended reading

K Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', in *Early Writings*, Penguin

F Engels and K Marx, *The End of Classical German Philosophy and Theses on Feuerbach*, Foreign Languages Press, 1975

F Jakubowski, *Ideology and Superstructure in Historical Materialism*, Pluto Press, 1990



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Reinventing humanism

Convenor: Alan Harding

• The measure of man • The great leap forward • The modern man • The sleep of reason • A Brave New World?

HIROSHIMA THE WEEK

The future of international relations

Convenor: Norman Lewis

Are nation states finished? What will be the balance of power in the twenty-first century? The course will focus on globalisation theories and their claim that sovereign statehood will become unviable.

Sovereignty and capitalism • Globalisation and the real world • Legitimacy crises—what's new?
• 'Non-governmental' states • The new balance of power

Recommended reading

F Halliday, *Rethinking International Relations*, Macmillan, 1994

P Dicken, *Global Shift: The Internationalisation of Economic Activity*, 1992

EJ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Cambridge University Press, 1994

The new authoritarianism

Convenor: Rob Knight

Are we all at risk? This course investigates why we live in an anxious age and how the state has responded to the demand for order.

What is the new authoritarianism? • The question of rights • The surveillance society
• A case study in new authoritarianism • An at-risk society?

Recommended reading

U Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage, 1992

S Fish, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech, and It's a Good Thing Too*, Oxford University Press, 1994

M Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage, 1979

The feminisation of society

Convenor: Ellie Lee

Family breakdown is in the news. Is there a new women's agenda? This advanced course considers changing attitudes towards women and the family.

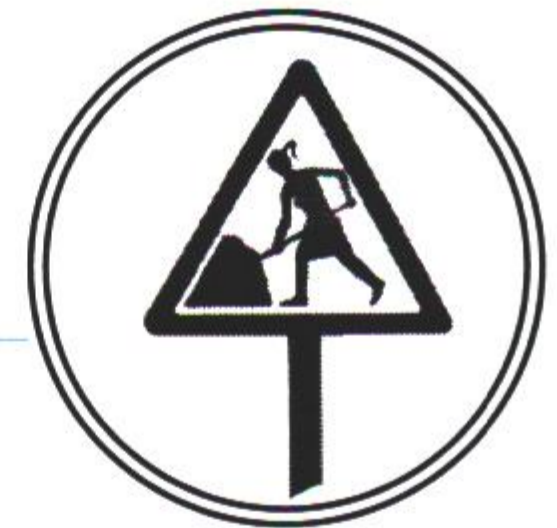
Is the family changing? • State intervention and the family • Women and work • Gender roles
• What happened to 'Victorian Values'?

Recommended reading

M Anderson et al, *The Social and Political Economy of the Household*, OUP, 1994

J Davies et al, *The Family: Is It Just Another Lifestyle Choice?*, IEA, 1993

L Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, Virago, 1990



Politics and the state

Convenor: James Heartfield

This course examines how the state is being reorganised to overcome disenchantment with politics and the absence of mass consent.

Narrowing the public sphere • Rights and power • Voluntarism and civil society
• The myth of social justice • Risk society and the custodial state

Recommended reading

Social Justice, Report of the Social Justice Commission, Vintage, 1994

P Whiteley et al, *True Blues: The Politics of Conservative Party Membership*, OUP, 1994

M Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, HarperCollins, 1995



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The media: who stole the news?

Convenor: Joan Hoey

• Who stole the news? • The laptop bombardiers • Images of Japan • History as news • Who's afraid of TV? •

Afternoon Courses

Youth and change Convenor: Deborah Thompson

Today's youth are called the 'slacker generation'. Is Generation Y conformist? This course asks why the image of teenage apathy is seen as a problem, and assesses the claims of rave and protest movements to represent nineties youth.

Youth at the end of history ● Youth and social decay ● Education: engineering conformity
● Rave and beyond: anatomy of loss ● Causes without rebels

Recommended reading

- J Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*, Athlone Press, 1990
K Keniston, *Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth*, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968
S Redhead (ed), *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*, Avebury, 1993



The medicalisation of society

Convenor: Michael Fitzpatrick

The spectre of death haunts society. While effective medical care is rationed, medicine has become a major regulator of behaviour with everybody urged to modify their lifestyle to avoid disease.



Illness as metaphor ● Prevention and cure ● The cult of health promotion
● Non-alternative medicine ● The marketing of healthcare

Recommended reading

- M Lockwood, *Moral Dilemmas in Modern Medicine*, Oxford University Press, 1985
P Skrabanek, *The Death of Humane Medicine and the Rise of Coercive Healthism*, Social Affairs Unit, 1994
S Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor/Aids and Its Metaphors*, Penguin, 1991

The politics of limits

Convenor: John Gillott

Are there natural limits to human ambitions, or are we just victims of limited vision? This course will examine the politics of restraint through a critique of concerns about the environment, development, and the effects of globalisation.

An age of limits or abundance? ● Environmental problems—real and imagined ● Left, right, limited visions
● The 'sustainable development' fraud ● Fighting the politics of limits

Recommended reading

- T Benton, *Natural Relations*, Verso, 1993
L Brown and H Kane, *Full House: Reassessing the Earth's Population Carrying Capacity*, Earthscan, 1995
A Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, Polity Press, 1994

The new ideology of imperialism

Convenor: Helen Simons

Relations between North and South are supposed to be governed by a new humanitarianism. But is the promotion of empowerment and democracy as imperialist as its precursor? This course will expose the moral premises of the New World Order.

Imperialism today ● The international bodies ● The NGO explosion ● The gender issue ● The moral crusade

Recommended reading

- Our Global Neighbourhood*, The Report of the Commission on Global Governance, Oxford University Press, 1995
F Fűredi, *The New Ideology of Imperialism*, Pluto Press, 1994
I Smillie and H Helmich, *Non-Governmental Organisations and Governments: Stakeholders for Development*, OECD (Paris) 1994

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Empowering Africa

Convenor: Barry Crawford

● The return of pan-Africanism? ● Challenging structural adjustment ● Rwanda: a case study of NGOs ● Feminisation of African politics ● Media images of Africa

Supporting the rights of indigenous peoples in Latin America is a fashionable cause of our time. But, as Ben Brack reports, the new indigenism is more a product of the modern financial centres of the West than of any ancient Indian cultures

This year marks the start of the United Nations' Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples. This follows the UN Year of Indigenous Peoples in 1993. From academics and radicals to the World Bank and the World Council of Churches, all seem to agree that we are witnessing the 'Return of the Indian' in Latin America.

The vogue of Indian ethnicity is as powerful in Camden as it is in Caracas. First we had Sting hanging out with the Kayapo Indians of Brazil and John Boorman's and Roland Joffe's films about noble natives, *Emerald Forest* and *The Mission*, then Anita Roddick's Body Shop commercials about the ancient wisdom of Andean women. Now events as diverse as the Zapatista uprising in southern Mexico, the conservationist campaign in the rainforests of the Amazon, or the debate around the quincentenary of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas are being interpreted in the light of a new indigenism.

For some, the return of the Indian marks a new, more pluralistic way of living that is more in tune with our environment. For others, the emergence of Indianist movements marks a return to a glorious past, a millenarian project of epic dimensions. As journalist Philip Werne puts it in publicity for his forthcoming book on the subject, *The First Americans*, 'The wheel has turned full circle, just as the Mayas, Aztecs and Incas said it would. After 500 years, the indigenous peoples are on the way back.'

For radical academics and activists, the traditions of the 'lost civilisations' of Latin America are returning as a guide for the future. ►

Exploiting the Indians



◀ Today's 'indigenists' see in radical Indianism an alternative to traditional state structures in Latin America. The nation state, they argue, was a false, alien imposition on the true 'ethnic' culture and identity of the region, and as such bound to fail.

Radical indigenism regards its challenge to the nation states of Latin America in a positive light, proposing the formation of autonomous regions based on ethnicity. Instead of modernisation and the incorporation of Indians into the national political system, the resurrection of forms of tribal government is proposed. The radical anthropologist Stefano Varese argues that 'the new realities of indigenous peoples suggest that their politics cannot be understood within the old spatial, historical and structural framework of the nation state' (*NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol25 No3, December 1991, p17).

What is being argued is that the modern institutions of the nation state are not suitable for the Indians, or indeed for Latin America as a whole. For commentators such as Phillip Werne, the Latin American nation states were doomed from the start. This is not because of their economic or political domination by the USA, or even because of the nature of the countries' social systems, but because of the simple existence of the Indian culture. 'The weakness and dependency of nation states in Latin America', he writes, 'contrasts starkly with the strength and self-sufficiency of indigenous culture....the truth about nation states [is] they never were'.

In fact, the counterposition of an underlying indigenism to the artificial nation state is mistaken. Indian ethnicity, far from being of ancient origin, is an entirely modern creation—and furthermore, a creation of Latin American nationalism.

In the early twentieth century, the emerging countries of the region rediscovered Latin America's pre-Columbian traditions in an attempt to secure a national identity. Initially local elites had favoured pro-Western ideologies. But these were challenged around the turn of the century as Latin America faced an ever more dominant and expansionist neighbour in 'El Norte': the USA. Mexico had lost over half its national territory to the USA by 1848 and Nicaragua was invaded in 1855. This was followed by Spain's defeat at the hands of the USA in 1898, which was traumatic for the Hispanic leaders of Latin America. By 1902 Cuba had become a US protectorate; Panama was to follow in 1904.

The USA based its expansion on claims of racial superiority, and refused to admit the Latin Americans into its club of white, civilised



PHOTOS: JOE WOODLEY

nations, despite the historical pretensions of the region's *criollo* (of Spanish descent) elite. In response, Latin Americans sought to shore up their nations' claim to sovereignty by seeking an authentic identity to counter the claims of *el gringo*. The explosion of archaeology, anthropology, plastic arts and politics that followed looked for its authenticity to the millenarian civilisations of the Aztecs, Mayas and Incas, whose palaces and temples still decorated the Latin American countryside. An Indian heritage was reinvented to serve the need of emerging

Indian ethnicity, far from being of ancient origin, is an entirely modern creation—and furthermore, a creation of Latin American nationalism

mass societies such as Mexico. Statues of Aztec 'war heroes' who had died resisting the Spanish appeared in the main avenues of Mexico City, and open racism was replaced by the official cult of the *mestizo* (someone of mixed race origin).

The pioneering Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio wrote in 1916 that it was time for Mexico's rulers to create a 'new nation of blended bronze and iron' from the descendants of the Spanish and the Indians. This new race would be the bearer of 'the national culture of the future'. His book was called, appropriately, *Forging the Nation*.

From the Mexican muralist painters to the Peruvian Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui and the continental nationalists of APRA (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance), indigenism was used to forge a sense of national identity in Latin America. It was also a banner of opposition to the USA. Indigenism gave shape to the idea of progress, as Indian peasants were for the first time incorporated into national society through unionisation and literacy campaigns. In Mexico the radical regime of Lázaro Cárdenas mobilised support with a mixture of indigenism and the nationalisation of US oil fields in 1938.

Just as the original 'indigenism' of the 1920s was the product of contemporary political developments, so today's vogue of Indian ethnicity arises out of the contemporary relationship between Latin America and the USA. A closer examination of radical Indianism today suggests that the issue is just as artificial as it used to be—except this time it is being used by the USA, big corporations and international institutions to undermine the sovereignty of the Latin American nation states.

The USA is now increasingly managing its relationship with Latin America through radical non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and interest groups. By claiming a relationship with minorities and 'grassroots' organisations, the USA and other Western powers are able to present their intervention in Latin America with a whole new face. In the past, outside interference in the affairs of Latin American countries was clearly seen as an infringement of national rights. Now such interference, usually under the auspices of an NGO, can be presented as supporting the rights of indigenous minorities.

Instead of the oppressor of the Latin American peoples, the USA can pose as the liberator of the Indians. Over the past 20 years, the issue of Indian ethnicity has become increasingly mainstream, moving from a fringe concern of a few anthropologists to an issue which big international institutions have made their own.

The new indigenism did not develop from the initiatives of native peoples themselves, but under the auspices of radical anthropologists and organisations such as Cultural Survival, Oxfam, the Inter-American Foundation and the World Council of Churches, which sponsored the landmark Barbados conference in 1971. Their approach was soon taken on board by mainstream Western organisations. The United Nations has been organising conferences on indigenous peoples since 1977. In that year a draft Declaration of Principles for the Defence of the Indigenous Nations and Peoples of the Western Hemisphere appeared and 12 October (Columbus Day) was declared International Day of Solidarity and Mourning with Indigenous Peoples of the Americas.

