

[front cover]

**ANARCHY No 117: MAINLY ABOUT
THE FUTURE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**
CONURB by CW - MOTORWAY MADNESS by ALAN THOMAS
FREEDOM AND ENVIRONMENT by BRIAN RICHARDSON
NOTES FROM NOTTING HILL by JOHN O'CONNOR

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November 1970**

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That evening, as they lay in their tent in the dusk, watching the bats swoop across the sky outside, Mike asked Rob questions. They were questions about his earlier life, about the Conurb. It was something he had not done before. Like everyone else in the County he knew a little about the Conurb: enough to be contemptuous of it. It was the place of the mob, where people dashed around in electrocars, crowded together like sardines, listened to raucous pop music, watched holovision and the bloodthirsty Games—for the most part watched the Games on holovision. It was the place where everybody ate processed foods and liked them, where there were riots and civil disturbances, where no one knew how to behave properly, how to dress or exchange courtesies, how to speak English even ...

Conurb and county

C.W.

ROB RANDALL, BORN IN FULHAM in 2038, orphaned at 14, escapes from the State Boarding School at Barnes, and creeps under the wire fence from Conurb into County, where he is found by Mike and adopted by his family as a cousin from Nepal. This is the setting of John Christopher's *The*

Guardians (Hamish Hamilton 21s., £1.05) a novel about the future intended for older children. In the County there were no Games, no lumoglobes (except in the servants' quarters), no high-rise blocks, no cities, no holovision, dancehalls, bright lights, electrocars and monorails, no community life, "no crowds, no sense of being part of a noisy mass of people who could give each other reassurance and security". Nor is there any contact between the two zones, apart from the Commuters—doctors, lawyers, senior officials and factory executives who travel in by private copter.

Rob is sent to a school in the County, which is just as spartan as the one from which he broke out. But there was a difference: even though it was difficult to grasp. "Gradually Rob worked it out as having to do with pride and self-respect. At the Boarding School there had been nothing to make up for the hardships. The whole aim had been to grind you down to submissiveness. Here there was a sense of being trained, and trained for eventual authority ...". But it was at his new school, in the study of a senior boy, that Rob heard the first whispers of discontent with the social order:

"Penfold spoke in a rapid, slightly hectoring voice: 'The point we have to start from is the realisation that we're all conditioned—that we live in the most conditioned society the world has ever known. We have our special position drilled into us from childhood. The servants here in the County are taught to despise the Conurbans and the Conurbans despise them in return. They never meet—they scarcely know anything about the way each other lives—but they despise them all the same. And we are the privileged ones at the

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top of the pyramid.

"The actual difference in classes is not new. There always has been a privileged few and an unprivileged mass, and there have always been people willing to accept a position as servants of the few and think themselves lucky on account of it. But now we have an absolute division: gentry and their servants on the one hand, Conurbans on the other. The Commuters regard themselves as gentry and look forward to the time when they can retire inside the County and not have to go back to the Conurbs. There are two worlds, with a barrier between them. The barrier may not be strong in the physical sense but in people's minds it's enormous. We the rulers and they the ruled, and never the twain shall meet.'

"A boy called Logan who was almost as old as Penfold said, 'What do you want to do about it?' 'Change it,' Penfold said. 'Just like that?' Logan laughed. 'Tall order.'

"Penfold said: 'There are two ways in which societies can be changed. If the masses are badly enough treated they may be forced into some kind of revolt. That's the desperate way and there's not much chance of it happening at present. The Conurbans aren't starved or ill-treated. They get their bread and circuses like the citizens of Rome used to in the days of the Roman Empire. And there's butter and jam on the bread and you can see the circuses without stirring from your armchair, 3-D on the holovision. The Conurbans won't start any revolutions.'

"Someone said: 'They have riots, don't they?'

"So I believe. Safety valves to let off steam, and police enough to handle them comfortably. It's all cleverly worked out. Like the life we lead here in the County. We don't have holovision. That's for the vulgar lower classes, for the Conurbans who don't know how to occupy their empty lives. Or is it because we and they mustn't be allowed to share anything? As far as we're concerned the clock stopped just before the sun went down on the British Empire. We'll go on living for ever in the afternoon glow—with horses and carriages, servants by the dozen, ladies in silk dresses and port and cigars after dinner ...'"

It would be unfair to potential readers to reveal the outcome of the revolt of the angry young in the County, or to disclose Rob's discovery of the mechanism of conformity which keeps the population, both sides of the fence, docile and free from subversive thoughts. The point is that Mr.

Christopher's imaginative novel presents one of our possible futures of controlled life-styles in a totally manipulated environment.

The germ of the Conurb and County division can be seen today: the urban poor in their run-down city slums or their high-rise council flats in the inner urban belt, the middle-classes moving out to commuter land. The process can be seen more clearly still in the United States with its city ghetto and swimming-pool suburbia. Some of our tomorrows are already here. The options that are still open depend on people's willingness and ability to shape their own future.

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Freedom and environment

BRIAN RICHARDSON

1970 IS WORLD CONSERVATION YEAR, and unprecedented attention is being given to the relation of man to the environment. It has at last come to public attention that, with rising populations and the new technology, this effect is potentially, and in some areas actually, disastrous.

It is a good time for libertarians, sharing this general concern to look with special interest at the result of these environmental changes on man's freedom. In order to be able to discuss the possible effect on the civil liberty of the citizen of his physical surroundings, we have to reconsider what constitutes civil liberty—what are the rights of modern man in his setting, today and tomorrow? Civil liberty is being able to do what you want to do, so long as you do not harm anyone else. The degree of outside restraint on your freedom must be directly related to this need to respect the rights of others—any imposed restriction other than this is arbitrary, and an infringement of civil liberty.

Further, you should be able to do what you want to do up to the limit of your potentiality, and any arbitrary obstruction of the development of your potentialities (such as commonly happens at school, where only the privileged attend reasonably sized classes, for instance) infringes civil liberties.

The distinction between rights and liberties is academic in this context. If one proposes that it is man's right to benefit to the full from the achievements of art, science and technology, and to take a significant place in the natural order, then any unjustifiable denial of these rights is an infringement of his liberty to enjoy them.

Seen this way, civil liberties are constantly changing. With the advent of printing it became a civil liberties issue whether the presses should be available to the citizen to publish his opinions. The invention of radio and TV now raise the question of the freedom of the air and the accessibility of the media for the free expression of opinion.¹

The physical framework of life largely determines one's opportunities to act freely. If a theatre, for instance, is built with only a

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proscenium stage, the dramatist is prevented from presenting his play in the round. A theatre such as the Nottingham Playhouse that gives the producer the choice of different stage and audience relationships, enhances everybody's freedom. Similarly, the whole physical environment as is developed, impinges on the citizen's life in both limiting and liberatory ways, and can enhance or restrict civil liberties.

Edward J. Mishan, in his essay on “the coming struggle for amenity rights”² puts it this way: man with his wonderful new technology invents a wealth of goods and services. These are costed, and so far as they can be accounted profitable, are produced. But he also produces (as “spillovers”) bads and disservices. These are at present not accounted for either in terms of overall financial gain or even in simple equity. Just as modern man has a right of access to goods and services, so Mishan argues, he has an equal right to protection against spillovers that harm his interests. “... a typical example is air travel, which produces services for the passengers while simultaneously producing prodigious disservices, aircraft noise, for large numbers of the population ... in a more accommodating universe, in which a person could somehow lock out these spillovers from the space surrounding him, he would be able to charge for admitting them into his private space just as the owner of private property charges for the use of it.”

The main civil liberty areas that occur to me, in considering the physical environment are

- (1) The basic necessity for people to have good housing, in terms of hygiene, space, structural soundness and beauty; the effect of the built environment on privacy and community in towns, suburbs, institutions and homes;
- (2) The threat to man’s natural right to fresh air, silence, sunlight, clean water and unadulterated food, and to his right to experience beauty in nature and to enjoy our inheritance from the past;
- (3) The effect of the procedures and rules accumulating round home, workplace and public spaces, regulating man’s behaviour in respect of safety, public health, traffic flow, town planning, trading, education, political assembly, entertainment, sport and so on.

It would be a lengthy work indeed that explored fully all these areas, and I can do no more than dodge about giving some examples: that will at least indicate the connection between the environment and civil liberties.

SHELTER, PRIVACY AND COMMUNITY

The influence of good housing on civil liberties should hardly need elaborating. It has been accepted public policy for over a century, since local government in its modern form was established, that

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sanitary arrangements, water supply, street cleaning and maintenance, size of rooms, damp-proofing, ventilation, and space between buildings, should be provided in accordance with standards laid down in byelaws. The effect has been to transform public health from the squalor of the early industrial revolution, to today’s general level of well-being. It is a remarkable achievement, detestable though we may think the rigidity and authoritarianism of the law-makers. Nevertheless, standards over the country are not uniformly high, and one missing element almost everywhere is that of delight.

“Byelaw” housing—the product of the literal interpretation of the minimum requirement of the building byelaws—produces a sickeningly dreary environment. So much was produced and endured by so many people as normal, that a blow was dealt against the traditional aesthetic values attached to town and village housing from which we have not yet recovered. I suggest that the time has come for us to claim our right to live in beautiful, and not merely hygienic surroundings.

Not only are standards too low, but the stock of housing still does not meet the needs in sheer numbers where they are wanted. Particularly in London the local authorities have waiting lists thousands long, and homelessness is a great and increasing problem. Audrey Harvey, writing in the *RIBA Journal*³ points out that the real extent of housing need doesn’t even have much relation to the size of the waiting lists, and among the reasons she gives are that many families have been in the district too short a time to qualify (two years is often stipulated), that people without children are often turned down, unmarried mothers are discouraged as they are unwelcome tenants to some authorities, that elderly people in poor conditions often do not apply because they assume their

applications will be refused, that waiting lists are sometimes closed in areas of comprehensive redevelopment, and that council flats are often overcrowded, but this cannot be disclosed to the authority. She adds that Ministerial statements about a surplus of housing over households in some areas can mean that the early provincial housing estates lacking vital amenities are being deserted by families who have tried their luck in livelier places.

Nothing produces such a negation of civil liberty as homelessness. Although some successful campaigns have been (and are being) waged to improve facilities in, and management of, hostels for the homeless, it is still intolerable that the threat of homelessness should be a scourge to so many thousands of people. Only after the basic need for shelter has been met, is it possible to look at the opportunities for living a full and free private and social life.

Privacy is a well-known civil liberty issue, but the direct effect that the planning and construction of buildings has upon it has been given little weight by civil libertarians so far. The NCCL campaign for privacy concerns itself mainly with the deliberate and malevolent

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invasions of privacy rather than the unintended intrusion of noise through thin partitions and the overlooking of windows in congested and ill-considered housing layouts.

However, in terms of the degree of privacy postulated as desirable by Chermayeff and Alexander,⁴ most modern housing is insufferable. The domain of privacy of individual, family, neighbourhood group and local community in relation to each other and to the city, are scarcely articulated, even in the best modern examples, in spite of the acknowledged stress of mass urban life, and the consequent need to establish an identity, and to be able to “get away from it all” from time to time.

How many people, for instance, have a sufficiently private garden or courtyard to be able to share my simple pleasure of running naked into the fresh air after my morning shower, without upsetting the neighbours? More serious, perhaps, is the lack of opportunities for lovers to be together, uninhibited by the fear of being overlooked or overheard, which affects almost everyone, particularly in the daylight hours.⁵

The loss of privacy is particularly acute in institutions, where insufficient regard has been paid to it in the original design, or where overcrowding has made privacy impossible. An organisation set up to look after the interests of hospital patients has pointed out that at the very time when the shy and modest Englishman most wants to be left alone to suffer his misery, when he is sick and weak, he is catapulted into a busy and public hospital ward and has to perform his most intimate functions in conditions of unfamiliar exposure. Lack of privacy in boarding schools, approved schools, prisons (with their disgusting “slopping out” procedure), mental hospitals, old peoples’ homes and hostels, causes endless misery to the inmates.

There is an obverse to the coin of privacy, which is the need for community. Although much lip service has been paid to community by planners, it is still notorious that modern mass housing fails to provide facilities for it. How frequent the housing estate where the houses were built first, much later a shopping centre followed, possibly an apology for a church was added, and the community centre never materialised at all. Often there is not even a pub within miles.

Even more totally neglected is the consideration of suitable designs for an extension of the idea of community living now being contemplated with increasing interest by young people, and realised in the emerging Commune movement. This attractive and constructive attitude⁶ to the challenge of modern life seems to me to require particular emphasis to be put on proper arrangements being made for privacy as well as for collective activity in the community house, yet most British communes are experimental and short of funds. They are consequently having to face the difficulties of shared housekeeping and

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the establishment of a secure and private personal base in improvised premises.

But our society desperately *needs* such experiments. It is encouraging that a community near here, composed of relatively well-to-do people, able to equip themselves really well,⁷ has prospered for seventeen years to my knowledge. They are not bound by any strong ideological ties (nor religious ones—religious communities have always had a capacity for endurance) and are not, so far as I know, exceptionally enlightened people, except insofar as they obviously care about their surroundings and have comfortable and beautiful accommodation. This must have contributed largely to the success of the venture. I hope that the young communards can generate enough resources to be able to equip themselves adequately and stand an equal chance of success. The interesting structures produced by the so-called drop-outs in the American West show how much can be done with little, if the ideas are good.

POLLUTION

We have no constitutional Bill of Rights in Britain, so we cannot conduct the same kind of campaign here as the American Civil Liberties Union is doing in the United States to establish the citizen's right to an unpolluted and whole environment, but their line of argument is worth our attention. The 5th and 14th Amendments of the Federal Constitution provide that neither the United States, nor any State, or their agencies, shall deprive any person of "life, liberty or property without due process of law". In American law the liberty guaranteed by the "due process" Amendments has been stated as "not merely freedom from bodily restraint but also the right of the individual to contract, to engage in any of the common occupations of life, to acquire useful knowledge, to marry, establish a home and bring up children, to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience and generally to enjoy those privileges long recognised at common law as essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men".

The position in America is discussed in an article in *Civil Liberties*⁸ in which the author quotes a law case in which it was said that, "the personal right is the right to live in and enjoy an environment free from improvident invasion or impairment" and urges the courts to act decisively on this interpretation of the constitution, arguing that environmental rights are indeed basic to a free society. He emphasises that constitutional protection of these rights is particularly important because of the irrevocable nature of the environmental changes. "Let us assume that a youth's hair is wrongfully clipped, or a girl is required to wear a skirt, or a child is exposed to prayer in a public school. If the legislature or other authority which infringed the right changes its mind as a result of the ordinary political processes, no fair-minded person would say that the damage to mind or body was permanent and irreparable. The point applies to many other deprivations of

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liberty or property. If however there is a right to an unquarried mountain, to a river that is not buried with millions of yards of fill or to an urban neighbourhood not torn apart by an expressway, the denial of that right is substantially irrevocable. We are generally unable to restore what we have destroyed. We can more easily reform our own human institutions than we can restore a bulldozed landscape ... We can have many haircuts. We have only one earth and according to many politicians, scientists and college students (whose rare unity may be some evidence that they are right) not much more than 14 years to save it."

We in Britain cannot, even if we wished, leave it to the due process of law to protect the environment, though one must acknowledge that parliamentary response to a pressure group can have results. The success of the Smoke Abatement Society in recent years in getting the Clean Air Act passed has produced a dramatic improvement in the city air. Mishan, arguing from the point of view of a liberal rather than a libertarian, sees an advantage in extending legislation, analogous to the laws prohibiting slave labour and the unrestricted sale of firearms, to protect men's rights to such basic amenities as quiet, privacy, clean air and unpolluted water. Speaking to those who have

accepted that the Market, when constrained by wise legislation can serve desirable though limited social ends, he says, "... the arguments for extending existing legislation to cover men's rights to basic natural amenities are no different in kind from those used in defence of men's rights to private property ... With respect to equity, it is a cardinal liberal tenet that every man should be allowed the freedom to pursue his own interest *provided* that in so doing he inflicts no harm on others. The post-war eruption of environmental spillovers forms a classic instance of the most blatant infringement of this crucial proviso; an instance that is, of severe and growing damage to the welfare of innocent people as a by-product of the pursuit by others of profit or pleasure, for which damage there is at present no legal redress of any value."

But public education is the key factor, and we must welcome the wave of books now being published that open people's eyes to the changes, good and bad, that we are capable of making to the environment.⁹ ANARCHY has carried much crusading material relevant to the subject, on ecology, agriculture, liberatory technology, and housing.¹⁰ The movement towards food reform must regain its momentum, and not only to ensure that foods available in the shops are free from adulteration, a job manfully tackled by the local authorities' public analysts, but also that the whole diet is sound and in tune with a sensibly manipulated natural order. The case for vegetarianism is very strong in the context of world food shortage, since to create meat food for man uses seven times as much land as vegetable food of the same nutritional value.

The aesthetic case for an undamaged and wholesome environment

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is inextricably linked with the social and practical aspects, but deserves special attention on its own account. Again, an enlightened public opinion is an essential prerequisite for success. Iain Nairn with his *Architectural Review* "Outrage" campaign, and the Civic Trust, have done much. Some local "preservation" groups have entered into the spirit of do-it-yourself politics in a commendable way (like the Dublin squatters reported in FREEDOM recently). But a glance round at new buildings anywhere, and the lack of any indication that architects have become collectively concerned about the results of their work, fills me with gloom.

Our towns are becoming more and more sordid and anonymous, and when we leave them we desecrate the countryside. Particularly at the sea's edge aesthetic sensibility leaves us altogether. I am writing this on holiday near the Welsh coast, and my old-fashioned green tent nestles under a hedge against the gale and will leave no trace of its presence there next week. But a mile towards the coast there are vast caravan parks, gimcrack holiday bungalows, Cheam-style semi-detached houses and a general appalling scatter of rubbish. Fortunately the landscape is magnificently rugged, the indigenous architectural style is strong, and much of the shore too rocky for human exploitation, and this outweighs the damage, but it is a near thing and many other places are not so lucky.

The situation could be redeemed. The crowds of holiday-makers and their cars and boats are a jolly sight, and an economic necessity for the local people. If only the style of buildings and equipment were good of their kind, comparable with the standards that seemed to obtain in the past, all could be well.

I mention this example because it is on holiday that people particularly aspire to freedom, and it seems that our freedom to enjoy a holiday by the sea is threatened by the built environment in a more obvious way than elsewhere.

AUTHORITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Apart from privacy, the area of environmental civil liberties that has received most attention from libertarians has been the legal restrictions placed on the use of public places. Of these the main concerns have been to preserve the rights of political assembly, procession and demonstration. Often the Queen's Highway, as it is legally known, provides the only public space available for

political activity. The law allows no right to do this, the only recognised lawful use of the highway being for citizens to pass and re-pass along it. Any other use causes an obstruction to other people doing this, and whether actual or potential, this obstruction is an offence against the Highways Act. To stop and do up your shoe, talk to a friend, look in a shop window, fart, make a speech, sit down, play games. sell goods, all are theoretically punishable offences if, for however short a period, you obstruct

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free passage. Nor does it have to be proved that anyone was in fact obstructed. Of course in this situation the police are constantly using their discretion and their power is used on infrequent occasions, lulling us into a sense of comparative freedom.

However, Pat Arrowsmith, Jim Radford, and many others less famous, know very well that you are *not* free to stand up at a street corner, or on a wide pavement, or even when other people are already speechmaking, and to voice radical opinions, because the police can and will stop you.

Strange then, that it is not an obligation on local authorities to provide public spaces aside from the highway, where people can gather and hold meetings without obstructing. Many such “Trafalgar Squares” do exist, and have been vigorously fought for, but often it is found that every bit of land in a neighbourhood is either privately owned and governed by laws of trespass, or is highway. If a local authority does administer a public open space, it often imposes byelaws with all kinds of weird prohibitions—the notice boards in London parks often make hilarious reading. I recollect not being amused though, when I was prevented from hearing Bertrand Russell speak in Hyde Park because the police prevented him from using a microphone.

Practically all our surviving commons have fallen to the local byelaw, and it is in large part due to this that the so-called Gypsy problem has arisen. The Gypsies have been with us for several centuries and are not a problem, but they have suffered a crisis in recent years that has caused them great misery and the settled population some annoyance because they have been unable to find space to put their trailer caravans without finding themselves unwitting law-breakers. Before the days of official planning, their small requirements were easily catered for on commons and lanes and waste ground, but being travellers they never claimed any serious entitlement to be in any particular place. Now they find that the whole territory has been buttoned up with them left outside.¹¹

Their opportunities for making a living have changed, but they are adaptable people and have coped with this, what they cannot do anything about is the physical denial to them of any place to stop, so they are hounded wherever they go. This is as clear a case as any that could be found of the interaction between the environment and civil liberties. It stems from the negligence of the planners to allow for their way of life, and the mistake can be rectified by the provision of sites and the repeal of repressive legislation (though not without a hard fight).

It is more difficult to see the answer to some other situations where the community (through its elected representatives and all that) puts restrictions on the private individual for the supposed benefit of the majority, and these restrictions lead to hardship. Intelligent plans

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for the use of the community’s resources in land and buildings are essential, and we must acknowledge that control needs to be exercised to ensure that individuals conform to the plan. So how can the liberty of the individual be reconciled with the community interest?

The trouble is that controls and limitations multiply, and the original purpose behind them is lost. Arbitrary bureaucracy rears its ugly head, and one is tempted to advocate clearing the lot away and abandoning control altogether. But our society is at present run on the capitalist principle of buy cheap, sell dear; private profit is success and exploitation of the community interest for private gain is thought to be all right unless specifically unlawful. The necessary self-control that could replace

public control does not yet exist. Libertarians strive to make it so, but meanwhile must try to see that sensible public policy, authoritarian though it may be in the making, is at least administered fairly and humanely.