The UN Draft Declaration emphasised the importance of Indian 'self-determination'. In practice, however, this has meant using the competing claims of ethnic groups to undermine the national authority and independence of Latin American states. The UN has sought to establish a basis in international law for intervention in the affairs of the Latin American states around the Indian question. In 1982, a Working Group on Indigenous Peoples was established by the UN Commission on Human Rights. This quickly became a focal point for the lobbying efforts of Indian groups and NGOs.

In the 1980s the Indian cause was manipulated by organisations linked to the US Central Intelligence Agency, such as the Washington-based Indian Law Resource Centre. Indigenism was used as a cover for US intervention in Nicaragua. CIA operatives backed the Miskito Indians on the Atlantic coast against the radical Sandinista regime. Indian groups funded by the USA have repeatedly lobbied for the inclusion of a clause in the UN declaration which would explicitly permit the intervention of 'third nations' in disputes between Indians and national states—in effect a license for the USA to intervene wherever it can find a group of Indians to support it.

Indigenism has been quickly taken on board by such unlikely institutions as the World Bank. The financiers have used the issue of indigenous rights to assert their authority over Latin American governments. In 1991 the Bank's policy statement asserted the need for Bank projects to respect the 'dignity, human rights, and cultural

uniqueness' of indigenous peoples, and 'to work closely with indigenous NGOs'. The US Agency for International Development and the Inter-American Development Bank have made loans and aid to Latin American countries like Peru and Bolivia conditional upon them meeting the bankers' demands on indigenous rights. Despite generally declining levels of aid to Latin America, the G7 group of rich nations has recently launched a pilot scheme for environmental protection with an emphasis on indigenous rights, involving the World Bank, the European Union and Brazil.

The UN has sought to establish a basis in international law for intervention in the affairs of the Latin American states around the Indian question

Organisations such as the UN and the World Bank, which were widely hated in Latin America in the 1980s for their association with the debt crisis, US and British military interventions and austerity plans, are now returning in a new guise. Dressed up in ethnic clothes, Western organisations find it easier to put Latin American states on the defensive. In reality, it is not indigenous peoples that are being empowered, but Western-run institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations that have a new excuse to dictate domestic policy to Latin American nations.

Ecology has been a key issue in the making of the 'Return of the Indian'. At the Rio conference on the environment in 1992, the Kari-Oca declaration, 'inspired by indigenous philosophy' was presented to the delegates. The writer of the charter, indigenous leader and professional pilot Marcos Terena, introduced it by asserting that 'the future of the Indians will be the future of the white man and will be the future of Mother Earth. We believe in this and we want the great leaders of the Earth such as the United Nations and the European Community to help us to continue to protect nature and guarantee a common future'.

As the big Rio conference and the recent global warming summit demonstrated, the USA and other Western nations are increasingly using the environmental issue as a stick to beat developing countries like Brazil into cutting production. The USA, the UN, the oil companies and other powerful interests have been happy to use Indian groups such as the Kayapo to legitimise their interference in Latin America's affairs.

In circumstances where being an Indian can be a ticket to Western patronage, it is not surprising to find more and more 'indigenous' groups emerging and more and more people considering themselves 'indigenous'. Ethnicity has become a tool to be used both by the West and by local groups scrambling for resources. Claiming sympathy and resources on the basis of 'cultural identity', Latin Americans are competing with each other for international favours. In place of the revolutionary struggles and solidarity of the recent past, many different interest groups are now striving to demonstrate their historic 'uniqueness' to the Western institutions. Modern indigenism is much more a product of the modern financial centres of New York, Bonn or Tokyo than of ancient history or culture.

An editorial in the US journal *NACLA Report on the Americas* stated that 'visions of an alternative society rooted in the pre-Columbian past may prove more appropriate today than the nineteenth-century notions of statehood and modernity which still mesmerise most of us' (December 1991). Such an intellectual assault on the idea of modern Latin American statehood goes down well in Washington, at a time when the USA is increasingly intervening in the region's affairs—dictating political events from Haiti and Guatemala to Brazil and Panama, and effectively retaking control of Mexico's oil industry as part of a debt repayment package. And when Western financiers can offer little but austerity and brutal exploitation to Latin Americans, the indigenist case for a 'non-materialist, non-instrumental' culture is a useful way to justify economic stagnation and poverty.

The strategy of radical indigenism offers little to a Brazilian peasant suffering the effects of a fall in world commodity prices or to a factory worker in Buenos Aires. For Indian-based groups trying to win support for their fight against the government, such as the Zapatistas in Mexico, a focus on ethnic difference has proved at best irrelevant and an often dangerous distraction. The narrow appeal to support a bogus indigenism can only obscure the real causes of Latin America's problems in its wider relations with the powerful USA, and assure that people are armed with nothing better than a begging bowl when they come up against US and Western institutions.

As for the fashionable academics and writers who believe in the coming of a 'pachakuti, the balance upheaval, that legends and oral history have kept alive for centuries', it might be funny if it weren't so tragic. ●

Ben Brack is coordinator of the Campaign Against Militarism's Latin America Workgroup

Why shouldn't students have sex with older tutors if they want to, asks Jennie Bristow?

University lecherers

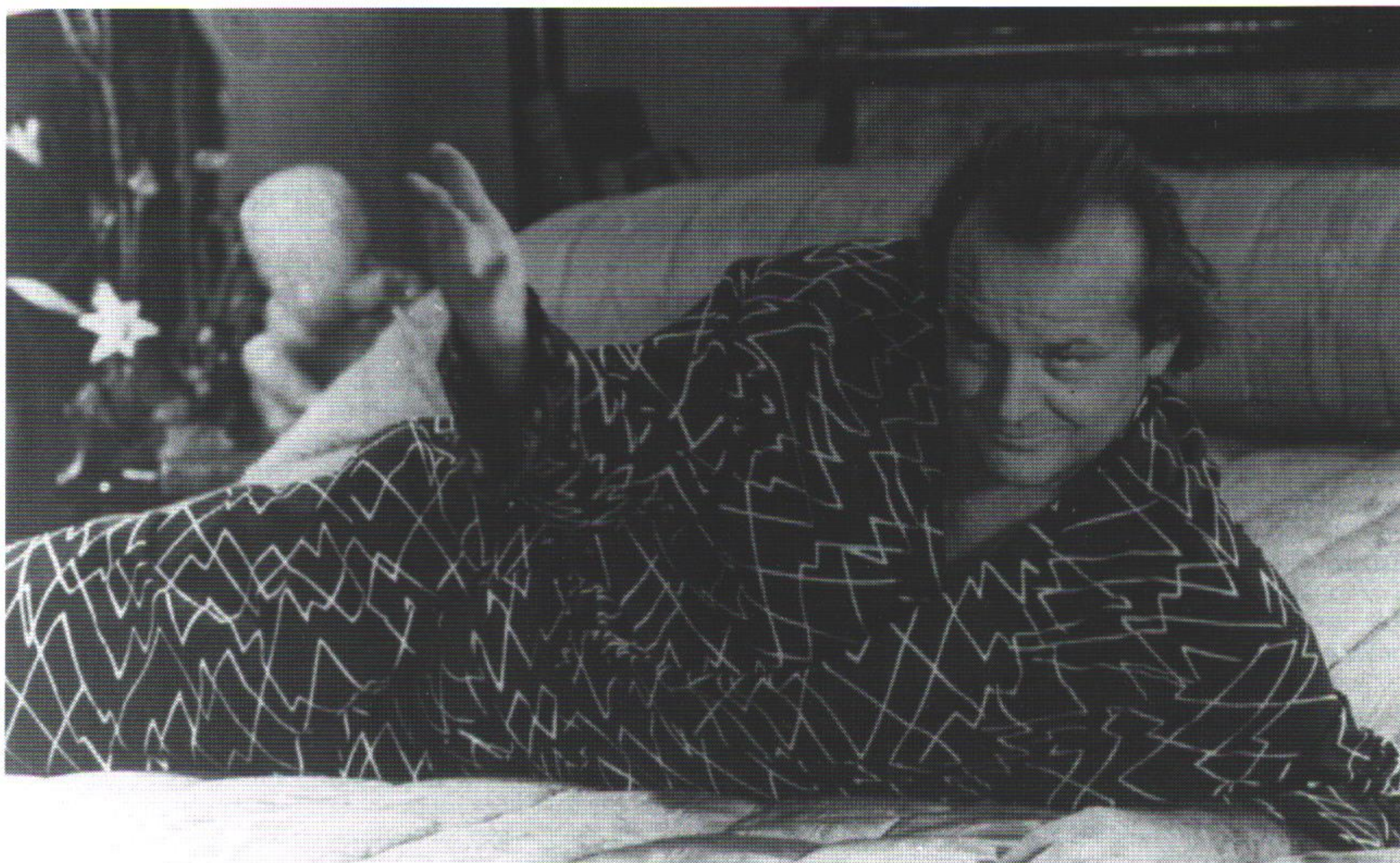
They target students who are vulnerable, or simply for their looks and home in on them.' Sounds scary, like something out of one of those campus slasher movies. Except that Tony Jeffs, author of a new report on the harassment of female students in British universities, is not talking about a psychopath. The type of predator he describes as 'a male in his thirties working in the art, sociology or linguistics department [who] identifies his target on the first day of term and offers her secret meetings outside lectures' is none other than your average lecturer, out for a bit of nookie with his nubile young tutees.

A Very Private Affair: Sexual Exploitation in Higher Education, by Tony Jeffs and Pamela Carter, is a detailed study of teacher/student relationships. It concludes that sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers is rife, and nothing is being done about it because college authorities are reluctant to discipline academic staff. The solution, say the authors, is to impose more restrictions on relationships. As Jeffs told the *Times*, 'there has to be a boundary between teacher and student'.

The notion that female students are at risk from male lecturers has received plenty of recent airings in the women's

media. All universities are producing policy on sexual harassment and creating new disciplinary bodies to deal with it. The Women's Committee of the Association of University Teachers (AUT) has put the seal of authority on the discussion by producing a code of conduct governing staff/student relationships.

The AUT code rules that 'in the event of involvement in a relationship with a student, particularly when it is a romantic or sexual one, the member of staff is encouraged to declare it to an appropriate superior or colleague, or to a third party designated by the university for the purpose after



consultation with AUT'. The code has been adopted by a number of universities, despite being met with widespread incredulity among the female students it is supposed to protect. 'The only thing that worried me after I slept with a lecturer', one told me, 'was that he would brag about it in the senior common room. The idea of him having to report to someone else is really incredible'.

The view of the AUT appears to be that the imbalance of power between a tutor and his student is so great that even entering into a relationship constitutes harassment. For the AUT officials, 'the basic premise is that a student is unlikely to consent voluntarily to a relationship with a member of staff, given the disparity of power and authority' (quoted in *Cosmopolitan*, October 1994). In other words, even if you say yes, it means no.

In loco parentis

Who are they trying to kid? Students and lecturers have been having relationships for as long as there have been books, often at the instigation of the student. Older men can be very sexy, particularly when compared with some of the younger specimens on offer at university. A female colleague who went to university in the seventies admits that her friends used to vie to see how many lecturers they could bed. Nobody thought anything of it. 'Hearts got broken and people got seriously pissed off with each other but that's life. They assumed we were adults and we assumed we were adults and got on with life.'

The assumption that university students are not capable of negotiating relationships for themselves is at the heart of the fashionable concern with harassment by lecturers. The AUT code clearly implies that, while students may be legally adults, they are still children when it comes to sex, easily dazzled by older men and incapable of making rational decisions. Lecturers are effectively placed *in loco parentis* over adults in their twenties.

The prevalent view that female students must be vulnerable little girls fits into a broader climate where young women are treated as feeble-minded, indecisive and in need of protection from sexual predators. This does women students a disservice, reducing them to children who must be chaperoned, but it also has horrendous implications for university staff. Already the restructuring of higher education has undermined academic job security. Now the extension of the definition of 'moral turpitude' to cover staff's personal lives becomes another way for the college authorities indirectly to monitor lecturers' standards and behaviour. Flirting with a student in a bar in the evening is no longer considered to be outside working hours; it is as open to scrutiny as essay grades.

Even those who accept that there are problems with the new codes of conduct will often concede that staff/student relationships are inherently 'exploitative', since they are based on an unequal balance of power. But that argument could be used to prevent sexual relationships in all manner of situations.

The structure of society means that in most relationships men are in the dominant position. If a relationship develops between colleagues at work, it is most likely that the man will be the manager with the power of hiring and firing. Despite all the publicity given to the film *Disclosure*, there are few relationships where a woman can dictate sexual demands as a consequence of her superior work status. Every woman who has had a relationship with a colleague at work knows that she is taking a risk and that things could turn unpleasant if/when they split up.

Sad academics

Even outside of work, the inequalities between men and women influence sexual relationships. The simple fact that men's earning capacity is greater than most women's, and that women are assumed to be responsible for the home and family, introduces an imbalance of power between the sheets. So are we to ban sex altogether on the grounds that it's exploitative?

Relationships between lecturers and students can be complicated. Lecturers can use their positions to flatter and coax the naive, and wily students can work the egos of sad academics. However, the majority of relationships between students and lecturers, like the majority of relationships between women and men, are probably quite good. As with any relationship, it is up to each partner to negotiate where they stand, and not let themselves be walked over. There is no evidence to suggest that we are less capable of doing that for ourselves than our mothers were in the 1960s. ●

Sexual survivors

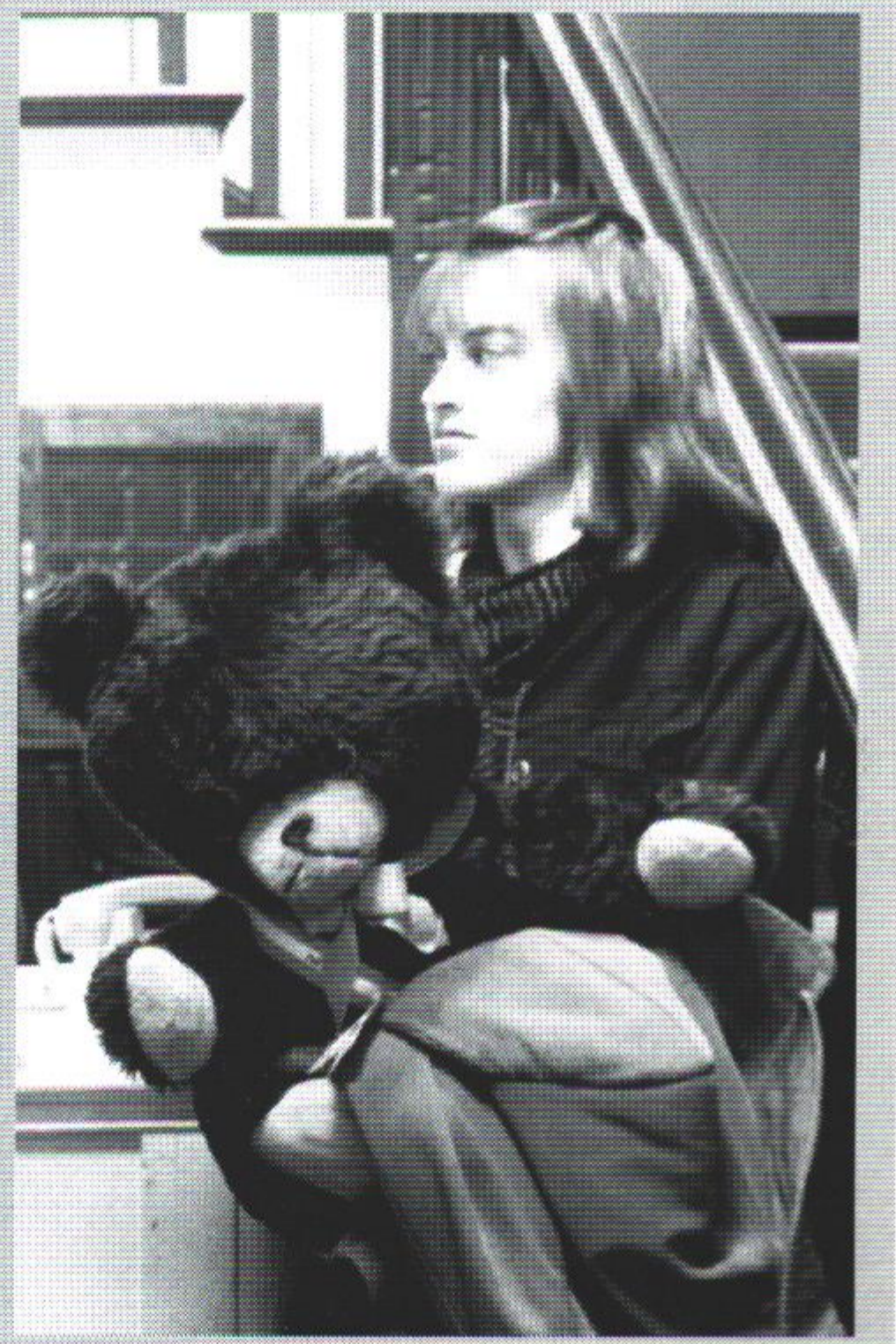
'There was one guy at college, a law lecturer and he used to try it on with anyone. But he was a joke. I don't think any of us could have stood the humiliation of being seen out with him. Maybe there were some girls who thought that going with him would be a way to boost their marks but, honestly, you would have to be really desperate. It's not the case that students are prepared to shag just anyone despite what you read in the *Sun*.'

'He'd got a reputation for sleeping around and I was curious. I've always gone for older guys. I knew there wouldn't be any relationship with a capital R. We had a really wild night. I was a bit intimidated at first because he was a lot more sophisticated than me—but I learned a lot.'

'He made a pass at me when he was giving me a lift home. It was disgusting, I couldn't

believe he would even think I could fancy him. That's the thing about some of these lecturers. They think they are so great, they don't realise that when they come on like that they are just seen as pathetic.'

'We had the most crazy affair. I knew he was seeing someone else who wasn't at the university but I was determined he was going to fall for me. Looking back I can't believe the risks we took—like making love on his office floor in the afternoon. The only effect it had on my studies was that I deliberately didn't take a course he was teaching. I thought that might be too complicated. I can't think of anything that was a problem—he was pretty young for his age and I suppose I was old for mine. The only person who was a bit freaked was my mother who thought I was bound to get hurt. But that was 10 years ago and we're still together.'



Out with the

Gay activist Peter Tatchell sounds like a New Age vicar, says Peter Ray

Outing has been in the news again after gay activist Peter Tatchell wrote to Church of England bishops and 20 MPs threatening to expose them as closet homosexuals. Tatchell accused the individuals he threatened of being hypocrites: 'gay homophobes' who had made anti-gay statements or refused to support equal rights legislation (such as last year's proposed equalisation of the age of consent) while actively enjoying a homosexual lifestyle themselves. Tatchell's tactics forced the Bishop of London to admit that his sexuality is 'ambiguous'.

The response from politicians and the media was ferocious, denouncing Tatchell as, among other things, a blackmailer, intimidator, thug, terrorist, McCarthyite, lefty, fascist, and Australian-born draft-dodger. They insisted that the right to privacy of closeted homosexuals should be respected.

Many gay commentators also objected to Tatchell's tactics. Some pointed out that outing, since it relies for its effect on the shock of exposing the 'shameful secret' of someone's homosexuality, must depend upon anti-gay prejudice for its success. After all, it was right-wing politicians and tabloids which 'outed' Peter Tatchell himself, when he stood as the Labour candidate in the Bermondsey by-election in 1983, and they were not fighting for gay rights. Gay Labour MP Chris Smith argued that outing trivialises the issue of gay equality, by focusing attention on the sexuality of a few in high places rather than the discriminatory policies pursued by the authorities as a whole.

Tatchell's gay critics are not wrong, but they miss the real importance of the furore over outing. The row was not really about gay rights at all, but about the way that traditional morality has fallen apart. In the past, a few letters from such an isolated individual as Peter Tatchell would not have become the focus of national controversy. The only reason that Tatchell's attacks provoked such a reaction was because they touched the raw nerve of the establishment's own moral malaise. The ferocious attacks on Tatchell reveal only that the elite is on the defensive.

'Who is really acting immorally?', asked Tatchell rhetorically, 'Those who are truthful about homosexuality, hypocrisy and homophobia in the church? Or those protecting closeted gay bishops who support homophobic policies?' (*Independent*, 15 March 1995). These are questions that the establishment finds hard to answer. The charge of hypocrisy is now commonplace because there is a full-blown moral crisis afflicting our ruling elite. These days none of Britain's traditional authorities seems able to offer a convincing sense of what is right and what is wrong.

Empty churches

In the past institutions like the Church of England, the monarchy, or the Tory Party preached humility, duty and respectability to the nation. Today the Church of England is bereft of any sure idea of what it stands for. Desperate to fill its empty churches, it is prepared to sacrifice any principle. Already it has conceded on women priests and gay love. Holding back on gay priests will not be easy. The public admission by the third-highest ranking bishop that his sexuality is 'ambiguous' may be the last straw. The royal family, too, is a poor example of family values, being for the most part separated or divorced.

In 1993 John Major launched his attempt to restore traditional values through a 'Back to basics' campaign. Within weeks it was back to the drawing board as government ministers were caught with their trousers down or worse. Today top Tories are so uncertain of their hold on public decency that it only takes a whisper of a minor indiscretion before an MP has to resign his government post.

The old religious sexual values of monogamous heterosexual marriage for life have been fatally compromised. The establishment is desperately searching around for a replacement. Labour leader Tony Blair explained the elite's position in a recent lecture: 'People need rules which we all stand by, fixed points of agreement which impose order over chaos' (*Spectator*, 25 March 1995). But what kind of rules will enjoy respect when the old ones are discredited?

This is where outing comes in. Despite its outrageous reputation, outing is in tune with today's search for moral certainty. The old priests and their

supporters may not like outing, but they are too compromised to put up a convincing response. It is the new priesthood represented by Peter Tatchell, not them, that is in the grain of contemporary moralising.

Outing has always been about establishing a sense of moral superiority, of right and wrong. The new moralists expose the immorality and degradation of the closeted 'gay homophobe'. The reverend Tatchell explained two tenets of his new morality in his letter to the 20 MPs: 'You have a duty to yourself for your peace of mind, as well as a moral obligation to other lesbian and gay men to be open about your sexuality.' (Quoted in the *Observer*, 19 March 1995)

In the first place Tatchell suggests that coming out is for the MPs' own good, a duty to themselves. This idea is at the heart of the secular moralising of the new priesthood—the do-gooding counsellors and therapists who are always on hand to give a helping hand to someone who needs to 'come to terms with' and 'accept' himself. It is the latter-day equivalent of the old priesthood's demand that you must purge your soul of sin: and, like those priests, Peter Tatchell requires a confession.

Healthy living

The idea that positively identifying with your sexuality is good for you is now almost common sense, as *Guardian* columnist Suzanne Moore put it: 'Most of us believe that some level of acceptance about what we are is healthier than denying it.' 'Healthy living' has always been the moralists' rallying call. In the bad old days young men were seriously warned by medical 'experts' that masturbating would make them go blind. Today we are told that failure or inability publicly to affirm our sexual desires will make us depressed or suicidal.

In fact for most homosexuals it is the probable consequences of coming out, or, worse, being outed, that they do not want. But even if it is true that openness is best, why does anyone need a self-appointed activist to tell them how to run their lives? Peter Tatchell's patronising view that the way he lives his life is an example to everyone else is typical of the priest's low opinion of other people.

old

The second moral principle which Tatchell demands of the MPs and bishops is that as homosexuals they recognise their obligation to something called the gay community. This fits with the wider calls for people to exercise self-discipline and embrace the duty they owe to others. According to the new moralists, sexuality is not a matter of individual choice, but involves a binding set of obligations to a community they belong to by virtue of their sexual desires, regardless of what the individual may feel about it. It is interesting that nobody ever questions where this community is to be found. If they did, they might discover that all it amounts to is the self-help groups, quangos and cafes frequented by gays like Peter Tatchell.

Duty to God

Here again the religious parallel is compelling. Duty to the gay community might sound very different from the duty to family and nation demanded by traditional moralists, but its consequences are familiar. Duty is all about doing what you are told is right instead of what you want.