The organised action of the citizens of Kensington where the new motorway makes conditions intolerable for the local residents is an admirable example of the struggle for civil liberty. But there are not enough George Clarkes to go round, and there should be courses open to ordinary men in less extreme situations to challenge harsh official decisions.

It would be an advance, for instance, if free legal aid were available for people appearing before tribunals. Our village was recently represented at a tribunal at which we succeeded in opting out of Greater London, but I was staggered at the legal fees we had to pay to stand a chance against the QC retained by the London Borough that wanted to keep us in. We could not have raised enough money without wealthy anonymous benefactors chipping in, a circumstance which split the village because of the suspicion that there was a political advantage for the Conservatives in our success.

Most distressing for the people involved, especially if they are elderly and not adaptable to change, is the powerlessness of the individual to resist compulsory purchase. The official method of monetary compensation may reflect the market accurately, but does little to ensure that anxiety is dispelled or disruption minimised. Even if the purpose behind the compulsory purchase is laudable (and it is not always so) and is good policy for the majority, it is not good enough to shrug one's shoulders at the "inevitable" cases of hardship and let the local officials sort it out according to the book (which only has to do with legal nicety).

Surely society is wealthy enough to expend money and care generously on minimising the suffering caused in cases where the rights of the majority conflict with those of the individual. Why shouldn't it be like winning the pools to find that your carefully tended garden is in the line of a road improvement?

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Mishan, again, has a proposal to provide machinery for this to happen.¹² He says that the costs associated with adverse spillover effects should be a charge on the production costs of the perpetrators of the spillover. If they cannot reach agreement (through the courts or otherwise) with the affected groups they would have to desist entirely from producing the spillover-generating goods. Thus an airline company would have the option of continuing all its services provided that completely effective anti-noise devices were installed, or, to the extent that they were not completely effective, of paying full compensation for all the residual noise thrown at the public. "Under such a dispensation the costs of operating the Concorde over Britain would have to include compensation for inflicting on us a plague of sonic booms. As an economic proposition it would be a dead duck."

Often the restrictions placed on people's liberty is manifested in the form of rules which spring from the nature of a building or its management rather than from social necessity. There are rules preventing council tenants from keeping pigs, not because it would be a bad thing for this country to import less Danish bacon, but because there is no room for a pigsty, and pigs are *infra dig* anyway. Frivolous? But what about car ownership when there is no space to put a car?

To take the Gypsy example again: how can the Gypsy way of life fit into a standard council house without upsetting the rule book and annoying the neighbours? A London borough did prepare a scheme for houses to be built mews-fashion over yards big enough for loaded scrap lorries, but for some reason this desirable environment was not realised, and this contribution to the Gypsies' freedom to live the life they want to live was thwarted.

Sometimes the building is all right but the management is restrictive. I know a county town where the best hall is unused for most of the time because it is in the technical college, and the education authority exercises proprietorship, allowing only occasional public musical performances. The architect had contrived to satisfy all technical requirements for public use of the hall, and the college caretaker is besieged with requests to hire it, which would be profitable for the college and

an extension of the freedom of the townspeople, and it seems to me as much a scandal to waste a part of the built environment in this way, as to fail to provide it.

A teacher's account¹³ of a different case corroborates my experience: "We build new (school) buildings and then use them only five days a week. We staff and maintain them mainly on a part-time basis. All community projects, both young and adult, must have their beginnings in accommodation. Authority must set up the machinery for full-time use, including Saturdays and Sundays, the most useful days, and 52 weeks a year. Railway stations, airports, hospitals, and the like could not operate only five days a week; they are staffed to be available all the year round. When education for leisure is becoming such

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a priority it is essential that a new basic framework of administration be set up to give real and lasting continuity of use. It is a criminal waste of specialist amenities to build swimming pools, tennis courts, gymnasia, floodlit play spaces of every description, and then allow them to be used for only a fraction of the year. In our own case we have a detached and self-contained theatre, specifically designed as such—and yet it cannot take on a life of its own in the community because of the administrative restrictions imposed upon it.”*

In school design, new patterns of education are gradually affecting the buildings. In primary schools particularly, the shift from teacher-centred to child-centred activity has brought about a more fluid, open form of planning, and tables nest together in groups rather than in the serried rows of our young days. Groups of children can be large or small depending on the work (or play) being done. But what of secondary schools, still being built with rows of identical classrooms for 35 segregated boys or girls each? Or the wastefulness of my daughter's secondary school, separated from its neighbouring "twin" boys' school by a desert of grass out-of-bounds to children, and with absolutely no "comprehensive" use of the facilities of the combined premises?

And what of the new monster hospitals being built to centralise specialist medical services, and feed hapless patients (who must be clearly labelled or they may be wrongly processed) into a great medical machine? How can these giant buildings fail to influence the way the Illness Service is administered? (They can have nothing to do with a "health" service which needs to be embedded in the community.)

I have tried to draw attention to the civil liberties implications of some elements that are too often thought of as a neutral background to life. But it would be wrong to think that the character of the built environment is of absolutely overriding importance, and that putting it right will of itself create the good life. We do not want to build beautiful prisons, we want to do without them altogether. It is the decision about the kind of life to be lived that is fundamental, and the creation of the environment to accommodate that life style is supplementary.

There is, however, much interplay between the environment that is constructed and the life that is lived in. The built environment that we create for ourselves, and the natural one which we conserve or destroy are a faithful reflection of our values and priorities as a community.

* The recent tendency for hospitals to operate a 5-day week because of staff shortages shows dramatically how disastrous this is for the civil liberty of the citizen unlucky enough to be injured at the week-end!

NOTES

¹ ANARCHY 93 discusses radio freedom.

² Edward J. Mishan: "The Spillover Enemy, the coming struggle for amenity rights" (*Encounter*, December 1969).

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³ *RIBA Journal*, August 1970. Audrey Harvey was writing as housing advisor to the Child Poverty Action Groups.

⁴ Chermayeff and Alexander: *Community and Privacy, towards a new humanism in architecture* (Pelican).

⁵ Some research is being done. The *Architect's Journal* has featured articles on privacy and has illustrated housing schemes where special attention has been paid to it through courtyard planning. The *Municipal Review* has referred to work going on in this field by T. A. Markus, Professor of Building Science at Strathclyde University, and has commented on the delicate balance of privacy and isolation, commending further research.

⁶ A model for such a community, briefly mentioning the requirements of the accommodation desired, stressing community and privacy, appears in *Communes*, journal of the commune movement, June 1970.

⁷ St. Julians, near Sevenoaks, Kent.

⁸ *Civil Liberties*, journal of the American Civil Liberties Union, April 1970.

⁹ A host of books, from Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Lewis Herber's *Our Synthetic Environment*, to Nan Fairbrother's recent *New Lives, New Landscapes* (Architectural Press, 1970).

¹⁰ ANARCHY 23, 35, 41, 69, 78 and 97.

¹¹ Grattan Puxon: *On the Road* (NCCL).

¹² *Op. cit.*

¹³ *Official Architecture and Planning*, July 1970.

You and the data bank

A.C.

BIG BROTHER IN BRITAIN TODAY by Antony A. Thompson (Michael Joseph 35s.).

PRIVACY AND FREEDOM by Alan F. Westin (Bodley Head 63s.).

PROFESSOR WESTIN'S BOOK has become a civil liberties classic in the United States and we are fortunate that it has now been published in this country. His assessment, which ranges from the biology of privacy to the more obscene techniques for destroying the human personality, is based largely on the American experience. The value to the British reader is that you may be fairly sure that what has happened in America is either already happening here or will come to pass within the next five years. His themes cover the technological breakthrough in techniques of physical surveillance, psychological surveillance such as polygraphing and personality testing, data surveillance or the development of computerised data banks and the gullibility of the public which has allowed its privacy to be invaded coupled with the ruthlessness of commerce and Government which are engaged in the joyful exploitation of a potent new source of power. No American who has read this book may have an excuse to say that he has not been warned. Professor Westin deserves much of the credit for exposing the threat to privacy as being one of the major human issues of our time on a level with the pollution of the environment and the threat of nuclear war. Fortunately his influence has extended outside his own country and has been an important factor in stimulating a debate which in Britain is just beginning to gather momentum.

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But what of Britain? Mr. Thompson in his right-wing way succeeds in cracking the veneer of the liberal mythology that has, in the past, often saved British institutions and bureaucrats from serious critical assessment. He flays tax inspectors and judges, credit companies and MI5. Government secrecy is contrasted with a personal exposure of the ordinary citizen that puts "Oh Calcutta" in the shade. The castle of the Englishman has become a goldfish bowl. The alleged freedom of the press dims in the shade of the Official Secrets Acts and the D Notice system. Even those who get a kick out of their five-yearly pilgrimage to the ballot box should begin to question the relevance of a system under which minority support can produce a Government and where representation of minority parties is a pale reflection of their numerical strength. The back bench MP, even if he survives the lashing of Party Whips, remains a pathetic figure starved of access to information and the resources which are needed to make any use of it. The doctrine of ministerial responsibility provides a convenient excuse for cover-up operations when anything goes wrong,

while even a Minister himself may not be informed because he is not entitled to have access to the files in his own Department. The checks and balances often claimed for the Parliamentary system are riddled with so many escape routes for the career bureaucrat that if injustices or maladministration ever come to light, it is more by luck than judgment.

Occasionally the reality is exposed. In giving evidence at a recent Official Secrets Act trial a permanent official with the Foreign Office said: "The only reason for classifying a document is for reasons of security ... a Government official who thought that the disclosure of a document might cause embarrassment to HMG might well classify it as confidential ... naturally you mean politically embarrassing. It is not the business of any official to try or allow the Government to be embarrassed. That is what we are working for. Embarrassment and security are not really two different things."

If the framework of rules and regulations governing the relationship between the citizen and the State has not developed to the citizen's advantage, we must now, as Mr. Thompson shows, take into account the additional threats created by new techniques of surveillance and data storage which are now being applied with great enthusiasm by the professional snoopers from both public and private sectors. The book is a libertarian's ammunition dump for, while it has the characteristic defects of all exposure-type journalism, it has also the virtue of bringing together basic information in an easily digestible form. One man's Enoch Powell is another's Mao Tse-Tung—thus we personalise our fears. Big Brother is largely, I suspect, "the by-product of the search for efficiency" and to resist efficiency is to invite all the ridicule that could be heaped on a modern Canute. In Britain at least tyrants as people are out of date. Progress itself, particularly in the realm of technology, is, in an uncritical climate, the most evident source of tyranny.