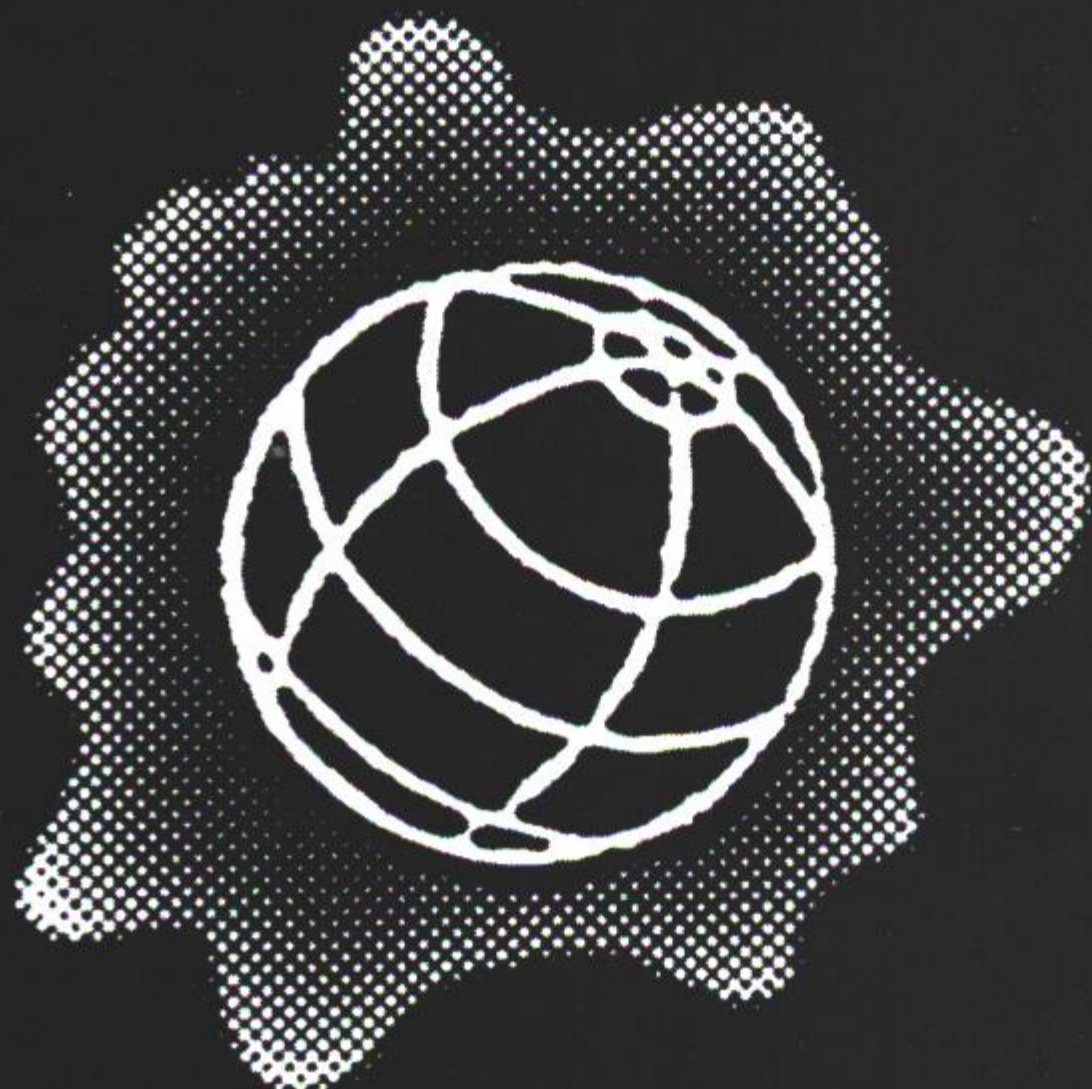
These obligations do not cease with the duty to come out. As a casual reading of the gay press reveals, a homosexual's duties to the lesbian and gay community already involve the observance of safer sex codes and condemnation of those that don't; no doubt anything else liable to bring the 'community' into disrepute, such as drunkenness or aggression, will soon be the target of moral censure.

A healthy lifestyle and a moral obligation to the community are the demands that Peter Tatchell makes of homosexuals in the establishment. They are paradoxically reminiscent of traditional moral demands that people should live a respectable, family-loving, God-fearing life, or suffer public opprobrium.

The outing row brings the good news that the old priesthood is finished, along with the morals it espoused. If feminists and gays stopped attacking them, few people would take the slightest notice of what bishops (or Tory MPs) had to say about anything. But then the reason that the likes of Peter Tatchell have a go at the bishops and priests is that they are after the job.

PHOTOS: MICHAEL KRAMER, PANDORA ANDERSON MONTAGE: ALEC CAMPBELL





A challenge to prejudice and mysticism on matters scientific, technological and environmental.

FUTURES

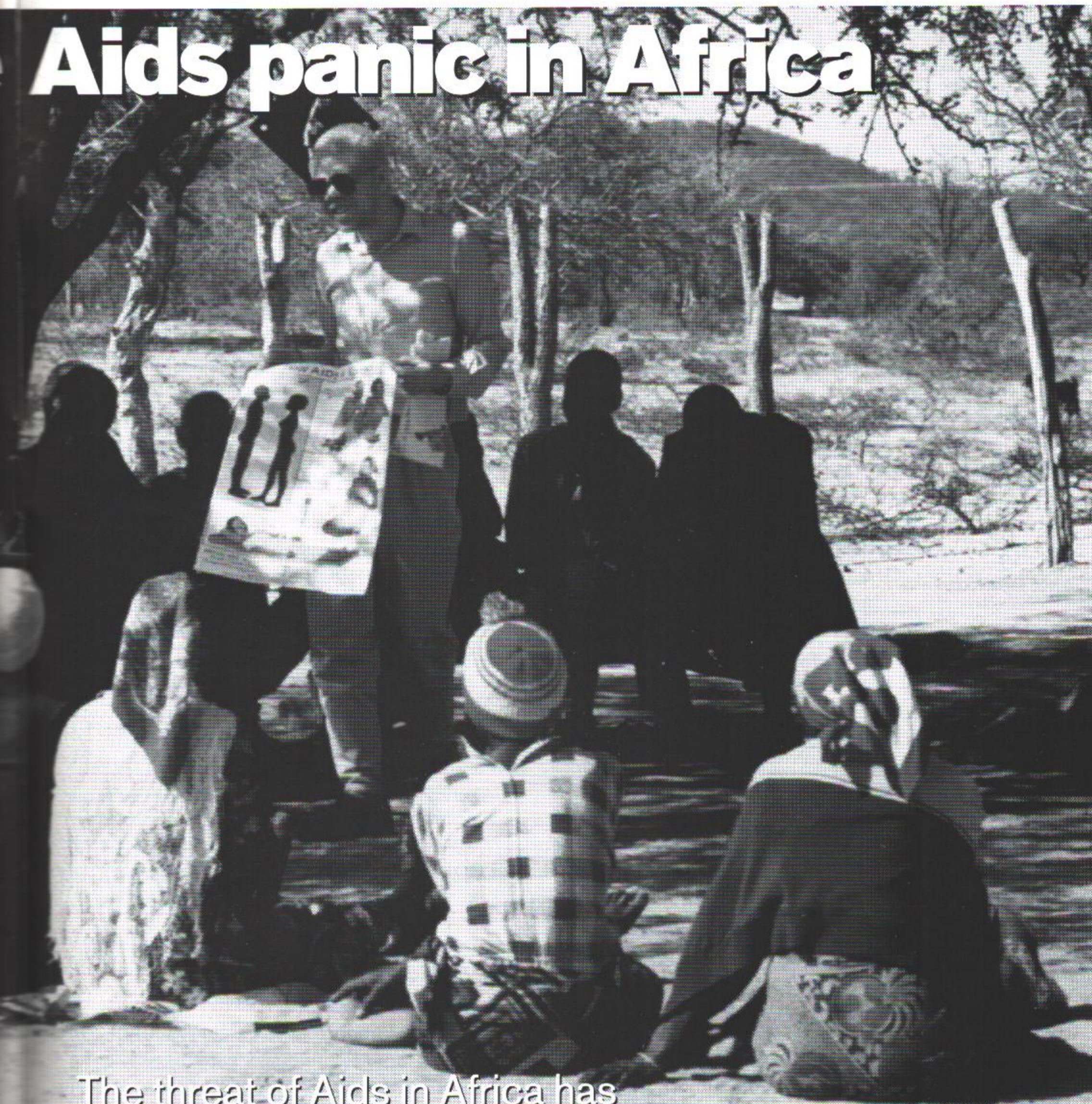


For a decade, international health organisations and the media have warned that Aids is about to devastate Africa. Back in 1986 the *Sunday Express* reported that 'Aids is now so out of control in black Africa that whole nations of people are doomed, leaving vast areas of now populated land devoid of a single living person within the next 10 years'. In 1990, the *British Medical Journal* predicted a nightmare future for post-Aids Africa: 'young orphans and the old eking out a crabbed, hand-to-mouth existence in dusty, forgotten rural homes, while in the towns, industry falls silent, businesses and stores lie closed and derelict while the wind blows rubbish and old leaves down deserted dead streets.' At the end of 1994 another article in the *BMJ* forecast that 'by 2010...8.5m people will be missing from Uganda's otherwise expected population of 33m because of HIV infection and Aids' (A Johnson and K De Cock, 10 December 1994).

Such images of Africa fit easily into Western perceptions of a continent decimated by war and famine. But the images are false. The number of people said to be suffering from Aids in Africa, or likely to get Aids in the future, exaggerates the real situation. The international focus on the threat of Aids is not just misleading, but perverse: in Africa, many other, largely curable, diseases of longstanding kill many more people than Aids, without attracting a fraction of the publicity and concern.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has put together an impressive array of computer models, statistics and projections to show the potential devastation of an uncontrolled Aids epidemic. The WHO estimates that between two and three million people in Africa are suffering, or have died from, full-blown Aids since the beginning of the 1980s, and that a further 10m people are carrying the HIV virus. Surveys of blood donors and pregnant women carried out during

Aids panic in Africa



The threat of Aids in Africa has been exaggerated, says Stuart Derbyshire, and used to endorse a prejudiced view of African morality and society

1987 in most large urban areas of central and eastern Africa indicated HIV seroprevalence rates ranging from a low of about five per cent to a high of around 30 per cent (WHO Surveillance, Forecasting and Impact Assessment Unit, 1989). The Global Programme on Aids of the WHO has developed an Aids projection model that utilises this survey data to estimate the annual progression of Aids. It predicts 6.5m new Aids deaths a year by 1997, which would reduce population growth in urban areas by over 30 per cent (R Feacher and D Jamison, *Disease and Mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 1994).

Persuasive as these data and predictions appear, a closer look at the figures indicates that the WHO is almost certainly exaggerating the threat of Aids—both in absolute terms, and in comparison to the threat posed by other diseases.

All of the WHO's projections are based on the most fragile of foundations.

Aids education in Zimbabwe: a forum for Westerners to lecture Africans about their sexual behaviour

In Africa there is not the infrastructure and expertise required to collect reliable data. Since the 1970s, assessments of adult mortality in Africa have been patchy, and no African state has a system of vital registration. So there is no reliable data on mortality in any country. In the absence of registration data, national estimates are derived from censuses and surveys—the most reliable of which were carried out in the 1970s. Much of the current information comes either from special studies of an ill population, or localised surveys with few participants. Such surveys are likely to give misleading results. There is even considerable uncertainty about what many people with a disease are actually dying from.

The WHO cannot be blamed for the patchy data. However, it can be blamed for the use and abuse of it. Amid all the huge projections and guesstimates, one figure stands out: the all-time total number of recorded deaths

from Aids in Africa last year reached 331 376 (*WHO Weekly Epidemiological Records*, No69, 1 July 1994).

These figures bear no relation to the millions predicted by the WHO. For some time now recorded deaths from Aids have fallen well short of the predictions. In response to this, the WHO has sought to bend reality to fit the projections. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that the WHO has adopted unscientific methods to get its headline figure of between two and three million Aids cases.

In 1986, the WHO redefined what constituted Aids in Africa in a way which inevitably increased the number of Aids cases. Under the new system, a positive HIV test is no longer considered necessary. Instead, Aids is defined simply on the basis of clinical observation. In the absence of any known cause of immunosuppression, an African can be declared to have Aids if he exhibits at least two major signs of the illness—such as chronic diarrhoea or prolonged fever—and at least one minor sign, such as a persistent cough or herpes.

The trouble is that it is impossible to tell at the beginning of treatment, that is at the defining stage, whether someone who is sick and develops malaria does so because of Aids or because of normal impaired immunity. Ignoring this fact, the WHO definition forces the balance of diagnosis towards Aids. The result has been both to inflate the estimated Aids figures, and to undermine the use of objective diagnostic techniques in favour of subjective symptomatic analysis.

The WHO's current estimate of Aids cases in Africa is almost certainly an exaggeration. And when it assesses likely future levels of Aids cases, the WHO further exaggerates an already inflated figure. This can be illustrated by examining the models used by the WHO and the way they have persistently exaggerated the growth of Aids cases in Africa to date.

Let's use the 1987 model developed by the Global Programme on Aids to predict how many new Aids cases there should have been in 1992. It should then be possible to assess the accuracy of its output, by comparing the projections with the WHO's post-hoc estimates based on actual cases observed that year.

With the highest recorded seroprevalence rate of 30 per cent, the WHO's 1987 model predicted six million new Aids deaths in 1992 alone—nearly 20 times the recorded number of *cumulative* cases up to 1994. Six million is clearly a gross exaggeration of the real situation in 1992. Using the lower seroprevalence rate of five per cent, the model predicted 780 000 new Aids cases for 1992. ►

With hindsight, the WHO now estimates that there were actually closer to 200 000 new Aids cases that year in Africa (*The HIV/Aids Pandemic: 1994 Overview*). Even using a seroprevalence rate of one per cent, the projection model still suggested 480 000 new Aids cases in 1992, more than double the more recent WHO estimate.



Matching current to past estimates, it appears that the estimates for the future are likely to be somewhere between three and 30 times the actual figure.

Another reason to be sceptical of high estimates of the *current* level of Aids cases is the fact that deaths from other commonly fatal diseases such as TB and malaria have not increased significantly during the period of Aids. Incidence of, and deaths from other diseases would have risen in the wake of widespread suppression of the immune system characteristic of Aids. That this has not happened must cast doubt on the WHO's figure for current incidence of Aids.

Consider the case of malaria, the disease responsible for more deaths in Africa than any other illness. Malaria is transmitted from infected to uninfected people by means of mosquito bite. Transmission is usually measured in terms of the basic case reproduction rate (BCRR). The BCRR is the mean number of new cases of malaria to which one case will directly give rise after passing once through the mosquito under conditions of zero immunity. With a BCRR of five, one case will give rise to five cases in the next generation and 25 in the succeeding generation of cases and so on; the spread will continue with more and more people becoming infected. In Africa, values for the BCRR are in excess of 1000. This is so high that everyone in Africa tends to become infected with malaria at a young age. The only thing that protects Africans from the effects of malaria is their own immune systems. A widespread prevalence of Aids would imply widespread suppression of the immune system and a rise in serious cases of malaria. And yet, the number of reported malaria cases has fallen dramatically in recent years, down to around 15 per cent of the figure for 1983 (*WHO Weekly Epidemiological Records*, No42, 21 October 1994). This picture is clearly not consistent with the immunosuppression and poor health conditions that Aids is reported to be creating.

Mention of malaria brings us to a critical point about the Aids panic in Africa. The number of reported cases of malaria may not have risen, but the absolute health threat posed by malaria is still very high. Much higher, indeed, than that posed by Aids. The WHO suggests that between 1.4m and

2.4m Africans die of malaria each year (*WHO Weekly Epidemiological Record*, No42, 21 October 1994). Even taking the lower estimate, that is a total of 16.8m deaths from malaria since the Aids epidemic was first identified.

TB is also a much bigger killer than is Aids. The WHO estimates that 250 000 people die in Africa each year

Aids in Africa is much less of a killer than TB or malaria

from tuberculosis (*Bulletin of the World Health Organisation*, Vol70, 1992). That gives a total of 3.5m TB deaths since the inception of Aids—up to one and a half million more than the (almost certainly exaggerated) WHO estimate of deaths due to Aids.

In fact, Aids in Africa is currently less of a killer than measles, tetanus, pertussis and diphtheria, which combined claim around 500 000 lives every year (R Rodrigues in L Feacher and D Jamison, *EPI Target Diseases*, 1994). And yet you could scour the media in vain for reports of Africa's imminent collapse because of deaths from tuberculosis, malaria, and other diseases. While the Western world seems obsessed by Aids in Africa, diseases that are far bigger killers barely warrant a mention. Why?

There is clearly something more than simple medical considerations behind the high-profile discussion of Aids in Africa. Indeed it is fair to say that this discussion has less to do with the real problems facing Africans than with the self-serving preoccupations of Western agencies and governments.

The Aids lobby in Britain has been happy to play up the scale of heterosexual Aids in Africa in order to lend moral authority to its demands for funding and support, at a time when its long-predicted explosion of heterosexual Aids in the West has failed to happen. The resonance which its focus on Aids in Africa has achieved, however, is due to broader issues—primarily the strength of anti-third world feeling in the West today.

Aids has become the perfect disease with which to scapegoat Africans as morally inept. The discussion of Aids in Africa has become a forum for Western spokesmen to deliver lectures about the moral standing of African people, their sexual habits and practices. Ann Larson coldly reported on the African character, suggesting that 'African attitudes towards sexuality and marriage have undoubtedly accelerated the spread

of HIV' (*African Affairs*, January 1990). More liberal reporters have argued for the empowering of women to give them a greater sense of control and 'ability to say "no"' (P Barnett and T Blakie, *Aids in Africa*, 1992). These views fit neatly with old racist assumptions about the weak and permissive nature of blacks.

The focus on Aids in Africa, over and above other diseases, reflects the imposition of Western perceptions and a Western agenda. That governments and others in Africa have felt obliged to take up the issue of Aids as a medical priority is a consequence of the way money from the West is distributed. If mentioning Aids is the way to get cash, then African governments and agencies will talk about projects to tackle Aids. This unreal discourse can reach the point where it almost seems that a shortage of condoms, rather than a lack of food and medical care, must be the biggest problem in the health of Africa.

The focus on Aids and sexual behaviour has diverted attention away from the economic and social factors which influence the spread of diseases in Africa. Vaccination against killer diseases is taken for granted in Europe, where 80 per cent of children receive full vaccination programmes before they are one year old. In Africa, where the entire health budget amounts to around \$1 per person per year, the figure is less than 20 per cent. The vast majority of African children go through their early years unprotected from measles, tetanus, polio, TB, pertussis and diphtheria. But even if African children were vaccinated, these diseases would still spread through dirty water and cramped living conditions which encourage germs. The decline in the incidence of such diseases as TB, measles and tetanus in Europe started before the introduction of treatments or vaccination, as a consequence of improvements in the standard of living. Social development, not sexual restraint, remains the key to improving the health of millions of Africans.

In the hyperbole surrounding Aids in Africa, the issue of poverty and its association with early death and disease is easily forgotten. Through the preoccupation with Aids, disease in Africa is being separated from the problem of social and economic advance, and recast instead as an issue of moral behaviour. The frightening possibility is that as more curable diseases come under the heading of 'Aids-related complex' in WHO classifications, the doomsday image of Africa may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Millions may be condemned to die by the WHO from the at present incurable Aids, when they are in fact dying from diseases that should have been wiped out decades ago.



Evening all, here is the news

A few years ago, dawn raids were associated with foreign police states, the sort of thing that Doesn't Happen Here. Then they did start happening here—but the people being raided were accused of being 'Yardies' and football hooligans, so it was considered all right.

Today such things don't raise an eyebrow—we see them every day on TV, and the media is now accepted as part of the police entourage. Nobody expects the media to do anything but cooperate with the police—handing over film, running appeals for information, or simply acting as a mouthpiece for police PR initiatives. The days when the police used to jostle journalists and camera crews out of the way are long gone—now the hacks are valued colleagues, carefully briefed and debriefed at the drop of a parking ticket.

How far things have gone can be gauged by the first episode of the Channel 4 series *Deadline*, which looked at a day in the life of *Calendar*, Yorkshire TV's local news programme. On the day in question, two of the three main features were police stories (the third was Ivy from *Coronation Street's* boozy autobiography, of which the less said the better). Two out of three was probably the normal ratio, and there was nothing exceptional about the stories themselves—a dawn raid on suspected hooligans in Bradford, and a reconstruction of a missing girl's last known movements. What was unusual was the view afforded by the extra camera crew, filming the other crews making news.

I had always assumed the point of reconstructions was that they might jog someone's memory, yet the girl was completely invisible beneath the bundle of hacks, cameras and fluffy microphones. Inside the shop where she stopped to repeat the missing girl's purchases there wasn't even room to get them all in. At the end of it all, the police controlled all press contact, deciding that the girl (who was the missing girl's sister) would answer just one question, and making sure this took place while a concerned-looking officer stood next to her.

In the street just before the dawn raid, things were less subtle. How do you want him, with a blanket over his head or what? That was the principal concern of the officer in charge. As they made their way to the front door, he hesitated, then came over to check what kind of shots the crew would prefer. After the round-up was finished, there was the debriefing. But what exactly are debriefings for? For the press, of course. Why else would the entire force turn out to sit in rows and listen to a one-minute speech? And one minute is all it takes—what you think is a TV clip is the entire thing. 'Was that OK? Need any more?', asks the senior officer. The crew is happy, so the meeting is curtailed.

This particular episode of *Deadline* was widely reviewed, with the broadsheets enjoying an easy laugh at the expense of *Calendar's* vox pops and E-list celebs. Not one gave the slightest mention of the cosy relationship between press and police. Ever wished you were better informed?

When the 'Queen Mother of Football' called for a neighbourhood watch scheme inside the grounds, it was a case of 'No sooner said than done Ma'am' at the Palace. Yes, Crystal Palace FC immediately launched 'Safeguard', with the better-safe-than-sorry slogan: 'Think before you speak. Think before you act.' (And probably, by the time you read this, 'think before you think'.) Hapless punters who happen to have sworn or 'threatened' opposing supporters at the other end of the ground are now frog-marched out by headset-wearing stewards while police with video cameras 'accompany' the stewards (on behalf of the local news channels, no doubt). Not surprisingly, this is beginning to wind people up. Before long every member of the crowd who isn't in uniform will be in a state of permanent agitation, and more resources will be 'demanded' to deal with them. The club has clearly anticipated this: reporting on the new stand, the match programme promises a good range of facilities, 'and even a police station'. At the final game of last season, some people shed tears for the massive

Holmesdale terrace which was about to be knocked down to make way for the new stand. They will be pleased to know that we will still have a real 'Cop end'.

'How do you want him, with a blanket over his head or what?'

The biggest turn-out since Churchill', claimed the *Sun*, reporting on the funeral of 'the Queen Mother of the East End'. (I thought the whole point of the Queen Mother was that she was the Queen Mum of the East

End, but never mind.) Well it may have brought traffic to a halt from Bethnal Green to Chingford, but south of the river things were a bit different. We didn't go for Churchill much either, as George Orwell reported during the war, and we certainly didn't worry about the Krays. So I wasn't surprised to hear that a wreath appeared at the south side of Tower Bridge spelling out those famous last words, 'Fat poof'. I know Bermondsey is not famous for its political correctness, but this was well out of order. That kind of language can get you into trouble these days.

Call me paranoid, but why have the pop chart compilers CIN chosen this moment to ask record shops to turn their security cameras on purchasers rather than shoplifters. The reason offered is that record companies are targeting chart shops with teams of buyers, and that these shops should be excluded from the weekly count. But could this be a smokescreen for a bit of official chart-rigging? Older readers will recall how, despite huge sales, 'God Save the Queen' by the Sex Pistols stubbornly stayed at number two during the Queen's silver jubilee, thanks to bans by WH Smith and creative accounting by the pollsters. Surely there can't be fears that 'VE-Day: The Official British Legion Collection' will fail to top the hit parade under its own steam, leaving a clear field for 'Great Parliamentary Speeches 1978-94' and Freddie Starr's 'VE-Day Extravaganza'? ●

The Word and Radio One, two icons of pop culture, have both taken a critical battering of late. Neil Davenport talked to Terry Christian about *The Word* and Talk Radio and, opposite, examines the decline of One FM

There is a certain irony, some might say, in having Terry Christian from *The Word* as a presenter on Talk Radio, the latest national station. According to Talk Radio presenter Dale Winton, the station is a fresh alternative to 'out of touch' Radio One. Yet doesn't *The Word* have the same ill-conceived notion of 'yoof' as One FM? Take, for instance, the way both emphasise the importance of being a prat, as if it was some kind of insignia for 'wacky' youth. Terry Christian disagrees. 'You can't compare *The Word* to Radio One', he says. '*The Word* has never self-consciously aimed for a particular audience. It has never attempted to be hip and trendy. Programmes that have tried to don't last long. And I think that is why we are still around.'

How much longer it will be around, however, is a moot question. *The Word* has completed its fifth series amid speculation that it will be the last. While critics accuse the programme of being tired and conservative, the TV authorities attack it for using offensive and

'inappropriate' material, and rumours that Channel 4 bosses have had enough of the controversy abound. Christian, though, does not seem too worried. 'After the first series', he points out, 'journalists were saying that the programme was going to be axed. It's a story that crops up at the end of every series and they have proved wrong every time. I haven't heard anything to suggest that it's going to be axed. But I find it odd that there is such speculation about *The Word*. It's only a pop programme, not *Panorama!*'.

The Word's penchant for the puerile and the perverse—people eating live worms, a feature on John Wayne Bobbitt's sex life, pictures of an operation to extend a policeman's penis, and so on—has outraged its critics. When Dani Behr took teenage runaway Peter Kerry—fresh from his trip to Malaysia—on a shopping spree to New York in March, the programme was forced to drop the item and the producer apologised to the boy's headmaster. Channel 4 director

Beyond The Word



PHOTO: TALK RADIO UK

Michael Baker called the piece 'unacceptable' and instituted an internal inquiry. So how much interference is there from broadcasting authorities and from Channel 4 itself?

'We haven't had that many complaints about *The Word*. Sometimes we are not allowed to say certain things or show particular items. And this can be daft. Once we were not allowed to show a clip of Tonya Harding's wedding night video even though it was openly on sale in America.'