Both Mr. Thompson and Professor Westin draw attention to the development of computers and data banks. A data bank contains

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information, possibly personal information. It may be stored in manilla files, recorded on punch cards, or contained for instant recall on computer tapes or discs. Information is power, either commercial or political. We are at the beginning of an information explosion created partly by administrative necessity and partly by revolutionary developments in the techniques of surveillance and of information storage and retrieval. At the very core of these developments lies the computer. Another American academic has said: "The computer with its insatiable appetite for information, its image of infallibility, its inability to forget anything which has been put into it, may become the heart of a surveillance system which will turn society into a transparent world in which our homes, our finances, our associations, our mental and physical condition are laid bare to the most casual observer."

What is the computer and what can it do? In itself like the car or gun the computer is neither moral nor immoral. It can open up unlimited vistas for our comfort and welfare. It can also act as a universal spy. It is not a brain, as sometimes suggested, nor does it have emotions. Left to itself it is a moronic clerk which does precisely what it is told. The danger lies in the use men make of the computer and their failure to comprehend the implications. Most people veer away from discussing it because they are not aware of what it does or how it works. At the most it is commonly thought to be a machine for doing sums. This is indeed one use but it is the collection of personal information with which we are concerned.

The Precision Instrument Company of California has demonstrated the model of a new laser process capable of putting 645 million bits of data on one square inch of tape. Photochromic micro-images have made it possible for the complete Bible to be reproduced on a thin sheet of plastic less than two inches square. A single unit containing one 4,800 foot reel of one inch plastic tape, using the laser memory process, will be capable of storing in digital form up to twenty pages of information on every man, woman and child in the United States. Any information required from an individual's dossier could be extracted in not more than four minutes. Ten such reels could provide

two hundred page dossiers on the entire population, while one hundred reels could record their entire life histories, from birth to death.

The unimaginative may well reply: "So what—if you've nothing to hide you've nothing to fear." Or the Fabian sophisticate may say: "If everyone had access to personal information about everyone else surely this would have a socialising effect and in any case don't commercial firms and Governments use secrecy to protect themselves from criticism or attack." It is certainly true that personal secrecy is very much a middle-class preoccupation and not one which is necessarily beneficial to society. It is also true that Bumbledom wants to know all about Joe Bloggs but takes very good care that the privilege is not reciprocated.

But before coming to particular examples of abuse which effectively deal with such reservations, it must be said that the issue at stake is the right to privacy which must be regarded as a basic guarantee

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of liberty. While privacy has been valued in Britain, it has never been protected by law. Clearly absolute privacy can be as destructive as complete exposure and a balance must be sought between the individual's need to get away from it all and his additional need to share the life of the community. Too much privacy can be just as psychologically damaging or socially destructive as too little. Some information about individuals must be public to ensure the smooth running of a complex industrial society. Clearly the distinction between public information and information which is purely private or semi-confidential must be finely drawn. Ultimately, however, the personality can only be protected if the individual has adequate opportunity to be anonymous in public places, to enjoy solitude, to preserve the intimacy of his relations with others and to maintain a degree of reserve towards the outside world. No individual can feel safe in a "Big Brother" world where someone, somewhere, is watching, listening, recording and judging his private behaviour.

Leaving aside the broad area of information which may be handed over to someone else, we should at least demand some say over what information is to be collected, its purposes and those who are allowed to use it. The need is patently obvious at a time when Government and commerce pursue the collection of information, the relevant and the irrelevant, with the enthusiasm normally associated with the schoolboy stamp collector. If it were possible for them to collect all the information about us which is recorded, quite apart from information which could be gleaned through deliberate snooping, they would be in a position to create a detailed data profile and perhaps end up by knowing more about us than we know about ourselves. Such a situation would open the doors to a totally new and virtually irresistible kind of totalitarianism—the manipulative society.

These are not dangers we may possibly face in the future. The threat exists now and will increase in pace with the development of computer technology. In the private sector the information industry is booming. In Britain today there are over 15,000 private detectives, many of them ex-police officers. There are agencies which collect and sell personal information of every conceivable kind to anyone who wants to buy it. One firm offers bank balances for 7 guineas, and ex-directory telephone numbers for 5 guineas. Another gives subscribing personnel departments or firms willing to farm out their personnel work detailed information on managers they would like to employ. Naturally there is a reciprocal arrangement to exchange information with subscribing firms. Yet another agency locates and describes individuals who would be influential for arranging purchases on behalf of their companies. The United Association for the Protection of Trade, which operates the National Credit Register, keeps more than 14 million files while other similar organisations cover as many as 20 million people.

Credit rating is inevitable in a credit based society and the reputable companies only make their files accessible to business concerns. The fact remains that an individual can be on a national credit black-

list without ever knowing about it and therefore without the opportunity to contest the information held. Recently one firm with branches all over the country announced that it planned to become fully computerised within a year. Last year the same firm claimed that it retained card indexes on 4 million people and that it would have dossiers on 80% of the country's households within ten years. Its indisputable commercial success followed, significantly, on a fine totalling £11,000 at the end of an Old Bailey trial for conspiring to effect a public mischief by using dishonest means to collect personal information, e.g. by impersonating police officers and other public officials. A security firm offered management a service involving placing spies on the shop floor, and an anonymous private detective, interviewed on the radio recently, boasted that he was employed to discover personal information about trade union militants. The network of "information gatherers" includes many large companies which have already computerised their personnel records, the banks and insurance companies. The potential for abuse in terms of the invasion of privacy is solely dependent on the policy of each firm concerned.

I have stressed the private sector mainly because it seems to offer a more immediate threat. The Government sector is of no less importance in the long run. In December 1969 there were nearly 240 computers in local government service and 187 in the Civil Service with 76 more on order.

In February 1969 the *Computer Weekly* commented bluntly: "The Big Brother's brother society took a massive step forward with the announcement of the earnings related pension scheme. This massive computer control system will provide the largest data bank of personal histories ever assembled in this country. If those concerned about the invasion of privacy by computers are serious in their intentions now is the time they should act."

The National Data Processing Service established by statute under the Post Office is, according to *Data Week*, "The hub of a network exchanging information between employers, Inland Revenue, and the Department's regional short-term benefit centres." Dr. Reginald Bennett, MP, asked pertinently, "What will happen when the tax authorities start probing the service?" Back came the assurance from the then Postmaster General, Edward Short, "The Post Office already have a high reputation for confidentiality which will be jealously preserved."

All the same the Registrar General sold details from the 1966 census to a direct mail company for business exploitation. Inland Revenue are building up a computer complex to handle the routine tax affairs of 25 million people. The Home Office has ordered for delivery in 1971 a £2 million computer to provide the first national police computer which will have some 700 terminals throughout the country. Lord Stonham announced the plans with unrestrained enthusiasm: "Every force, and divisions within the forces, will have direct and immediate access to the information about the *modus operandi* of criminals, the names and previous convictions of criminals and the main fingerprint collection. It is an immense concept, and will entail storing far more

information than any comparable project in the country."

Police records are supposed to be confidential but they seem to be readily available to social security offices and personnel departments. It would have been more reassuring if Lord Stonham could have given some commitment on confidentiality. Records are not restricted to convicted persons and through the activities of the regional crime squads it is possible to have a police record without ever being convicted on any offence. It has been estimated that the Special Branch hold at the very least 2 million dossiers. Will these be fed into the police computer? The bureaucratic logic of Government information systems is to extend and centralise. Every invasion of privacy is always, when challenged, backed up by the argument of necessity. The least we can do is to make sure that Government alone is not going to get away with telling us what the necessity is.

This is merely an introduction to the problems the computer can bring. We would do well to bear in mind the following remark of an overseas observer: "Adherence to the usual British custom of refusing to recognise a problem until it is fully developed could do incalculable harm. By the time any computer-based system is in operation a substantial investment—often of public money—has been made in hardware and intensive human effort. This, allied to purely technical considerations, will make it difficult to effect any major changes in design." In other words, if we are to do anything, it must be done now. In five years' time the computer revolution will have passed us by. Then we shall have to live with it.

Professor Westin has laid the American experience on computers before us. Thompson has scratched the surface. There remains an urgent need for the menace of data banks in this country to be spelled out in much more detail. It seems likely that another book to be published by Allen and Unwin in November, *The Data Bank Society* by Dr. Malcolm Warner and Michael Stone, will fulfil this role. It will send the computer industry running for cover and make the average citizen reach for a whisky bottle to steady his nerves. I understand that the National Council for Civil Liberties, which has been exposing the invaders of privacy for the last two years, will be launching a "Workshop on the Data Bank Society" to coincide with the book's publication. The workshop is likely to produce a number of proposals for legislation, technical safeguards and the need to develop some social consciousness among those who operate computers for Government or in industry. Solutions like these will incorporate all the classic defects of the liberal approach. If the authorities are going to use personal information as a political weapon and if industrialists are going to use it to exploit the consumer, no amount of lecturing or legal reform is going to stop them. Another equally ineffectual response would be to wish the nightmare away. If radical groups can drag themselves away from their internecine disputes and theological differences, they might perhaps ask themselves whether a mass invasion of privacy has not become the number one item on the political agenda. Centralisation by machine is wide open to direct action techniques. First however the

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technology must be understood. Want to be a computer programmer? The pay is good.

Motorway madness

ALAN THOMAS

LONDON IS AN INTERNATIONAL CITY with a population of approximately eight million souls. It is these millions which give London its traffic problem. London houses more than one-seventh of Great Britain's population. It absorbs one-fifth of all employment in England and Wales. Greater London covers an area of over 600 square miles. It would bound an area with 13 times the population of Leeds, 15 times that of Glasgow, 46 times that of Coventry or 60 times that of Newcastle.

The 60 million tons of goods handled each year by the Port of London represent a third of the value of the United Kingdom's trade. It is the centralised capital of a centralised state. Apart from being the seat of government, administration, and apart from its international significance, it is the country's biggest port, airport, and the financial, commercial, artistic, academic and sporting capital, the hub of the transport system and the communications system. It is no wonder that the problems of over-centralisation are all to be found here.

The twentieth century has seen many changes in London itself: areas once spacious and with an elite population have given way to business areas, and large office blocks have sprung up everywhere, but the basic plan and structure of London and its thoroughfares has changed very little

since the eighteenth century. Roads whose original users were horses and pedestrians are now carrying 1½ million motor vehicles and by 1980 will carry two million.

London has a very large and complex public transport system. It enables a traveller to go anywhere in London with very little difficulty, but the conditions of travel are steadily deteriorating. Besides an expensive, slow and inefficient service, you have to put up with the dirt, smells and the degrading carnival of rush hour. 90% of the 4½ million workers reside in London, and the remaining tenth commute across its boundaries. The rush hour problem arises when these millions each seek a different destination at the same time. If the distance to be covered is of any length, it is economical *for the individual* to use private transport. There is little heavy through traffic but London requires a vast fleet of commercial vehicles for internal journeys. All this adds disruption to the bus services, congestion of the main routes

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and the overflowing of traffic into residential districts where secondary roads become regular traffic routes for the cars and lorries that cannot pass along the main roads.

Anyone who has been stuck in a London traffic jam, whether in an agonisingly long bus queue waiting for the next full bus, or in a stationary, over-heated car just watching the traffic lights change colour, will realise what a terrific waste of time, energy, peace of mind and money is involved. The city's arteries are hardening and if the present congestion continues, not only will its economic efficiency decline, but so also will its vital services, refuse disposal, fire brigades, ambulances and every kind of distribution.

THE BLUEPRINT FOR TOMORROW'S LONDON

In the Greater London Development Plan, the Greater London Council sets out its proposals for a network of primary roads, consisting of two orbital ring roads and a substantial part of a third, with connecting radial routes, and links with the national motorway system, and backing up this with a system of secondary roads consisting mostly of improved existing main roads. The Council envisaged the primary system as having the dual purpose of releasing the heavy commercial and industrial traffic from the restrictions imposed by existing main routes, and equally of improving the environment in the shopping and residential areas from which the traffic has been removed. The secondary roads are planned to take the local traffic and bus services, and to distribute traffic to and from the primary network.

Ringway 1, the innermost of the orbital routes, known as the Motorway Box, has been located for most of its length alongside railways, or through areas of "housing stress". These are areas due for early redevelopment through slum clearance or replacement of obsolete property. The GLC claims that "It gives a unique opportunity for building the road and redeveloping the land in a way that will permit this major highway to be incorporated into central London".

More than 5,000 people will lose their homes and a further 5,000 would be seriously affected by the environmental changes if Ringway 1 is completed as planned.

Ringway 2, circling London about seven miles from the centre, will consist of an improved North Circular Road, with a completely new route through the Eastern and Southern suburbs. This will serve increasing demand for orbital movement in the suburbs and the distribution of radial motorway traffic. When the GLC originally published its plans it was unable to show any suggested route for Ringway 2 in South London. This was because the London Borough Councils had not then had the opportunity of giving their opinions on the proposed route. On 17 July 1969 the GLC announced in the press the full proposed route for Ringway 2.

The North Circular Road is being improved by the Ministry of Transport by constructing flyovers at intersections and by widening to provide dual carriageways. It will also be extended eastward to a new

river crossing at Thames Mead (a new estate being constructed by the Thames on the site of the old Woolwich arsenal) and then on to Falconwood, whence it will wind its way through a largely owner-occupied residential area for 11 miles. This stretch will be a four-lane dual carriageway, reaching in places 150 feet across, the widest in the country. For most of its length this section will be in a cutting (i.e. below ground level with an open roof). For 1½ miles it will be covered—at an estimated cost up to 10 times as expensive as a conventional road—half of this part being under the Royal Blackheath Golf Course. It will destroy 2,189 houses as well as schools, churches, public halls, a swimming bath, open spaces and playing fields.

From Streatham Vale, Ringway 2, again cutting through a residential area will continue to Wandsworth, crossing the Thames with another new bridge at Chiswick, meeting the North Circular Road at its junction with the M4 Motorway.

Ringway 3 will be a new route circling London about 12 miles from the centre. At present only approximately half of the proposed route has been decided upon. Ringway 3 will be providing for traffic which would otherwise penetrate deeply into the built-up area. Considerable stretches of this route will be outside the Greater London Council boundary.

MOTORWAY MADNESS

As one who is personally affected, and therefore interested in the Ringway Scheme, I feel that the public reaction would be overwhelming if people knew the full facts concerning the proposals. If the Ringway Scheme does materialise, the GLC will have pulled off the biggest confidence trick of the century.

The Council's present estimate of the cost of the proposals is a staggering £1,700,000,000, equivalent to £800 *per family* of Londoners. This estimate does not include the cost of the Greater London Council's secondary roads scheme, it also excludes the cost of the many interchanges, the alterations to the feeder roads that will become necessary for the ring roads and their interchanges. It does not include the cost of the part of the scheme already under construction or in the pipeline, and it does not include the cost of the remainder of Ringway 3 not yet proposed by the Ministry of Transport.

The cost will be met by both taxpayers (through the Ministry of Transport) and ratepayers (through the Greater London Council). The GLC claims that "The general rate will increase by 6d. by the mid-1980s on account of the roads but the GLC believes that the roads will be good value in terms of the savings in time and money they bring to London as a whole". One would imagine that 6d. in the pound on the rates would not make much impression on £800 per family.

The Ringway Scheme will destroy 19,750 houses: 80,000 Londoners will require rehousing. This will be in addition to the 600,000 people already on waiting lists throughout London.

On 21 January 1970 the Conservative-controlled GLC released a statement saying that because of the need to make big cut-backs in

spending, the completion of the Motorway plan will be postponed for another 10 years. Simultaneously, but somewhat overshadowed by the previous statement, they released a new building programme stating their intentions of building 8,500 fewer houses than previously intended, and admitting that by 1981 there will be a shortage of 95,000 homes in London.

Mr. Horace Cutler, Tory Housing chief, justified his report with the classic comment: "Falsely optimistic predictions do nothing to help the situation and only dash the hopes of people now suffering through poor housing conditions". This attitude follows closely to the way in which the GLC has conducted the whole of the Motorway Plan. At the outset, the Council initiated a rather lengthy London Traffic Survey, which cost the ratepayers £1½ million. On publishing the survey

they suppressed large sections which utterly damned the proposed Motorway Plan. When pressed on this point, Mr. Robert Vigars, Chairman of the GLC Planning and Transportation Committee, claimed that the findings of the survey were based on a hypothetical study of the situation, and therefore were not valid. We might ask the point of spending £1½ million.

One amusing point is that the ten year postponement was announced two weeks before the last date for objections to the proposed Ringway 2. The GLC statement was somewhat misleading. The press and the BBC misread it, and a week passed before the Council clarified the situation: the postponement was of the completion and not of the start. And of course all objections had to be in by the end of the week.

The original cost, based on 1967 statistics was £650 million, but this was soon raised to £860 million through increases in the cost of labour and materials. The GLC stuck firmly to this figure claiming that all the private estimates from professional bodies, of up to £2,000 millions, were just wild guesses. On publication of the plan in July 1969, the cost was estimated at £950 million and the completion time 10 years. By January 1970 the cost estimate has risen to £1,700 million and the completion time "by the end of the century".

PUBLIC REACTIONS

The building of the Ringways is a foregone conclusion simply because of the public's lack of knowledge of the situation. To explain this point let me draw your attention to an article in the London *Evening Standard* on 16 March 1969 under the headline "Ringways: 'Massive Support' Claimed". It reported a public opinion survey by the British Road Federation which claimed that eight out of ten Londoners supported the Ringway scheme. It went on to break down the replies, saying that "Only 59 per cent of the 2,000 people questioned knew of the Greater London Development plan". Of these 38 per cent knew of the road plans and of these only 10 per cent knew of their actual route. So in fact, out of 2,000 people, 45 knew something about the proposed plans. These results have been confirmed in Public Opinion Polls.

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The main opposition has been in East and South London. This is not surprising, as the people affected in these areas are mostly working-class owner occupiers. These people have understood the full impact of the proposals. They have formed various committees and organisations to oppose the plans: mostly on humanitarian grounds, organisations like The Homes Before Roads Campaign, South London Against Motorways Group, and the Norbury and District Society. At present anyone living on the route of a proposed motorway can be forcibly ejected from his home and paid what the Council feels to be a fair price for the property. This need not bear any relation to the actual market price. The biggest injustice will be felt by the hundreds of thousands of people who will end up with a motorway outside their door, who might lose part of their garden or be cut off from shops, schools and other amenities by a motorway 150 feet across and receive no compensation whatsoever. The noise, fumes and vibrations created by passing vehicles will make their houses hell to live in. In one part of Eltham, a small group of houses will be bounded on three sides by motorways, turning them virtually into an island. The plight of such people was highlighted by the campaign of the Notting Hill tenants last summer.

The Motorway Plan has been roundly condemned by ten experts in the very interesting and well-written book *Motorways in London* (edited by Micael Thomson), while Anthony Davis, editor of the plan, saying that "It represents a foolhardiness unequalled in the history magazine *Official Architecture and Planning* damned the motorway of London Government". At public meetings held throughout London, the GLC has been represented by Mr. Robert Vigars, who admits to the hardship which the scheme will bring to individuals, but claims that it will be necessary for the good of the majority. The meetings provide a veneer of "consultation" and when the shouting dies down the GLC will march on.

It is surely obvious to everyone, except the GLC road engineers that the provision of more and more road capacity to meet the pressure of unrestricted demand and without regard to the true economic and social cost of such roads is not likely to do more than reproduce the same problem on a larger scale. Hammersmith is a desert, Hyde Park Corner is hell, Mitcham Common will disappear, Blackheath will be shredded, and on top of it all, the traffic will be worse.

—THE ARCHITECTS' JOURNAL

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Notes from Notting Hill

JOHN O'CONNOR

In my Eden our only source of political news is gossip. In his New Jerusalem there will be a special daily in simplified spelling for non-verbal types.

—W. H. AUDEN: *Vespers*

IF WE IMAGINE A WORLD in which economic necessity no longer had importance in determining peoples' relationships with each other, it would be one in which the full spectrum of political stances and groupings still existed, except that they would now be formed in accord with the demands of different temperaments for their different satisfactions.

A society in which the distortion of material things no longer applied has been used as a postulate before, but it has usually been thought of as an almost ideal situation in which the only conflict would be the beneficial friction between ideas and philosophies. It becomes clearer every day, however, that as people are released from the more brutal necessities of economic survival they begin to differentiate themselves from each other in any number of new ways and form those classes based on age, race, sex (and sexual orientation), which present themselves at first as politically and economically oppressed minorities before revealing their intentions to make a bid for power—control of what I think has been called the OFFICIAL REALITY.¹

A declaration by any of these oppressed minorities that it intends to rebuild the world in its own image, can be excused by the anarchist, who instinctively sides with the underdog, as being the excess of an overheated imagination which hasn't in the past been able to put into practice its more practical and modest desires (the most important of which is simply the wish to live without interference) and to believe that the chest-beatings will subside a little as soon as this equality is granted. But I think we cannot ignore the fact that this doesn't follow as a matter of course. The battle of policies and ideas which are a subterfuge for the range of emotions which these new

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classes represent is creating a state of confusion which will make the capitalist's desire to control the economic life of his workers seem a touching and childlike materialism.

I believe, however, that this "confusion" has a dialectic which hasn't yet been put into the kind of cast iron system in which Marx fixed our economic drives: that until a system is created,² or revealed rather, in the movement of ideas in a society, we face the likelihood that the struggle between these different "classes" will continue to create the divided consciousness that ensures the

advance of totalitarian government. The worst mistake we can make at this time is to believe that every class of people producing anti-authoritarian literature is at the service of the revolution. There are people who have a hatred for the well-integrated personal authority which would give the necessary density and texture to a self-determining community without central government.