The idea that *The Word* is outrageous, Christian argues, owes more to the censorious times than to the programme itself: 'I am not into the idea of contriving things or being outrageous for the sake of it. But it is far too easy these days to appear outrageous.'

The Late Show's Mark Lawson once joked that *The Word* was going to be called *The Sentence* but Christian could not manage one. How did a presenter mercilessly pilloried in the press for

allegedly being unable to put two words together get a job on Talk Radio? 'A lot of people in London are unaware that I had worked on radio before', Christian says. 'The press I get is not exactly flattering. I was once described as the biggest patsy since Lee Harvey Oswald. So the last thing the press will write about is that I have worked on award-winning radio shows before.'

Talk shows on radio have been around a long time and even Radio One is opting for 'sharp talk' these days. Is Talk Radio any different? 'The idea behind Talk Radio', says Christian, 'is that anyone can come on and say anything. It is the first time that a radio station is catering for people who like talk shows. OK, you have discussions on Radio Four, but they are presented by journalists who are not that accessible. In a way they are like presenters from *Blue Peter*—completely alien to most ordinary people. Talk Radio will be aiming at a different crowd.'

Many who have listened to Talk Radio, however, say it is just regrinding existing formats. Add the constraints imposed by Britain's tough broadcasting censorship laws, and it seems unlikely that we are going to hear a US-style shock-jock like Rush Limbaugh or Andrew Dice Clay on our airwaves. So what can we expect from Christian's show?

'The format I'm using is similar to my old radio shows in Derby that I adapted for *The Word*. I like to introduce guests and keep them around when I'm talking to someone new. As far as the content goes, it will challenge existing ideas. Unfortunately, though, I cannot simply go on air and start saying "All property is theft".'

This sounds suspiciously like the revamped One FM. So will Christian's show really be that different from the *Blue Peterish* opposition? 'To be honest', he says, 'I don't listen to Radio One that often—but it was a mistake getting rid of people like Simon Bates.' Just the kind of controversial comment to set the airwaves buzzing. ●

Terminal One

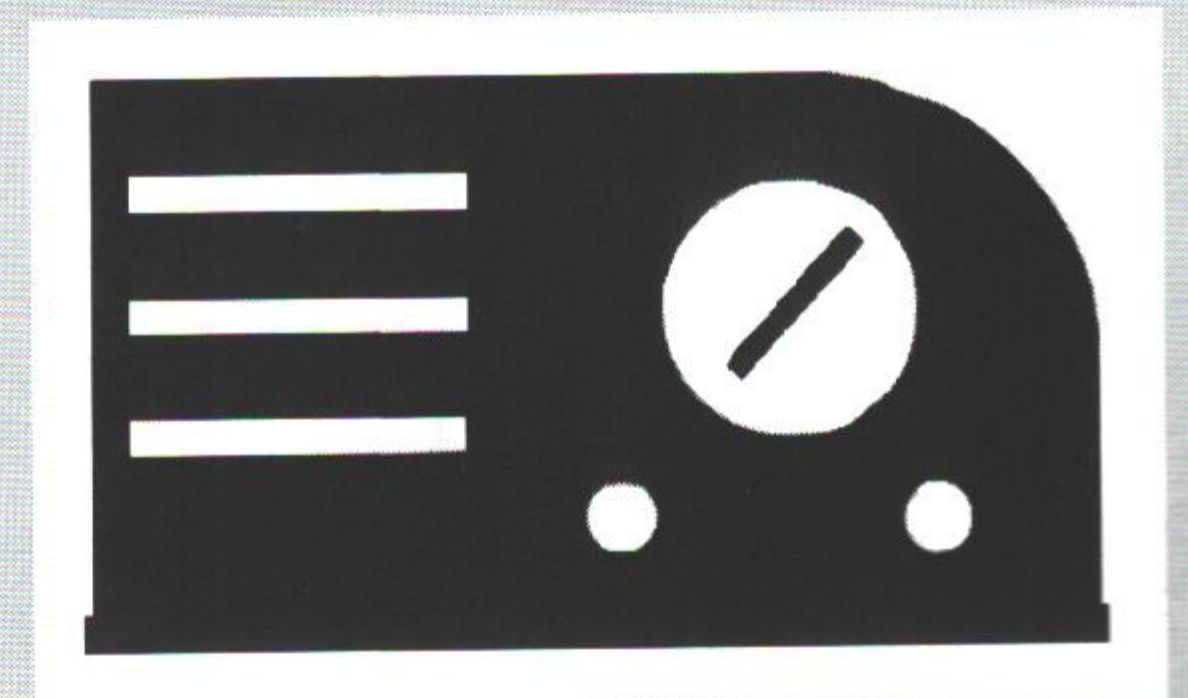


When Matthew Bannister became controller of Radio One two years ago it was renowned for its naffness, all Smashey and Nicey DJs and a mind-numbing playlist apparently built around Phil Collins and Wet Wet Wet. Bannister's shake-up brought the departure of hairy, hoary old Dave Lee Travis, Simon Bates and his execrable 'Our tune', and medallion man Gary Davies. It has also resulted in the departure of about five million listeners and, more recently, the shock resignation of star man Steve Wright.

Bannister's replacements are, if anything, even higher on the irritation index. Danny Baker and the lamentable Emma Freud did not exactly herald the Dawn of the New; he quickly had his Sunday show cut and she has, wisely, walked. Bannister's attempt to bring a more 'considered' approach to popular broadcasting by introducing 'serious' issues has turned One FM into a forum of political correctness on Aids, drugs and racism. Switch on Radio One these days and you are as likely to hear a sermon as a song.

Bannister's aim is to make Radio One part of the nineties. Unfortunately for him, the nineties is not about being a part of anything. This is one of the reasons why 'one nation' radio stations are no longer particularly successful. The pattern for radio in the nineties is a shift from 'broadcasting' to American-style 'narrow-casting' that targets a specific niche. Technological advances—such as keeping the playlist on a computer hard disc, so removing the need for a vast record library—have made it much cheaper to run a commercial radio station, and deregulation of the airwaves has opened the way.

In the sixties, when Radio One was launched, the same styles of pop music appealed to a wide range of people. Thirty years on, pop music has become so fragmented that its presence is barely noticeable. The media through which pop music made an impact on life—the singles charts or *Top of the Pops*—have dropped out of public view. In their place come a range of niche stations. Kiss FM plays black dance music while Virgin Radio caters for white rock fans, and has barely a black singer on its playlist. Each knows its audience and panders to their tastes. Sadly for Matthew Bannister, there is no youth audience out there waiting expectantly to tune into a sermon on Bosnia.



A Trojan tragedy

Of all the Greek playwrights, Euripides probably best matches the modern imagination. He was the bad boy of Greek drama, iconoclastic, irreverent—he was tried for blasphemy—and ironic. His work lacks the stuffiness of Sophocles and Aeschylus. While they deal with grand themes—such as the nature of fate or the relationship between humanity and the Gods—in a formal fashion, Euripides places real people in extraordinary situations and wrings from this a psychological drama. His language is that of everyday speech, and his plays are highly theatrical.

Women of Troy is one of Euripides' most meaningful plays for a contemporary audience. It tells the story of a group of Trojan women in the aftermath of the lost war with the Greeks, waiting to be shipped away as slaves. Euripides uses the women's predicament to explore his favourite themes—coming to terms with the breakdown of moral and ethical order, the attempt to preserve one's humanity in a situation of hopelessness, the role of myth in the making of history. The play is at once a powerful polemic against war, a study of how human beings respond to extreme tragedy, and an exploration of how to recreate moral order in a world seemingly bereft of morality.

It is easy to see why the National Theatre should have chosen to stage *Women of Troy* as its major spring production—the play resonates with so many themes important to contemporary society. Unfortunately, however, Annie Castledine's production provides a classic example of how not to revive great drama from another age for a modern audience. Rather than rework Euripides' themes to allow us better to understand the contemporary world, Castledine has simply chosen to swaddle the play with crude political overtones. As a result it has been transformed into the kind of agit-prop piece beloved of the fringe theatre of the seventies and eighties. Castledine wants to preach, not produce a play. The subtlety and irony of Euripides' work have been squeezed out in favour of a simple (and simplistic) message: war is bad and women are its main victims.

The very use of women as the central characters presents a problem in restaging Euripides. When it was originally performed, casting women as the vehicles through which to express an

The National Theatre's production of *Women of Troy* shows how not to restage great drama from the past, argues Kenan Malik



anti-war message must have been profoundly subversive. Today, the contrasting of passive 'feminine' values to the 'masculinity' of war is a mainstream idea, with dangerous and fatalistic connotations. Any restaging of *Women of Troy* must first confront this problem, but this production does not even recognise that a problem exists.

To 'modernise' the play, Castledine has turned the Greeks into American marines, strutting around the stage with machine guns and bad attitude. Creatively used, such updating can work wonderfully well. In Jonathan Miller's recent production of *Così fan Tutti* at Covent Garden, for instance, the soldiers of Mozart's opera became UN blue berets and the Turks were transformed into Albanian refugees. But Miller had the lightness of touch to make this work; Castledine does not. Her black-and-white portrayal of goodies and baddies is simply condescending to the audience, who she clearly feels cannot understand the complexities of the work.

The nadir of Castledine's 'modernisation' comes in the scene between Helen (whose abduction to Troy began the war) and Menelaus, her husband, who now sees her for the first time since she was taken prisoner. Castledine turns Helen into a Marilyn Monroe figure with a Tennessee accent and Menelaus into an American admiral with a Southern drawl. Presumably this is a stab at irony. It feels, however, as if we have suddenly walked into a terrible amateur production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

'Why did they do this?', Trojan queen Hecuba asks of the gods at the end of the play, 'uproot the world?/To make a myth of us/Give poets a theme for plays?'. For Euripides, it was important not to reduce history to myth. In making Hecuba question the gods in this way, Euripides is ironically suggesting that war is a human not a divine problem. Castledine, on the other hand, makes a myth of conflict, transforming it into an eternal struggle between the good and the bad, between the forever oppressed and the forever oppressive. Myth, her *Women of Troy* seems to suggest, has a redemptive quality, for it is all that the oppressed can hold on to in the face of fate. At the point where Euripides' play most clearly touches the modern condition, Castledine rejects his nascent humanism for a rigid fatalism. ●

Women of Troy is in repertory at the National Theatre, London

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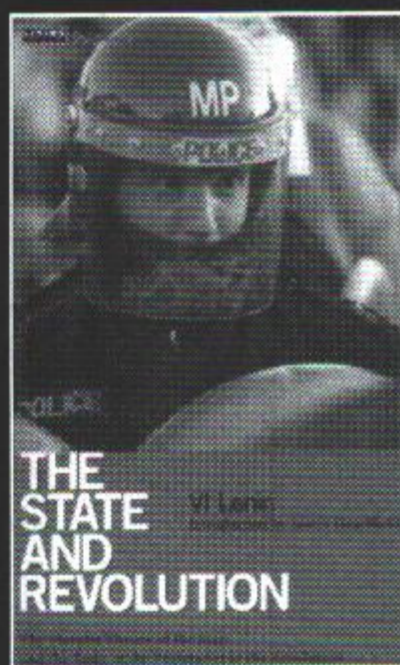
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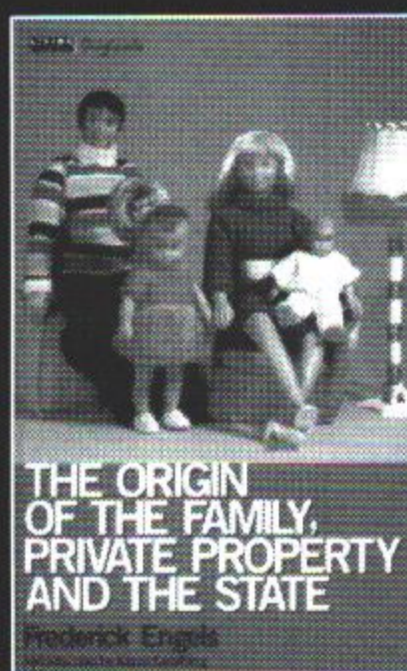


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It is tempting to see *Bullets Over Broadway* as Woody Allen's response to the personal traumas that have dogged him over the past two years. The question the hero asks throughout the film—'Whom do you love, the artist or the man?'—could be a *cri de coeur* from Allen himself.

The film deals with familiar Allen themes—the relationship between art and life, the thin line between fantasy and reality, the nature of artistic and personal integrity. Following Allen's affair with former lover Mia Farrow's adopted daughter, however, and the allegations of sexual abuse thrown at him, these themes acquire a particular poignancy. What is interesting is the way that Allen has tried to distance himself from the film.