I intended to write a straightforward account of the Notting Hill district of London, with a description of the different community action and political groups of that area. (The *Observer* recently called it “the most fashionable social laboratory in the country”, and quoted someone who said that living in the area was “like living under a microscope”.) But I find that I can’t approach the question of poverty in our society without trying to define what I think is its new position. It might seem from what I have written above that I am going to claim that the only people who are poor today are poor by temperament—which I’m not. There are certainly families living in Notting Hill and Ladbroke Grove whose morality is the kind of religious materialism which capitalism seeks to encourage. (Capitalism doesn’t even induce a genuinely realistic materialism, but—more horrible than that—an attitude to consumer goods that has requisitioned the imagination.) There are poor families who will not, on principle, wear secondhand clothes, or eat the cheap but unpretentious foodstuffs. On the market it’s possible to buy, for ten shillings or so, a pair of handmade shoes that somebody must have paid ten pounds for, and died unexpectedly, leaving them in perfect condition. The sense of self, that our society tries to weaken, has to belong to something other than capitalist morality to feel capable of exorcising the ghost of past ownership.

When I see newspaper headlines which refer to Notting Hill with words like “misery”, “twilight zone” and “hell”, I have to keep in mind that there are people in the area who see themselves as unable to reach the first rungs of a ladder which stretches far above them, and to whom these terms apply: but I feel little urge to join one of the political groups trying to help them onto the bottom rungs of this particular ladder. Far more interesting, in a society that might very well “clean up” all its ghettos sooner or later, is the existence of people who *choose* to live in this area rather than anywhere else in London. A housing survey which George Clark organised discovered

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that 77% of the people interviewed wanted to stay in the area after rehousing. To them, the families as well as the young drop-outs, South Kensington is the nightmare area which has come to be part of the foreign territory that stretches away from the boundaries of the Grove, just as the social worker comes into North Kensington and sees only bad housing conditions. Now that the demand for the rehousing of the people of Acklam Road has been agreed to (thanks to the vigorous agitation inspired by George Clark), it is worth while pointing out that the residents of Cromwell Road tolerate a noisier and filthier piece of “motorway” outside their front doors without ever coming to the conclusion that there is anything they can do about it. And another point worth mentioning is that the reason why so many children are involved in road accidents in Notting Hill is because mothers insist on their *right* to let their children wander around or go to the shops on their own. If you walk round South Kensington or Chelsea, you will rarely see any young children out on their own. This isn’t because play amenities are that much better. Children still have to be taken backward and forward between the parks and squares that do exist. And whereas in a “better” area it costs from £3 15s. to £4 10s. to put a child in a day nursery (provided they can be given a place from long waiting lists), there is at least one nursery in Notting Hill that will take any young child for four hours a day at a nominal five shillings a week, apart from the half dozen groups for older children that have been run by students and volunteers during the summer.

Obviously community leaders and social workers, plotting to get bigger grants from the local council or the GLC, need to stress the bad aspects of the area, but in many ways the place has that lived-in look, and liveable-in feel about it, that makes it more bearable than most of the districts of London. The density of relationships, which again ensures the safety of children in the streets, is very high in the area. People know the names of their local councillors and policemen (mostly the

notorious ones) and there is always somebody who knows somebody who wants to sell/buy an old sewing machine or a large wooden trunk, and so on.

So the real horror of society, which is alienation and destruction of community, deprivation of meaning rather than deprivation of food and shelter (a situation in which the best anarchist slogan would be DECENTRALISE EXPERIENCE)—is less severe because of a persistent sense of place and stubborn sense of self which, even if they only result from the kind of mutual aid and independence that is forced on people in any disaster zone, ought to be the subject of a more optimistic sociological study for its own sake.

The Christian and the Marxist have both enlisted the poor as being closer to their respective salvations than any other group in society, and, if we accept the existence of a dialectic in which all the stances and strategies are aimed at greater control of the Official Reality, they

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must be enlisted again as being one of the groups that are closest to snatching control of their own thoughts, and coming closer to self-determination. Together with the conservatives (by which, at best, I mean the people with a particular view of human nature rather than people with money or sexual repressions!³), they are a class of people who pay little attention to the manufactured attitudes and new puritanism surrounding questions of race, violence and sex in society.

The middle-class amenity groups, the footpath preservers, the consumer protection groups and the people who manage to foil plans for new airports, as well as the community groups in poor areas, are the two classes of people left who are showing some kind of local opposition to central government. Some of the best criticism of centralised government and ignorant totalitarianism is at the moment coming from the right. I've noticed, for example, a big improvement in the expression of ideas in the *Daily Telegraph*, and a bad decline in the *Guardian*, and in the next couple of years I think the *Telegraph* will come to occupy that place which the *Guardian* held for so long. (Beginning as an outlaw, of course.) Because the right-winger—again I don't mean capitalist or policeman or anything like that—senses that the middle-ground of thought in society (as represented by the intelligent young lecturer in sociology or economics, the top-class journalist or reviewer, as well as thousands of schoolteachers and students) has been lost, he is being forced to tighten up his ideas. A correspondent to the *Telegraph* has no authority—the latest report from the latest committee or social study group, etc.—he can bring forward to support his own feelings on a topic. Whereas the correspondents in the *Guardian's* letter column consistently evoke the findings of a committee rather than their own common sense, in suggesting what improvements can be made in society. This is a complete reversal of the position, probably as little as fifteen years ago, when the libertarian took it for granted that every schoolmaster was conservative and authoritarian by nature, and that any committee would be bound to oppose his ideas.

It is one of the victories of a permissive society that this middle ground of thought in society now expresses its ideas in libertarian concepts such as “participation”, “decentralisation”, “spontaneity” and so on. The price to be paid for this is an increasing slackness and lack of meaning in the use of these words which is going to lead to their expulsion from this territory by a set of terms, outlawed at the moment, but regenerating themselves by the necessity to be self-referential.

This year the Notting Hill Carnival, which has been run for five years by Mrs. Rhaune Laslett and the Community settlement, was cancelled because of fear of “growing racial tensions in the area”. She is quoted in the *West London Observer* as saying: “We would have felt a tremendous sense of responsibility if there had been any incidents, and we thought that until problems had been resolved it would be better to call it off.” I'm afraid that most people living here wouldn't know what she meant by that. The women who depend on the Nigerians and West Indians for their living, taking care of many

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more problems than the local social worker, are the people most ready with the term “black bastard” at the slightest provocation, without bringing to mind the word “prejudice” or images of gas chambers. The weight of commonsense in a community, the density of its relationships, can keep in check any outbreak of prejudice or violence. Ideally, people ought to be allowed their prejudices and quirks, which never get out of hand until they are abstracted from everyday circumstances by establishment politicians, or their opposite numbers who belong to the “revolution”. To ask an individual to consider what his private thoughts would mean if ten thousand people had the same thoughts and banded together in some way, shows the lack of trust in the social maturity which exists in Notting Hill more than in many communities where talk of racial tension might have more meaning.

As it happens, the carnival was taken over by members of the Notting Hill Youth Project, and renamed the People’s Carnival for the day. It was a great success, a self-conscious and rather militantly joyful celebration of the two famous local victories that centred around Powis Square and Acklam Road. It’s wonderful to see crowds of people surging past their own homes and down the centre of the streets which belongs to them. It’s a kind of tribal assertion of territorial rights that people everywhere should get a chance to indulge in once a year.

This brings me back to the idea that it is this sense of identity and sense of place which is being undermined by all those who attach themselves uncritically to the centrally organised crusades of the day.

“The ideas of a time are like the clothes of a season, as much imposed by some superior will which is seldom explicit. They are utilitarian and political, the instruments of a smooth running government.”

Wyndham Lewis wrote that in 1926 in a little-known masterpiece of social criticism called *The Art of Being Ruled*. It is so relevant to the new kind of political battle that is being fought at the moment, that I suspect the publishing and literary fraternities of suppressing the book for fifty years. Lewis was the first to write social criticism which paid serious attention to the fashions in ideas and policies and life style, which have become the subject of so much attention in the last few years. He was the first man to set foot inside the global village with his assertion that the popularity of Charlie Chaplin was due to the spread of the philosophy of Bergson. This strikes us as nothing more than a novel idea now, one of the hundreds of such notions that exist in an atmosphere when it seems commonplace to discuss the Beatles’ lyrics and Mahler in the same breath. But Yeats, who read Lewis’s *Time and Western Man* towards the end of his life, records that it struck him as one of the most novel and striking ideas he had come across. Since, by the time he read Lewis’s book, Yeats had explored every (for him) strictly separated labyrinth of art,

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popular culture and politics, Lewis’s thought must have seemed true enough to threaten one of the barriers Yeats had erected round his ideas.

One of Lewis’s prophesies describes an attitude, a political stance even, that we have heard a lot of recently. “In a society, the political and social machinery of which could be logically reduced, for the purposes of grasping it in its simplest, most radical workings, to such a figure as the above, what type of being would be pointed to as the ideal of human perfection? Obviously a child of some sort—of the same race of ‘little children’ as that of which Christ proposed to build his heaven. But Christ’s charm would be absent. The grace and gentleness of his evangel would not come to mind on reading the harsh and fussy text-books of this political faith, prepared for the mechanisation and fixing of the new child type.”

I don’t know if Lewis expected a recognisable part of the established power groups to begin preaching this doctrine, but it is now being preached by somebody I like to call a freakout philosopher who rightly regards himself as an avant garde in the wish to create this new kind of political being. There is an exhilarating freedom to be found in submitting to something called Experience, drifting on the surface of life, tossed here and there by delightful and spontaneous

accidents. But it is the freedom of the adult slave and the freedom, whose existence only a self-determined individual can ensure exists, of the child.

Seeing the hierarchically structured personality of an adult, with purpose, will and ego in control, and so preventing a beautiful and passive understanding of existence coming to the surface, our freakout philosopher recommends a reversal of this state of affairs, reminding us that this structured personality is a reflection of the structure of states which are causing all those dreadful wars. But since choice, hence self-determination, is based almost by definition, on some repression of parts of the self and the outside world, he is recommending the dismantling of the centralised and integrated personality which has become its own dictatorship and aristocracy, and no longer needs government and authority in the outside world.

Lewis tells us that the first kind of freedom, the one based on choice and self-rule, man finds too difficult to achieve, and begins to seek the second kind, “the great patent of ecstatic submission, the feminine type of freedom and self-expression”, and Lewis adds that “the first requisite for it is a master”. Seen in this light then, Paul Goodman’s appeal to the young to accept the help of the “professional” is futile, because every underground magazine in England or America is filled with the kind of writing which sets out to undermine the values of the professional—of which Goodman himself is a good example—by its distrust of objectivity and stress on the dionysian freedom of ecstatic submission, and by its aversion to the structured mind which, the closer it comes to defining real freedom and how it

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is to be achieved, threatens to impose a more intolerable authority on the young rebel’s mind than a clumsy government does.

A government that knew what was happening would be happy to sit back in its own invulnerable position and watch the internal structure of society disintegrating, the ground falling away till it is left alone on a high rock hidden by mist. The authority of its own henchmen is threatened of course, but they are becoming less important to it, and a totalitarian government would ditch its right-wing support in the community, as soon as the destructuring process had gone far enough to ensure the lack of cohesion in any assault on its position from the left.

There is an awful wisdom in being impotent and helpless in the face of events, and the blind stupidity of revolutionaries in the past who thought that they could change society and did, needs to be cultivated in very small areas of existence before it is ready to face a larger world. If anything, it is a too great awareness of the complexity of society which is undermining people’s sense of their own realities, and the deliberate stupidity of a person who thinks he can take his fate in his own hands seems to be worth a cheer whether that person is a hard-bitten old reactionary or an unashamed lumpen who hasn’t heard of the new impossible situation we are all in. It’s in this situation then, where people take their identities from the Official Reality and not from a community existence that the politically motivated social worker is the small entrepreneur of the new dialectic.

I heard that the people who run *Bit*, the underground information service, were worried recently about the decline in the number of telephone calls being made to them. Fewer people wanting advice, fewer people with problems perhaps: but politically oriented organisers with a vested interest in other people’s helplessness beginning to feel vaguely irrelevant.

Because of a self-consciousness about the need for spontaneity and participation that these people have, you can walk around the *Bit* or *Release* premises and some of the underground newspaper offices without being challenged too directly as to your purpose. It’s best to lurch in looking puzzled and stand reading the notices stuck on the walls in a compulsive and slightly unbalanced way, so that after a quick glance at your back, they will write you off as best left alone and carry on with what they are doing. If they suspect some kind of impudent observer in the room, among the transcendent junkies and fifteen-year-old problem runaways, the games with telephones,

urgent messages and impossibly worsening situations (common to all offices, I suppose) will tend to become more subdued and so less interesting.

On one line there is a mother in Kent, wondering if her daughter has shown up in London, then somebody runs up the stairs to say that there's a big bust at No. 11 and the police are holding over twenty. As another telephone rings—by which time you have turned

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round to watch, you can't help noticing the touch of manic glee. Christ, another problem? It's one of those days! as it is explained by the person on the other end that there is a bloke in the room next door to her who says he can see black spiders the size of LP records trying to get in at his window. What can she do about it?

Still holding his head, the man who took the call passes this last problem to a political female with a sincere voice who says to give him a cup of hot lemon juice with plenty of sugar in it and to ring back in an hour if the spiders haven't gone away by then.

I'm not suggesting that it is possible to expect social workers, or young people who run community and information services and so on to be completely disinterested, and not to seek their own emotional satisfactions and mental stimulation by helping people with their problems. But as with any other kind of organisation—even the most informal, participatory and unstructured kind, a person with a desire to lead or to represent, can only demand dependency and insidiously begin to encourage it. There's nothing some of them love more than an authentically hopeless wreck.

By way of gossip, I've heard stories of community helpers fighting each other for control of a problem which both claim they found first. The housing organisation woman, for instance, who rang up another organisation in the area which had already found accommodation for a homeless family, warning them to leave her homeless families alone.

A form of humanitarianism, and for younger people a more libertarian-based humanitarianism, has become the secular religion, which means that the political left have inherited that huge body of people, the well-meaning philistines, the good people with irreproachable ideals who were a plague round the church for centuries. It took decades of political and literary activity to expose the hypocrisy and reactionary role of the "Love, Peace and help-your-neighbour" attitude of the charitable Christian, and I'm depressed to think that it's going to take as long before it is generally seen that a certain kind of modern community worker and socially concerned man or woman is the same person in a different disguise.

A typical extract from one of the numerous reports of one of the youth projects in the area (which I've invented however) will read:

"When Jimmy first appeared at one of the informal gatherings we had begun to hold, because of lack of funds, in the largely improvised environment of a school hall, he displayed a brazen self-sufficiency which was obviously a brave front to hide a turmoil of adolescent difficulties. He wouldn't join any of the groups we had arranged to talk over the racial discrimination in the area, and to answer queries about any of the kids' sexual difficulties that might turn up in the conversation.

"One of the female students who had joined us that summer was enlisted to approach him but she was unable to coax him into telling her about himself and his problems. (It was known already, in confidence, that his father was a drunkard and that his mother had taken up with

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a black man who was still taking money off another woman in the area.) His usual reply to such attempts was: 'Who, me? I'm all right.'⁴ And he spent most of his time around the record player, shouting remarks at the girls and generally disrupting the work we were trying to organise.

"But the fifth time he came, a night when he seemed upset about something and had stopped making fun of the girls, another volunteer was able to achieve some success in getting him ..."

When I think of people with problems and difficulties, I remember Kerouac's Dean, running into the road holding his gangrenous thumb in the air. Well, perhaps it's an unpleasant truth, but a society with its head on fire doesn't pay much attention to the agony of its separate parts—its poor included—knowing that if it can do the basic things well, the details will fall into place. This isn't a very helpful attitude at the moment, and the community worker probably is doing the best possible job in a situation in which the only synthesis of consciousness there is, forms itself round a shared helplessness. I've only to see a crowd of mothers painting their own "GO SLOW" sign, erecting their own play street barriers, or emptying their dustbins into the road as a protest, to want to change my attitude completely. But I suspect that if the optimism and confidence which will risk radical change was to appear in the future, you would find the Jimmies and the sharp spades who shut the door in your face when you are trying to complete a housing survey, of more use than the people who, at present, are willing to group themselves together and present authority with a challenging list of complaints.

NOTES

¹ Two novelists, William Burroughs and Colin Wilson, seem to have come up against the idea of thought control. Colin Wilson is a political writer in a way that hasn't been understood yet. His attitude to literature is completely utilitarian—to a prosaic extreme. He has little interest in aesthetics, words and rhythms never lead him astray from his ideas, and in a sense he hasn't bothered to become a "writer". He sees himself as writing in the English progressive rationalist tradition that Wells and Shaw belonged to. If he doesn't apply himself as closely to everyday politics as those two writers did, it appears to be because he is doing the kind of "pure research" which points to a new dialectic.

² I suspect that the "new Marx" will be a psychologist and literary historian who uses the whole field of art history as his raw material.

³ Interesting, in connection with the idea that temperament is becoming more important than money in determining political attitudes, is the stress, among people who call themselves the "underground", on the latter qualification for a reactionary attitude rather than the possession of money.

⁴ This is a false note in my invention, because it is here that a social worker will put a four-letter word into his report to illustrate depth of experience and the informal character of relationships inside the group.

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The manipulators

GEORGE WOODCOCK

THE ART OF POLITICS is the art of manipulation, and democracies differ from dictatorships mainly in the degree to which the manipulative machinery is concealed. Both democracies and dictatorships seek to establish the illusion of unity within the countries they govern; the most successful of them, in fact, rule by practising the art of division. by playing one section of the community against the other. On politician-fostered divisions between English and French in Canada, for example, Pierre Trudeau came to power and stays there; if René Lévesque did not exist, he would have to be invented to assure power in Ottawa at a time when the natural tendencies in English Canada are strongly decentralist. In the United States the quasi-dictatorial power of the presidency has been built up over the generations by exploiting divisions between North and South, between western farmers and eastern manufacturers, between blacks and whites, between the real young and the arrested boys who are their fathers. Even industrial strife, provided it can be controlled, is incorporated into the system of divide-and-rule. There is nothing like a restive but unrevolutionary trade union movement for keeping a conservative government in power by playing on the fears of rural and lower middle class voters.

One of the dangers of not knowing enough history, which is the weakness of so many of the New Left, is that without it one becomes all the more easily a victim of this kind of manipulation, and in this context what may appear on the surface to be a symptom of liberation can, in fact, turn

out to be a guarantee of enslavement. I believe we have reached the stage of development in the so-called counter-culture when this problem has to be considered.

I am a member of the old counter-culture, associated with the literary and artistic movements of the first half of the century and with the political traditions of classic anarchism. My own youth in the Thirties was also a time when the young rebelled, but there was a difference. Then one rebelled, initially, in isolation; one made oneself, as it were, through one's individual rebellion against family, authoritarian school, class, employment, state, and then one sought, often with difficulty, for the small Bohemian and radical movements of the time.

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Nowadays it is, according to one's definition of rebellion, at once more easy and more difficult to be a rebel. It is easier in the sense that the counter-culture exists; there is always somewhere to go when one leaves home; rebellion on that level is a group matter, a moving from one herd into another. Though the extent of the youth rebellion has in fact been exaggerated by middle-class journalists who judge by their own class and do not realise how many of the working class youth are trying to make it into square respectability, the counter-culture is strong enough to provide company and solidarity. Arising out of essentially American traditions, it stresses the old pioneer virtue of "togetherness" as vehemently as the Daughters of the American Revolution, making the massed thousands of the rock festival its public face, whereas the older, European-born counter-culture chose as its typical figure the "outsider", the lonely rebel who draws on his own resources of inner strength or is inevitably defeated. And, while no doubt it is more pleasant to forget about inner strength and snuggle together in the foggy, freaky burrows of Haight-Ashbury, or Fourth Avenue, Vancouver, or their European equivalents, the penalty is the mentality of those who live in burrows. The mentality of lemmings. It has already become a cliché that doing one's own thing really means all doing the same thing. And the appalling thing about clichés is that they are frozen truths. The counter-culture is a mass phenomenon [which], for all its rhetoric of freedom and spontaneity, in fact imposes a conformity of life-style, of language, of patterns of thought, through its sumptuary rules governing a thousand details of the hip life, which is more exacting than anything in the straight world outside a prison or a cemetery. No doubt there are generational differences among lemmings. But they all live in cosy burrows, and they are an intensely suggestible, all liable to destroy themselves en masse through the operation on their wills of forces they do not understand.

By now it has become obvious that the so-called hippy community and its following of teenagers and juveniles is eminently suggestible and exploitable precisely because of its conformity. Fortunes have been made and still are being made catering to the naive and uniform needs of this community for special clothes, trinkets, musical instruments, electronic equipment, records, incense, gewgaws, films, rock festivals, and above all, drugs, the main subject to which this article tends. Popular youth heroes like the Beatles and Leonard Cohen, and even anarchist-aping comedians like Abbie Hoffman, have become rich men, by exploiting the theme of protest. The counter-culture is in fact just as much dominated by consumer urges, just as deeply dedicated to its own forms of conspicuous spending, as the other world it rejects and imitates. *A few individuals retreat into genuine and purposeful voluntary poverty, into real rebellion, but they belong neither in the establishment nor the counter-establishment, nor in either of the attendant herds. They are the outsiders.*

Equally, the counter-establishment (which really I prefer as a more correct phrase to "counter-culture") has become so hypnotised by its own rhetoric that it has fallen a total prey to the mass media.

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There is an unpleasant passage in Tom Hayden's *The Trial* (published as a special issue of *Ramparts*) in which he waspishly shows Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin as lost media freaks, night after night studying the newspapers, watching the telly, fascinated by their own images and planning yet more attention-catching antics to get more press coverage and to play—wittingly or unwittingly—their assigned roles in the divide-and-rule policies of the real establishment, the roles of making revolution look like a child's game. Even the so-called underground press is itself liable to descend into the aridity of an inflexible rhetoric—hophead or Maoist—by means of which it obsessively avoids reality and creates solipsistic images of its own unreal world which merely alienates those masses of the underprivileged who should be the natural allies of a true radicalism.