It is as though Allen is deliberately limiting how much of himself he has put into the film (he does not act in it, which is itself unusual). Here we have a filmmaker who has built his reputation on explorations of guilt, sex and family discord, and whose previous films drew self-consciously on his own life and relationships. But now that Allen has very publicly been confronted with these issues in his private life, he has drawn back to make his least personal film.

Set against the backdrop of twenties New York, *Bullets Over Broadway* tells the story of David Shayne (John Cusack), a struggling Greenwich village playwright who agrees to let Nick Valenti (Joe Viterelli), a New York gangster, bankroll his new play. In return, Valenti's girlfriend Olive (Jennifer Tilly), a two-bit dancer with acting pretensions but no ability, gets to play one of the leading roles. Through this tryst with money, Shayne is drawn into compromising the purity of artistic vision that he believes is the essence of every true artist.

But now a new artist emerges. Cheech (Chazz Palminteri), Olive's intimidating bodyguard, and an uneducated philistine, helps Shayne to rewrite the play, until the final version is work by Cheech rather than Shayne. The rewritten play is acclaimed as Shayne's finest, and Shayne himself as a new genius. 'Don't worry', Cheech tells him, 'round here we don't squeal'. But while Shayne was willing to cast Olive for the sake of Valenti's backing, Cheech will not countenance any such compromise. He decides that the integrity of his work requires her removal—so he bumps her off.

In some ways *Bullets Over Broadway* lends itself to comparison with the Coen brothers' *Barton Fink*. In both films we see a self-centred artist trying to reconcile himself to the fact that, in order to sell his work, he has to compromise his artistic talent. However, while *Barton Fink* uses this plot to explore the relationship between fiction and reality, and to illuminate some of the darker recesses of the human condition, *Bullets Over Broadway* wants to evade addressing any of the

Woody Allen's Carry On



In *Bullets Over Broadway* Woody Allen has made his least personal film and, argues Ian Walker, it suffers for it

Jennifer Tilly and John Cusack in Hollywood's New York

more serious themes that it introduces. The bitter-sweet quality that infused previous films with similar themes, such as *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, is missing here.

We are left with a comedy that is more slapstick than satire, more *Carry On* than Coen Brothers. The characters reveal themselves largely through comic, often farcical, situations. There is Helen Sinclair (Dianne West), a once beautiful actress but now past her prime, who drinks paint stripper from a hip flask. There is Warner Purcell (Jim Broadbent), a fat actor having an affair with Olive; in one scene he is caught stealing dog biscuits from an actress' chihuahua, while in another he flees from Valenti by escaping through a window on to a busy

New York street dressed only in his underwear and his corset. Allen is well equipped to handle this sort of farce. His early work, such as *Sleeper*, relied heavily on visual gags. Nevertheless *Bullets Over Broadway* represents a retreat from the cerebral humour of his more recent films.

What saves *Bullets Over Broadway* from being a standard Hollywood comedy is its sense of time and place. In this film, more than any of his others, Allen's love of New York comes together with his love of Hollywood to recreate the mythical New York of cinema. This gives *Bullets Over Broadway* a ravishing look. But you are left with a sense of disappointment that this is a film that has missed its mark—and perhaps deliberately so. ●

MARXIST

REVIEW OF BOOKS

Helen Simons examines the latest arguments for more forceful policing of the 'global neighbourhood'

Global citizens and globocops

Populations in Danger 1995, Médecins Sans Frontières, Médecins Sans Frontières, £11.99 pbk

Our Global Neighbourhood, The Commission on Global Governance, Oxford University Press, £6.99 pbk

As the United Nations approaches its fiftieth anniversary, these reports from radical aid agency Médecins Sans Frontières and the more staid Commission on Global Governance are rewriting the UN charter. In different ways both reports urge the UN to take on a more forceful role in the modern world. And those conclusions are dangerous.

Our Global Neighbourhood is the work of the Commission on Global Governance, commissioned by former German Chancellor Willy Brandt in 1991 in the wake of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and endorsed by the secretary general of the United Nations, Dr Boutros Boutros Ghali. The introduction claims that the moment has come to look 'at the world in a more integral way' (pxv).

Our Global Neighbourhood argues that the issue of global security has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. The old East-West rivalry may be over, but in its place the commission summons up a host of new threats that serve to justify forceful action on the part of 'the international community'. On closer examination, the 'international community' turns out to include only those countries that can be trusted to support the West. And the only people who can be trusted with the business of global governance appear to be the unelected apparatchiks of the 'non-governmental organisations' (NGOs)—like Boutros Boutros Ghali and Willy Brandt, in fact.

As the commission sees it, the most significant change is the global character of the new risks. Crime, the drugs trade, terrorism and the traffic in nuclear material have been globalised. National frontiers are more porous than ever before, and the new threats are said to endanger people irrespective of borders. In the eyes of the commission, environmental crises, civil strife and ethnic conflict all fit into the pattern of risk that is endemic in the New World Order. While the risk of wars between states has not been eliminated, the authors claim that the new conflicts have a different character: 'It is conflicts originating within national polities—in Yemen, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia, for example—that have posed a formidable new challenge to the world community.' (p15)

Because of these new dangers, the commission concludes, two central principles of the United Nations in the Cold War period—the sovereign rights of independent nations and the principle of non-intervention—have to be questioned:

'In an increasingly interdependent world, old notions of territoriality, independence and non-intervention lose some of their meaning. National boundaries are increasingly permeable—and in some respects less relevant.' (p70)

The issue of the right of nations to self-determination is lightly passed over. The commission argues that in a world where ethnic minorities and indigenous populations are demanding the right to self-determination, as we see today in the former Yugoslavia, the matter is no longer straightforward. Today it is unclear which countries and what peoples constitute nations. The relevance of the concept therefore has to be questioned.

Questioning national sovereignty allows the commission to make a giant leap in its re-evaluation of global security. Since this is a key turning point in the commission's argument, we should ask if it is justified? Certainly the world has changed since the end of the Cold War, and there is nothing wrong with looking again at the matter of national rights. But a re-evaluation of this kind needs to begin by understanding why these principles were held so dear in the first place.

It is not enough to say, as the commission does, that these ideas simply expressed the more national character of 'risk' in the past. The struggle for national rights captured a healthy democratic desire for people to control their own fate. In particular in the third world, the aspirations to national sovereignty and self-determination expressed the demand of oppressed people to free themselves from colonisation and Western interference. However unattractive such nationalism may seem in the changed world of today, the aspiration for freedom from outside control which lay behind it remains entirely legitimate.

The commission's inability to understand the democratic content of the claim for national independence is not ►

surprising. The report itself is a sustained argument for the abrogation of the national independence of those countries that are not considered sufficiently 'civil'. The report provides a justification for the kind of interventions that have been made under UN banners in countries like Somalia and Iraq, where the Western powers' attempts to shore up 'civil society' have led to the deaths of tens of thousands of the uncivilised, through economic and military sanctions.

Since our fates are all intertwined, the authors claim that we need a more integrated approach to global security. Now global governance has to encompass 'civic society', as the authors believe that governments cannot be relied upon to represent these broader interests of people and the planet. Circumventing national governments is presented as a very democratic development. 'Global governance, once viewed as primarily concerned with inter-governmental relationships now involves not only government and inter-governmental institutions but non-governmental organisations, citizens movements, transnational corporations and the mass media.' (p335) But for all their democratic language, it soon becomes apparent that this new democracy is not for everyone.

According to the commission, the new global neighbourhood needs new principles around which society can be organised. Civic values should now play a part in guiding global security. These values should encapsulate 'human rights' and must be 'embodied in the evolving system of international norms, adapting, where necessary, existing norms of sovereignty and self-determination to changing realities' (p48).

On the face of it, the vision of a society where everybody is consulted and humanitarian values are upheld sounds good. But who is it that can be trusted to do the consulting and the enforcing? If we accept that upholding global humanitarian values should be the guiding principle of global governance, then it is logical that a new ethical global police force will be needed to ensure that these new principles are upheld.

What starts out as a call for a more democratic and humanitarian form of governance is turned into a case for military intervention

The authors are adamant that certain nation states cannot be relied upon to fulfil this task. They assert that governments are too often the principal violators of human rights. Rather the commission calls for this policing role to be undertaken by international institutions. In particular it should be a reformed and revitalised United Nations that takes on this task. Nothing less than armed military intervention by UN forces will ensure that the new ethical codes are respected.

Here we have the crux of the argument. What starts out as a call for a more democratic and humanitarian form of governance is turned into a case for military intervention and the active policing of problem nations. Beneath the rhetoric of 'One world', the commission is making a pointed argument for the division of the world between those that can be trusted to safeguard democracy and those that cannot.

For all the talk of democracy, and its attention to the democratic deficit of small nations, the commission neglects the fact that the UN itself is no democracy. In reality it has only ever represented the interests of the most powerful nations, as reflected in the five permanent members of the

Security Council: USA, France, Britain, Russia and China. But despite the reality of the UN as a vehicle for Great Power *realpolitik*, its offices are made to look as if they float serenely above all the petty conflicts pursued by national governments, because they are invested with a spurious sense of higher purpose by 'non-governmental organisations' like those responsible for these reports.

Strikingly, it is on the issue of the call for more decisive, armed UN intervention that the report of the Commission on Global Governance concurs with the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) report *Populations in Danger*. In every other respect MSF is a fierce critic of the UN. But the aid agency's criticisms focus on the failure of the UN to intervene decisively enough. Indeed, MSF has coined an oxymoron for the decisive action it wants to see—'armed humanitarianism' (p91).

The UN's offices are made to look as if they float serenely above all the petty conflicts pursued by national governments

As a radical and outspoken non-governmental organisation—and NGOs are all the rage in world affairs today—Médecins Sans Frontières is well placed to carry the interventionist agenda forward. It too holds sovereignty in low esteem, as its own name argues. Established by a group of French doctors who broke away from the International Red Cross, MSF felt that the Red Cross had too much deference to the sovereign wishes of national governments. The breakaway doctors wanted the right to move into emergency situations as they saw fit, without being asked in by host governments. Hence the 'doctors without borders' were born.

The MSF report does not set out to be a plan of action for the UN. Rather it is a harrowing tour of the global crisis points of the past year; the forgotten tragedy in Burundi, the killings in Rwanda and the endless war in Bosnia. The report examines each of these episodes, depicting them as horrors driven by ethnic divisions and hatreds. Inevitably, in describing the misery and despair generated by these events, the report angrily poses the question of how such tragedies are to be avoided in the future.

MSF's answer is 'armed humanitarianism'. The report pays lip-service to examining the specific causes of each modern crisis. But it really concentrates on the common theme of the bloody, uncivilised and bestial behaviour of one or other side in each conflict. Whether the accused are Serbs or Hutus, it seems they are driven by ferocious and irrational ethnic passions which are not susceptible to civilised reasoning. For MSF the only solution in these circumstances is to call in a third party to deal forcefully with the perpetrators and restore peace.

MSF is not interested in sappy peacekeeping missions to hold the line between warring factions. For humanitarianism to mean anything it has to be 'something more than a mere gesture of human compassion' (p96). Humanitarianism means taking sides against those who do wrong. So, last year, MSF called for armed intervention in support of the Rwandan Patriotic Front against the Hutu 'killers'. Ideally the UN should have played the part but, since the UN was too dithering, MSF was prepared to call upon French armed forces—the same people who had systematically armed and trained the Hutu forces in the preceding years—to play the 'armed humanitarian' role.

MSF takes this aggressive stance one stage further. It argues that all too often, once crises pass, the atrocities that have been perpetrated get forgotten and the crimes go unpunished. This too must change if the world is to become a safer place. The aid agency therefore takes the step of calling for the 're-emergence at an international level of the concept of humanitarian law and justice' (p104). It wants to see war criminals brought to trial and judged by the 'international community'.

Here again MSF's findings dovetail with the recommendations of the Commission on Global Governance. As the commission argues, 'the global neighbourhood of the future must be characterised by law, not lawlessness' (p329). For the new global policemen at the UN to be effective guardians of the new civic codes they will need tougher international laws to back up their actions. New international law commissions and courts will be needed along with new penalties and punishments.

How has a radical aid agency and a committee of the great and good arrived at such similar conclusions? Because they share fundamental assumptions about the modern world. Although neither state it outright, they both apply a double standard in judging nations and peoples. Both think there are some that can be trusted and some that have to be watched and held in check. For all the talk of neighbourhood and community, this double standard underpins all their ideas.

Here is the reality of the global neighbourhood that is so attractively portrayed in the commission's report. At first we are led to believe that the neighbourhood is a happy, democratic place where all are to be consulted as equals. Now it becomes clear that there is a right and a wrong end of the neighbourhood. The good citizens, who live in the nice part of town, live by one set of rules and have their rights to independence and freedom upheld. The bad citizens, who live at the other end of town, have far fewer freedoms, no right to independence and are actively policed by the neighbourhood policemen.