If the “underground” community can be manipulated commercially and by media-addiction as easily as the straight community, the centre of danger still seems to me the erroneous identification of drugs with revolution. I have nothing against drugs *per se*. As a libertarian I believe every man has a right to indulge himself and to destroy himself—should that be the final result—as he wishes. I even find myself identifying imaginatively with the drug-user in so far as he is a persecuted deviant, which is increasingly less the case. It is when drugs become the subject of political rhetoric and are likely to become the means of political manipulation that we have to pull the whole question down to reality.

And in reality the great brouhaha over drugs during the past decade has been such a splendid piece of Madison Avenue virtuosity that one becomes convinced more than ever that the counter-establishment parallels the regular establishment as accurately—almost as accurately—as a mirror image. There is the pseudo-scientific gabble about the mind-expanding qualities of certain chemical substances that reminds one irresistibly of the pseudo-scientific propaganda for patent medicines which was popular only a few years ago. There is the revivalist cant—with even a few tame parsons mouthing it—about the religious elements in the drug cult (Marx reversed into “opium is the religion of the young”). There is the exploitation of the fear of being different, of being left out of one's peer group. There is the suggestion that by “expanding our minds” drugs will make us spiritual muscle men, invisibly resembling those swollen-limbed athletes who feature in comic strips and Sandow developers; Superman turned psychedelic. All of it, of course, dismal rubbish, but seductive rubbish, and made all the more seductive by the urge to conformity, to stand in well with one's associates. Not nearly so many people would have been caught in the net of drug-taking if they had learnt that there are other ways of attaining all but the more unpleasant effects of drugs. Euphoria, the sense of epiphany, the world-losing trance: all of them can be attained at will and less expensively by those who are ready to make the effort. It is a solitary effort: that is the trouble. It involves finding oneself. And that is something neither of our establishments, neither of our conformities, is designed to encourage.

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Meanwhile the drug business grows and grows, and somewhere, behind every starry-eyed missionary pusher is a capitalist ruthlessly milking the profits as other capitalists—or sometimes the same—reap, the profits of protest records and love beads and Choctaw headbands. It is a business which has an ever larger future because of the increasingly equivocal relationship between the regular establishment and the counter-establishment. For there are quite obvious signs of an experimental attitude motivating the actions of the real establishment in the whole field of drug use.

Is it not a strange thing, to begin, that police and customs officials over the past few years—in spite of a few well publicised raids and captures—have allowed such large quantities of drugs to cross seas and borders and reach the underground markets? Is it not strange that, with thousands of users and pushers known to the police, only a small proportion should be raked in, and always the tiniest fry—never the big suppliers, whose identity ever remains concealed? Is it not strange that orders are given to the police everywhere to ignore drug use at large and small rock festivals and similar gatherings?

I suggest that, in combination with the emergence of a number of highly respectable American and Canadian lawyers in favour of legalizing drug sales, all this presages a notable coming change in official attitudes to drugs, based on watchful observation of the real effects of drug use. What the regular establishment has realized is what the hardline authoritarian political activists—like the Weathermen and the Panthers and the Maoists of various shadings—have known for a long time; marijuana and acid and hashish and probably most other drugs induce merely passive withdrawal rather than active revolutionism; with drugs action is reduced to the shadow of rhetoric. Fantasists—lost and outdated—like Abbie Hoffman, go on mouthing about the Woodstock Nation as if Woodstock had shown a generation in insurrection; in fact, it showed a good many thousand people in solipsistic passivity, willing submission.

One of *Life's* correspondents had a sinister but, I believe, a completely true insight when, at Woodstock, he suddenly saw “the spoiled. field” taking on “the aspect of a concentration camp, a camp of the future, stocked with free drugs and music, staffed with charming guards.” That, of course, was Huxley’s vision of the future, an inverse Utopia in which the people live totally meaningless lives, shaped into set moulds by psychological conditioning and the availability of euphoric drugs. We are, I believe, moving rapidly towards the destination of *Brave New World*, and moving there under the illusion that we are liberating ourselves; it seems an even closer danger than *1984*. With growing automation, provision will have to be made—even if the population growth slows down—for increasing redundancy. The desirable aim would be a never-ending educational process to create a vastly enriched leisure, but intellectually active people left to their own resources would at last make government impossible. Massive manipulation will be needed, and the free availability of drugs that create undemanding passivity is one means to that end. It will fulfil the old aim of divide-

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and-rule by splitting the population into active and inactive castes who will fear, despise and hate one another. The interests of the establishment and the counter-establishment will have been revealed (as happens so often in history) as identical. After all, they are both conformities. And the outsider will still be loathed and rejected by both.

So I foresee a steady relaxation of the drug laws, not for libertarian reasons, but in the interests of easier government. I foresee state stores for the sale of marijuana and hashish, and probably acid, which will have the minor advantage of preventing adulteration. I foresee the taking over of the manufacture of tailored joints by the big tobacco companies, who will start great hemp farms in the southern United States and elsewhere, and the appearance of the first self-confessed pot millionaires (there must be many unavowed ones with unnumbered Swiss banking accounts already). I foresee a generation doped into acceptance and believing it has achieved the revolution. I foresee ... But need one go on? It’s the old story of putting last things first. As natural and harmless and inevitable. On its own, and subject to manipulation by government, it can more easily be an evil than a good.

The pusher who now—when he is not a copper’s nark—is the distant agent of some capitalist on the verge of the big-time underworld, will then be a smiling government welfare agent, offering you the false euphoria in which you walk into a prison that looks like paradise until the doors close and then becomes a Hades as pointless and directionless as that underworld from which Odysseus called the grey spirits for their feast of blood. Odysseus, remember, plugged his men’s ears and had himself bound to the mast so that he could hear the sirens singing but not follow to take part in the aftermath to that glorious music. Likewise he exorcised the spell of Circe and remained a man. He was the great outsider of the ancient world, and all, like Odysseus, if they are to be free men and their own masters, must learn to master Circe (not without enjoying her in mastery) but never fall to her entrancing spell. All I have met who labour under the delusion that their minds have been expanded by drugs and so they have become chemical supermen, have in fact turned out to be the dullest of Circean beasts, whipped by the goddess. That of course is their right.

Every man has a right to be a slave. Every man has the right to grovel. Every man has the right to belong to his chosen herd. But we do not take him seriously when he boasts of liberation.

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Observations on Anarchy 114

COHN-BENDIT AND CASTRO

IN ANARCHY 114 George Woodcock states quite categorically, though without any supporting quotation, that when Dany Cohn-Bendit was at the Anarchist Conference in Carrara, he showed very clearly he was “*in no way* an anarchist, for the basis of disagreement was Cohn-Bendit’s defence of Castro’s dictatorial communism”.

This is the exact reverse of the truth. The basis of disagreement at the conference was the over-representation of exile movements which were no longer active. Stuart Christie, as the British delegate, objected to the presence of the Spanish exile committee, static since 1939, pointing out they had no connection with the present activists in and out of Spain. Cohn-Bendit followed this up with an attack on those Cuban refugees who fled *rather than* resist. His actual words were “for me the revolutionary anarchists are still in Cuba”.

One or two illiterate journalists thought that by this he was referring to Castro, just as on one occasion when Herbert Morrison was criticising the Trotskyist infiltration into the Labour Party, one illiterate journalist who had not heard of Trotskyists thought he was referring to Bevan. Presumably this is where Woodcock picked up his information, which may well find its way into bourgeois histories (“*see Woodcock op cit*”).

Cohn-Bendit went so far as to suggest the “instant refugees” were supported by the CIA. This was an exaggeration (it does not need the CIA to produce excuses for inactivity) but he was criticising the not resisting of dictatorial communism.

EMMA GOLDMAN

EMMA GOLDMAN certainly had, in her lifetime, the power of working over the bad consciences of the “liberal bourgeoisie” and the would-be intellectuals, who let her act out their fantasies and were prepared to submit to flicks of the whip for their sins. Prof. Drinnon (ANARCHY 114) bears this out.

A hagiographical approach to her would be a disservice. Her private letter to V. Richards bears out her egotism (“I am inclined to think I will stand pretty much alone in my protest against the coming conflagration”—which is rather on a par with her waiting, during the General Strike, for the TUC to call on her services, but it was too cowardly, she stated).

But Prof. Drinnon concludes misleadingly that “neither of the two (Berkman or Goldman) became *in any strict sense* a pacifist”

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(my italics). He claims they came to oppose terrorism, on the grounds of some private letters in the mid-twenties (when it was totally irrelevant to the situation, as Berkman granted), shot through with pessimism resulting from age and defeat.

In fact, Berkman reassumed his association with “individual acts of terrorism” during the thirties though he could hardly publish it at the time, not only in regard to his approval to acts carried out against the Duce and in Spain, but his personal involvement in abortive actions in Germany. Emma Goldman’s attitude was made quite clear in her article on Herschel Grynszpan (who shot the German Ambassador in Paris), in “Spain and the World”.

Apart from this, however, to say of her she was “in no strict sense” a pacifist is a euphemism since she, in fact, regarded pacifists in the strict sense with the utmost contempt and derision which she made no attempt to conceal even from the poor liberal pacifists around her. On one occasion, during her propaganda campaign for the CNT-FAI, due to the unremitting work of Ethel Mannin she had occasion to address a large meeting mostly composed of Quakers and pacifists, and was implored to restrict her appeal solely for relief of suffering in Spain and not to offend their consciences. To anyone who ever knew Emma Goldman it is hardly necessary to relate what happened. She made a barely disguised appeal for arms and berated them as humbugs.

The appeal was not over-successful, though the sentiments were impeccable.

London

ALBERT MELTZER

So what is happening? I came away with the impression that I'd seen a two hour commercial for anarchy, and on retrospect I still feel that. I get the impression that the gullible American student population is being force fed anarchy, through the medium of films, books, TV and whatever. There are some pretty good reasons why this should be so:

- (a) anarchy is easy to repress. It's not real revolution, because it has few positive aims, and is by definition so badly organised that it can't survive. So if you push people into anarchy, you make sure their energies are burnt out before a political consciousness evolves.
- (b) anarchy is boring in the long run—it exists as a short spurt of energy, and pretty soon non-political people look for a return to normal. Everyone knows a million reasons why 500,000 people went to Woodstock—but they all went home for the same reason—they were bored and the music had stopped.
- (c) anarchy makes waste—and we should all know that the military/industrial complex will support any form of waste. War is the biggest waste disposal unit known to man—its one drawback is that it destroys potential consumers. Student riots keep battalions of National Guardsmen and repairmen employed with much less loss of life.

—IAN STOCKS reviewing the film
Getting Straight in TIME OUT, October 1970

[inside back cover]

Anarchy 118:
is about
WORK
and has news
of
Anarchy's

new look in the New Year

[back cover – no text]

[checked March 2019]