It becomes clear that there is a right and a wrong end of the global neighbourhood

Most significantly both reports share the assumption that the bad end of town is essentially the non-Western world. MSF spells out that human rights are violated in places like Rwanda, Haiti and Serbia. The commission reminds us that the environmental problems of land degradation, deforestation and desertification are poverty-related environmental catastrophes. The commission adds that it is the Persian Gulf nations which insist on boosting their military expenditure and stockpiling weapons of destruction.

Even the use of international law will be a differential affair. In a democracy nobody is meant to be beyond the reach of the law, but it is not democratic principles that concern our authors. We are left in no doubt by both MSF and the commission that Serbs and Hutus are the war criminals they have in mind to bring to trial. The international courts will not trouble themselves with the likes of the Canadian Parachute regiment which tortured and murdered Somalis during its UN 'peacekeeping' tour of duty, or trigger-happy individuals like Britain's Private Lee Clegg. No doubt they think that these type of 'minor excesses' can be dealt with by their own, trustworthy, national authorities.

On occasions the commission goes so far as to make its assumptions more transparent. For example, it asks who will alert the UN when human rights are violated and atrocities are committed. The answer is those governments 'with extensive information-gathering capacities' (p98). In plain language this means the surveillance will be carried out by powers like the USA which control the most sophisticated global information-gathering technology. The commission's second solution is to use the NGOs as an early-warning system. This again can only mean one thing. It is the third world that is under suspicion, and Western agencies are to play the role of detective. The NGOs can act as a neighbourhood watch scheme in the third world because this is the terrain in which they concentrate their efforts.

The 28 men and women in the commission are on the whole failed politicians or privileged appointees

Just in case anyone has failed to grasp the message, the commission concludes by calling for a new body to see through all these tasks. 'To reach all these goals, we look for the emergence of a group of "good global citizen" states and representatives from civic society organisations. This group should be prepared to work together and provide leadership. They should lead by example and moral suasion, and work towards the ends that we have outlined in all international fora where they are active.' (p331) North Korea, Iraq, Somalia and the like need not apply for 'good global citizen' status.

Dressed up in a language of global humanitarianism, the commission's proposals are depressingly familiar—they simply recast the old divisions in the world between the powerful North and the subjugated South in a new light. Of course there is no mention of colonialism or of setting up protectorates in the third world. But, when the double standards of the commission are examined, it is clear that the world's nations are to be divided between those which can be trusted with rights and those which cannot. In those nations that cannot be trusted, the 'international community' will set up effective trusteeships to ensure that the civilised values of good citizenship are upheld—where necessary through the MSF's 'armed humanitarianism'.

A useful tip for anyone reading the commission's report is to save time and start at the back of the book. Annex one—the composition of the commission—is enough to make you take all the talk of democracy with a large pinch of salt. The 28 men and women in the commission with 'diverse experience and responsibilities' are on the whole failed politicians or, even worse, people who have reached their own high position in life through privilege or appointment.

The British members of the commission are a case in point. One is a member of the House of Lords, the other an ex-official from the UN. The co-chairs of the commission are a former Swedish prime minister and an old secretary-general of the Commonwealth. Perhaps the best known member of the commission is Jacques Delors, a bureaucrat who has made clear that he prefers the privileged life of appointed power in Brussels to mixing with the masses by standing for election in France. It is little wonder that with plutocrats like these the new global neighbourhood they have in mind is not 'ours' at all: it would be short on democratic rights and big on military might.

The Black Album, Hanif Kureishi, Faber & Faber, £14.99 hbk

If Hanif Kureishi's first novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, was like an ethnic version of a Just William story, his new work, *The Black Album*, is akin to a tour through postmodern Britain in the company of *Viz* magazine. Lewd, profane and occasionally witty, it is also a lazy, self-indulgent comic book of a novel.

The Black Album is set in the London of 1989, the year in which the Berlin Wall came down and the Ayatollah Khomeini issued his fatwa against Salman Rushdie. Shahid Hassan is a naive but somewhat cynical Asian lad from Sevenoaks who comes to London to study. He finds himself trapped between two sets of friends.

On the one side is Deedee Osgood, his cultural studies lecturer and eventual lover, who has given up politics and believes that 'life is just for pleasure'. On the other side, there is Riaz Al-Hussain, leader of a hardline Islamic group in the college, a man devoid of all doubt and who, 'in an era of self-serving ambition and careers, had taken on a cause and maintained his unpopular individuality'.

As Shahid is torn between the certainties of faith and the pleasures of uncertainty, Kureishi introduces us to a collection of picaresque characters who fizz in and out of the plot. Chili is Shahid's gangster brother who wears Armani suits and Calvin Klein underwear and whose 'drug dealer would come to him at all hours, and accept his cheque'. Chad is a former junkie who has now found Islam and who berates Shahid for reading novels 'when out there...it's genocide. Rape. Oppression. Murder'. Andrew Brownlow, Deedee's estranged husband, is a former sixties radical reduced to a stutter by the collapse of communism, who despairs of the working class because 'they're a bunch of fucking, greedy, myopic c-cunts'.

You soon begin to wonder whether Kureishi's London contains any figure who does not fit a particular sociological category. When the E-dealer Strapper tells Shahid, 'You a Paki, me a delinquent', it is as if the characters are reminding themselves that only stereotypes are allowed into Kureishi's world.

There are characteristic flashes of Kureishi's wit, as he takes pot shots at all and sundry, from Labour politician to Asian businessman. In the end, though, it all feels too easy. Having set up his characters as caricatures, Kureishi proceeds to knock them down again. But why bother? Like Shahid and Deedee, Kureishi seems to spend most of his time jerking off.

The laziness of *The Black Album* is reinforced by the plodding feel to the writing. The plot is chaotic and undisciplined. What is meant to be parody too often feels like lazy writing: 'Oh Shahid, it's not true that you've fallen into a religious framework?', Deedee asks at one point. Dialogue is frequently replaced simply by a tired summary of the arguments. Kureishi's is a style that could best be described as a lack of magic realism.

At one point Deedee tells her students that she is compiling a 'wank list' of Western literature. With his penchant for the easy option, Kureishi would no doubt be grateful that his creation would not even have to step out of her own novel to find the first item on the list.

Kenan Malik

The Information, Martin Amis, Flamingo, £15.99 hbk

'Here's what struck Steve Cousins about pornography: at last he had found something that was as interested in sex as he was.

'He had found something that was all about sex. And nothing else. The bits in between were just breathers: nothing else.' (p410)

From the Marquis de Sade to Henry Miller's *Opus Pistorum*, with its ever more jaded variations on the theme, pornography has sacrificed all available typefaces to recreating the act. There were some pretty pornographic scenes in Martin Amis' last big novel, *London Fields*, but it was not pornography.

But not all pornography is about sex. There is a pornography of violence too. Texas chainsaw massacrer Tobe Hooper might think he created it, but more than a century ago the self-styled Comte de Lautreamont was setting up scenes of the most touching innocence and beauty for the sole purpose of setting his archetypal slasher Maldoror on the golden-headed boys, saintly grandmas and shipwreck surviving sailors.

The Information is a pornography of humiliation. All efforts are bent to wallowing vicariously in the depths of humiliation. If protagonist Richard Tull has a beautiful wife, it is so he can be cuckolded; if he is good at tennis it is so he can be beaten; if his new novel, finally, gets published after a 10-year silence, it is only so he can be outstripped by his winsome rival, and secretly hated old chum, Gwyn Barry.

And Richard Tull deserves it. There is no getting away from that. Barry is a picture of insincerity, author of a greeny, non-gender specific utopia called *Amelior*, whose inexorable rise to fame ridicules Tull. But Tull's hopeless schemes to get one over on smug Gwyn are more contemptible, denying him even the sanctity of the victim. Even Tull's virtuously avant-garde prose is so repulsively difficult that anyone who reads beyond page nine of *Untitled* gets a detached retina, or a brain tumour. Amis' latest is *Success* without the redemptive reversal of fortunes, *London Fields* without the relief of Keith Talent's demotic sense of fun. It's very good indeed. Can you get any lower? You know you can.

There is an observation about the changing nature of literature that I have seen Amis make better on television. This time he puts it into a book proposal by Richard Tull for a *History of Increasing Humiliation*, 'a book accounting for the decline in the status and virtue of literary protagonists. First gods, then demi-gods, then kings, then great warriors, great lovers, then burghers and merchants and vicars and doctors and lawyers. Then social realism: you. Then irony: me. Then maniacs and murderers, tramps, mobs, rabble, flotsam, vermin' (p129). On the box I thought he said '...then heroes, then us, and now, them'. 'Them' loom large in Amis' fiction. The underclass before we even called 'them' that. Steve Cousins in *The Information* is the literary descendant of Keith Talent in *London Fields*. But the vermin Amis most cruelly portrays is not them, the underclass, but, them, the middle class intelligentsia, as in 'them and us'.

Will Deighton

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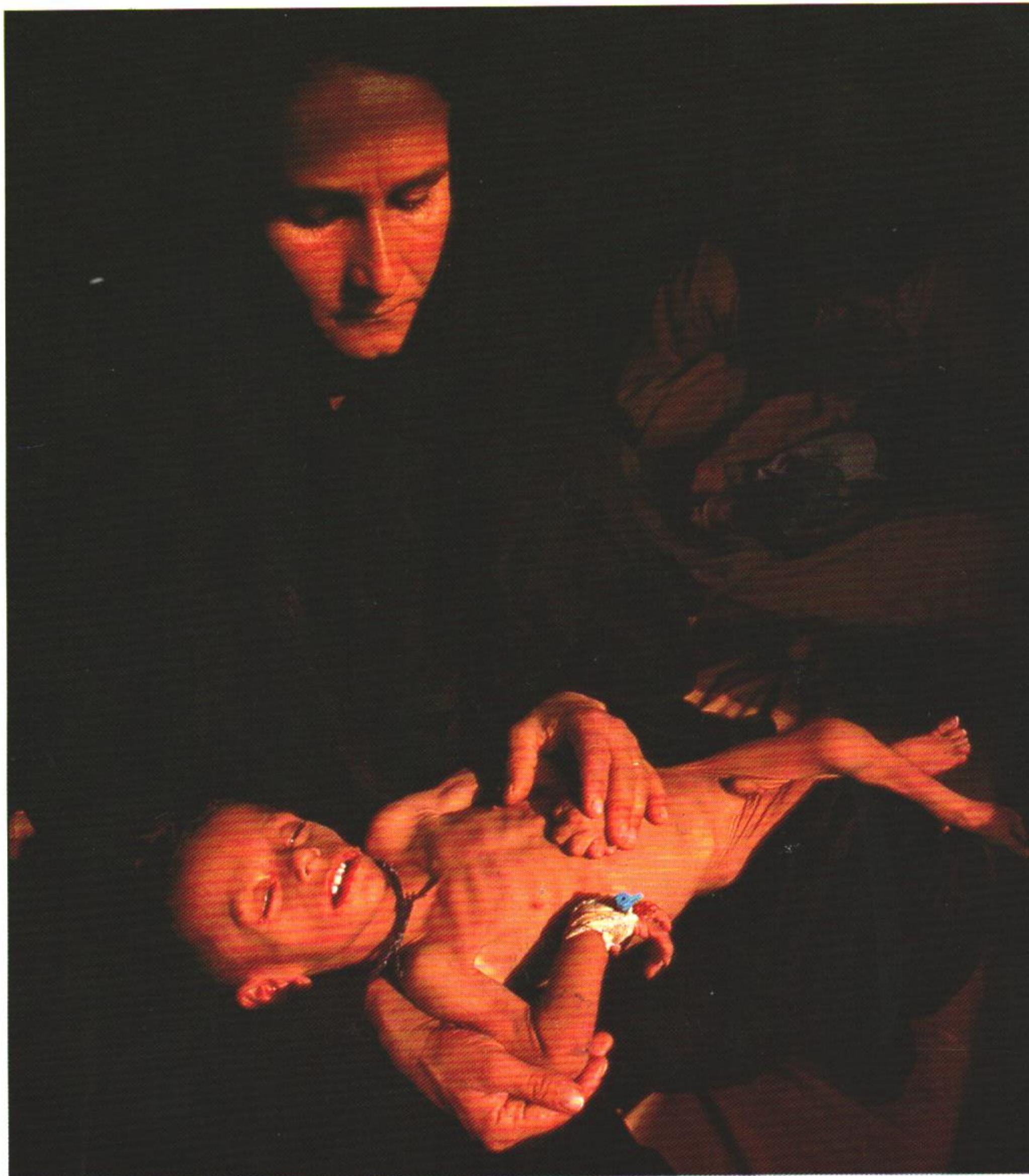
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